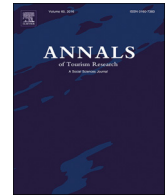




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Research note

Partigraphy: A new methodical approach in tourism[☆]

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A qualified beginning to sensuous concerns in tourism research dates back to 1994 when two Finnish researchers published a reflexive paper titled ‘The Body in Tourism’ (Veijola & Jokinen, 1994). Notably ahead of its time, the paper critiqued the absence of the body in tourism. Not the ‘body’ as an abstract or discursive subject or ‘text’, but the carnal and sensing body. Since then a growing body of tourism research has engaged in issues related to embodiment and the role of the sensuous. For example, researchers have studied multisensory tourist experiences (Crouch & Desforges, 2003; Edensor & Falconer, 2011; Scarles, 2010) while others have acknowledged the embodiment of tourism through disabled and physically challenged tourists (Andrews, 2005; Jensen, 2016; Richards, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010).

And yet while these studies have contributed greatly with new insights in tourism research, it seems that a tiny, yet severely influential non-human actor has been left largely unnoticed: the particle. This is paradoxical given that all human activities unfold in ‘geographies of particles’. However, it is becoming increasingly clear how climate change and the environmental effects of the anthropocene influence the production, distribution and re-organization of particles on both local and global scales. Imagine, for example, how particulate matters such as bacteria and viruses, allergens, dust debris, animal dander, toxics, smog and transport emissions influence all human lives including the embodied experience of tourism.

Subsequently, this research note develops a new methodical approach to inform critical tourism research on the embodiment and increasingly biopolitical nature of tourism: *partigraphy*. Partigraphy grows out of three interrelated strands of research in-and-around tourism studies. First, the approach is set around and inspired by the ‘performance turn’ in tourism acknowledging the role of the body, practice and materiality in a new relational understanding of tourism (Edensor, 2007; Franklin, 2001). In the attempt to nuance the ocularcentric dominance in tourism studies, performative approaches have explored the “embodied emotions, performances and affects that are an integral part of being tourist” (Xiao, Jafari, Cloke, & Tribe, 2013, p. 373). Secondly, partigraphy is inspired by works around object-oriented ontology, posthumanism and non-representational theories that address the agency of things in the

[☆] This research note develops a new ethnographic approach for critical scholarship on embodiment and biopolitical concerns in tourism: *partigraphy*. As a combination of the words particle and ethnography, partigraphy seeks to critically and creatively study the implications of particulate matters on the everyday experiences of tourists, and more generally, on issues related to the staging of the global tourism industry in relation to particles. To push forward this new mode of inquiry, this research note outlines four analytical avenues that will help guide future partigraphy in tourism studies.

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constitution of experiences and social systems (Bennett, 2010; 2015; Lorimer, 2005). Here, I am particularly inspired by recent accounts on the politics of neglected materialities such as *dust* (Nassar, 2017) and *air* (Adey, 2015; Nieuwenhuis, 2016), and how air quality is increasingly seen as a biopolitical concern with respect to how to govern particles most considerately. Finally, partigraphy is indebted to the environmental sciences, specifically aerometric studies within meteorology and atmospheric sciences that study the effects of airborne contaminants (Davidson, Phalen, & Solomon, 2005; Valavandis, Fiotakis, & Vlachogianni, 2008). Put together then, this style of transdisciplinary inquiry contributes to the body-oriented strands of tourism research by providing a novel socio-environmental and biopolitical approach for exploring the intricate and complex relations between tourism and particles. In the following, the research note outlines four analytic directions for future partigraphic studies in tourism research: *phenomenology*; *materiality*; *discourse* and *technology*.

First, doing partigraphy in tourism is about studying the *phenomenology* of human lives in geographies of particles. Imagine, for example, the embodied tourist experience of intense high-carbon cityscapes; or, envision the study of pollen-allergic travelers as they experience Alpine regions, not only through their eyes, but also through every deep and refreshing breathing of their lungs. Alternatively, try to picture the circulation and role of food bacteria when eating out on street kitchens in developing countries. Partigraphy ‘zooms in’ on situations like these where the relations between the type, concentration level and flows of particles overwhelm or impress the human sensations (Jensen, 2016). Secondly, partigraphy explores the ways that tourists materially ‘cope with’ particles. This focus on *materiality* sheds light on, for example, the everyday use of wipes, hand rubbing alcohol, air pollution masks, filter and respiration technologies, sunglasses, medicaments, mobile apps and so forth. That is, different material props or strategies that help ‘shield’ the sensing body from the maelstrom of particles that tourists, knowingly or unknowingly, encounter during holiday- and recreational activities. On a different scale, partigraphy examines how tourism attractions, buildings or entire destinations are all ‘staged’ and biopolitical environments designed (or not) to govern, filter and control particles to cater for positive user experiences. Thirdly, partigraphy investigates the ways that the organization of particles is increasingly becoming a *discourse* set within identity formation processes, symbolic consumption and societal debates. I allow a short reflexive recall:

Now having used an air monitoring device at home for more than a year, I see how it is transforming our daily vocabulary and sense of place. Actually, a conflict unfolded on Christmas Eve last year, as we were preparing the Christmas roast. The air in the apartment was getting stuffed as my mum said: “It finally smells of Christmas – dinner is soon ready!” I replied, shortly after, rather insensitively (I now see): “I know mum, but the pm2.5. Level on the AirVisual is alarmingly high, we need to open windows to allow some fresh air to get in!”

