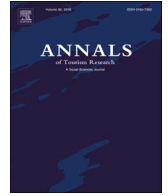


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Scarborough based study on bodies' affective capacities

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ABSTRACT

This paper conceptualises leisure-seekers' sociality using Deleuze and Guattari's framework of Body without organs (BwO). Data, collected in Yorkshire's coastal town of Scarborough, indicate how the 'beach' acts both as a magnet and a protective shell for a whole gamut of 'intimate social microcosms'. Overall, the value of this study lies in its illustration of bodies' affective capacities and in particular visitors' agency in creating new possibilities for perception and experience of tourist sites. In doing so, it urges tourism studies to engage with how leisure-seekers' bodies enact multiple sensibilities, become 'bodies without organs' without determinate form, in the process of experiencing a locality and (re)imagining its place in their lives.

"A Body without organs is not an empty body stripped of organs ... The Body without organs is not a dead body but a living body all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organisation ... The full body without organs is a body populated by multiplicities"

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 30)

Introduction

This paper looks at leisure-seekers' nuanced engagement with the place and the sense of intimacy, affinity and belonging they experience towards others within the context of the beach. Prasad (2012) argues that the sentiment of camaraderie within the tourist space results from:

"... encounters and community formation, seeing one's affectations in others and vice versa. Familiarity rejects the notion of authenticity, because it accompanies the dissolution of the individual in favour of the group. It is a thickening of feeling... which bonds dissimilar (yet familiar) bodies into a loosely conceived 'tribe'" (p. 354).

With such affective bonding comes "a temporary loss of the everyday self, and everyday consciousness, in place of which emerge dream-like states where the individual explores his/her emotional and experiential capacity..." (Canniford, 2011, p. 599). However, these affective processes are difficult to theorise, let alone represent (Thrift, 2007). Indeed, research remains scarce on how leisure-seekers mediate their sense of belonging with a place, approximating a 'home-like' attachment with its facets and the populace present therein through customising, subverting, and re-interpreting its meanings. Also, as Hough (2011) points out, their close and long-term ties with the local society are often overlooked in favour of overriding fixed identities defined by a priori categorical distinction between hosts and guests.

Further, whilst marketing and consumer behaviour researchers have long recognised the appetite of consumers to co-produce (see Cherrier, 2007; Kotler, 1986) there is scant research on their extended role in the marketplace, particularly as co-creators of experiences at a site. Few studies look at simultaneously playful and entrepreneurial consumer attributes as they select, (re)interpret

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and reject elements from a profusion of product/service offerings at a destination. Thus the aim of this paper is twofold: i) uncover the manner in which actors perform and narrate particular identities and negotiate ways of being together with (dis)similar others in tightly packed places of leisure rife with atypical affects; and ii) assess their role in (re)assembling/(re)scripting the place through imagination and cunning. In the context of beach-based leisure experience, as Löfgren (1999) observes, vacationing, despite being a mass phenomenon, can still be very personalised – “conducted within confined space and tailored to one’s personality and desires” (Hazbun, 2010, p. 207). The beach, as a distinctive holiday spot, presents a unique opportunity to explore how actors enact multiple identities which provide them the locus for ‘soaking up’ the locality and (re)imagining its *place* in their lives. At the same time, as Munt (2015) observes:

“... beaches are also microcosms of morality, as manners dictate what can and cannot be done in the name of freedom, and tourists, with their picnics, deck chairs and mobile music create simulacra of home” (p. 11).

In this sense, the focus of the paper is on place meanings that are created by consumers, independent of the system of place production and resulting from “existing consumer knowledge, travel history, preferences and motivations, previous experiences, and the availability of interpretative information” (Young, 1999, p. 385). Moreover, given the growing emphasis on considering “... vacationing as a cultural laboratory where people... experiment with new aspects of identities” (Löfgren, 1999, p. 6–7, cited in Franklin & Crang, 2001), this study looks at how the interplay between people’s fluid identities renders and (re)configures a locality.

In examining the beach based holiday experience, Deleuze and Guattari’s framework of BwO is applied as it decentres attention from individuals towards assemblages (containing a flow of affects – or bodies’ capacities to affect and be affected by their relations to other bodies, things and abstractions) which enables a richer reading of multisensory consumption experiences. The study focuses on beach based holiday experience which offers an escape from ‘the strictures of the self’ into a zone of pure intensity, or *immanence*. The plane of immanence can be defined as boundaryless, smooth domain without constitutive divisions and characterised by formless, self-organising processes of affect (Mullarkey, 2006). Yet, the beach is not only smooth and deterritorialised space, but also striated and territorialised filled with a host of normative performances and expectations that inhibit the undoing of bodies. Striated spaces (e.g. arranged according to gender, class and race) are hierarchical, rule-intensive and confining Tamboukou (2008). The value of using BwO [mentioned extensively in *Anti-Oedipus* (1984/1972), *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and in Deleuze’s (1990/1969) *The Logic of Sense*] as a conceptual lens lies in the fact that offers an ontological basis for conceiving a set of practices and tactics that seek to disrupt and undermine fixed identities to which tourists are consigned.

In section “The Body without Organs (BwO)”, I further underline how BwO embodies intensities (which Deleuze and Guattari (1994) describes as elements that are virtual, at the limits of perception, yet real) and encounters that take precedence over identity and the precincts of the self. Following a discussion on the study context and methodology in section “Study context”. Empirical findings are presented in section “Discussion and analysis” that contain a critical reflection upon implications arising from considering an inclusive view of the ‘body’ to “...be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 127). The emphasis is on how BwO, existing outside any determinate state, is infused with affective capacities and creative potential required to set in motion transgressive happenings. Section “Conclusions” brings the discussion to a close by underlining how BwO – “... opposed not to the organs but to *organisation* of organs called the organism” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 158) advances understanding into leisure-seekers’ fluid identities – ‘in a constant process of becoming’(or flux) – and their creative enterprise in spawning distinctive place uses and meanings.

The body without organs (BwO)

Broadly, studies on holiday-making at mass destinations often approach the phenomenon in a negative tone with scarce attention to the emotionality leisure-seekers enact and experience, resulting in much bias and inaccurate comprehension of its scope (Boorstin, 1964; Poon, 1993; Turner & Ash, 1975). Yet, mass segments are “... not mere puppets of the producer; rather, they customise the behavioural and spatial content of their trips” (Vainikka, 2013, p. 280). Thus mass tourism has become “more de-differentiated, esoteric and individualised activity” (Mowforth and Munt (2009, p. 136). Even in the context of beach-based tourism, vacationing, despite being a mass phenomenon, can still be very personalised as visitors tailor it to their personality and desires Löfgren, 1999; Hazbun, 2010).

Further, there is growing emphasis on including mundane types of leisure activities (e.g. on the beach or resorts) that centre on “*producing* social relations rather than consuming places” (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003, p. 24). In fact, Obrador-Pons (2003) offers the ‘dwelling metaphor’ to draw attention to the multifarious manner in which tourist bodies dwell in a setting and how through the agency of their ‘body’ dismantle imposed objectifications to seek alternative ways of being. This paper builds upon this argument by considering “a vocabulary of affect” (Little, 2010, p. 7) as means to capture varied and intimate entanglements leisure-seekers encounter in their visits. The emphasis is on the immanent body that offers possibilities for not only challenging the notion of stable and discrete individuality and a clear-cut divide between one’s self and the world, but also the dissolution of the boundary between selves. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) contend:

“Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain, having an anus and larynx, head and legs? Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly?” (, p. 150–151).

Such an ontology enables an insight into how “one ceases to see organs as being constituent parts of a hierarchical organism” (Hansen, 2010, p. 84). Instead, through immersing in a flow of intensities, one acquires the capacity to bring about change and

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