First author, ‘AirVisual fieldwork recalls’, April 2019

As the recall shows, air quality (in this case, ‘odors’ which consist of organic compounds such as fats and oils bonded with carbon) also represents a discursive element within, for example, the symbolic or nostalgic consumption – and negotiation – of a Christmas Eve dinner. Furthermore, during my preliminary fieldwork with the AirVisual device, I have noticed how a large number of its users post their domestic air quality levels online on Facebook, and so revealing that there are elements of social capital, class, cultural attitudes and identity formation involved in the way air quality – and distinct particles more generally – is appropriated in social systems and societies. Partigraphy, in this respect, is interested in how the appearance, type and symbolism of particles influence the construction of social relations, cultural orders and the sustaining of traditions and social systems. Finally, partigraphy can be informed by *technology*. Basic air monitoring equipment is no longer inaccessible, expensive or for the technologically advanced only. Today, various companies provide household air monitoring systems which allows everyday users to keep track of air quality levels (for example Temtop, Awair Glow, Foobot and AirVisual). Subsequently, and inspired by the aim of mapping mobilities (Sheller & Urry, 2006), partigraphy can also emerge as the attempt to map the concentration levels, mobilities and historic tracks of particles on a local, national or even global scale. For example, as a global ‘air quality community’, AirVisual users have the option to share their recordings, and when fused with real-time wind and heat predictions, the result is a powerful visual representation of the global circulation of fine particulate matters, i.e. ‘pm2.5’ (see Fig. 1 or visit link for live animation).

The contributions of this research note are threefold. Firstly, the term partigraphy is introduced as a new mode of inquiry that studies the relations between particles and human activities in tourism. The tourism industry is to a large degree based upon encounters with particles, and so if policy makers, practitioners and change agents are to fully understand these types of more-than-human encounters, researchers must be equipped with an agile methodical toolbox, mindset and vocabulary to understand and explore it. Secondly, four analytic ‘avenues’ have been proposed to guide future partigraphy; *phenomenology*; *materiality*; *discourse* and *technology*. This is not an exhaustive list of how partigraphy can become relevant, but function as a creative invitation for future research to engage with, and further develop, this new domain for ethnographic research. In this respect, this note also invites further philosophical elaborations on scientific methods, more generally, in view of contemporary doctrines such as post-humanism, post-phenomenology and object-oriented ontologies, to inspire new modes of empirical analysis related to particles and other non-human entities in tourism.

Thirdly and finally, this research note inspires new exciting collaborations between tourism research and disciplines such as environmental sciences, aerometric studies and atmospheric sciences. Time is ripe for embodied tourism research to critically reposition around acute ‘body-nature dilemmas’ in the face of rapid environmental transformations. Tourism researchers should turn their ‘eyes, ears, nose and entire sensory system’ towards these smallest of non-human actors: particles. Importantly, in promoting this new style of inquiry, researchers should be aware of their own positionality, attitudes and presumptions, and not least the socio-cultural contexts in which their studies are carried out, to critically understand the role and social appropriation of particles – not least over longer periods of time. Partigraphy is an attempt to establish a methodical framing around which new types of knowledges can emerge to inform both political, social and environmental debates and lead societal and tourism industry change. As stated by

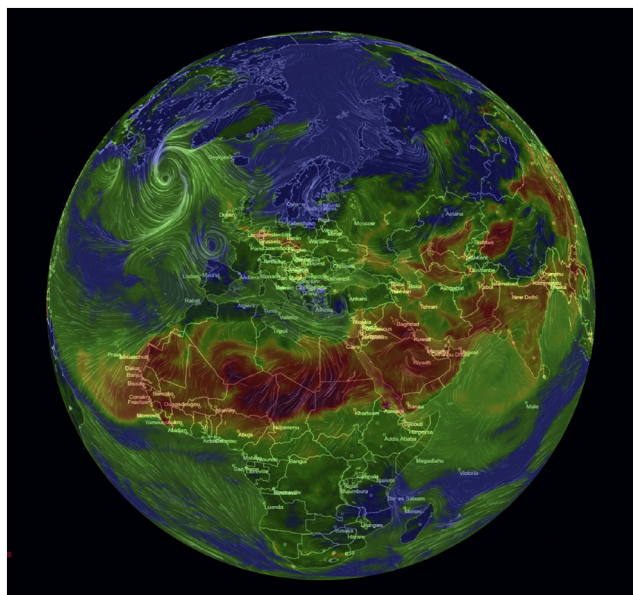


Fig. 1. AirVisual: real-time world air quality view.
See <https://www.airvisual.com/earth>.

Korstanje and George (2012, p. 337): “How can people become more concerned about the environment and the impact of pollution unless they are directly connected to the hardship experienced by others and the on-going ecological decline?” Partigraphy partially responds to this pressing question by exemplifying how often abstract notions such as ‘climate change’, ‘global pollution’ and ‘environmental change’ emerge, practically, through very concrete situations, social lives, challenges and everyday practices. By analyzing and understanding both the phenomenological and discursive implications of particles in the tourism and travel sector, allow us to scrutinize the politics, planning and ethics of current tourism development pathways, which may in turn, help generate new critical questions, empathetic understandings, ethical orientations and not least hopes for future sustainable tourism industries and cleaner futures.

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