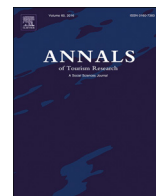




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Tourism non-places: Bending airports and wildscapes

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes Augé's *non-place* idea as point of departure to develop a deeper phenomenological understanding of two types of tourism settings: wild spaces and airports. While place and non-place are useful as comparative, polarized concepts addressing materialities and subjective experiences, asking what these particular spaces are like sheds light on both their bendability and boundedness, revealing the potential of *intentionality* in liberating place experiences. While intentionality has not yet received much attention in industry or scholarly discussions of tourism, it is absolutely crucial to the experience of tourism, as our findings elaborate on the ways travellers accede to and consume (non-) places, as well as negotiate, conquer and extemporise them.

Introduction

Tourism is place-dependent. It happens in places, through places and places past or yet to be experienced. As such, place in tourism research is multifaceted: carrying expectations and symbolic imagery, while also being a physical and tangible entity where materialities and performances come together (Baerenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2004; Coleman & Crang, 2002; Chen & Chen, 2017; Gieryn, 2000; Meethan, 2006; Rickly-Boyd, Knudsen, Braverman, & Metro-Roland, 2014; Sheller & Urry, 2004). Without the weaving together of absence and presence, emplacement and displacement, Johannesson and Baerenholdt (2008:155) contend, "place would simply not 'happen'". How this co-mingling converges into momentary, personal place experiences continues to stimulate scholarly curiosity (Johannesson & Baerenholdt, 2008; Massey, 2005; Simonsen, 2008). However, what such scholarly conversations often lack is precisely the *momentary* and *phenomenological* study of the traveller's place experience (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009; Tribe, 2006; Wollan, 2003). Thus, this paper aims to accommodate (and celebrate) the eternal fluidity, the place-in-becoming character generated by the opposing imaginaries of place and non-place through the investigation of experiences of two seemingly divergent environments: wild spaces and airport spaces. In so doing, we return to a concept that often evades our consideration in studies of tourist places: *intentionality*. Intentionality attends to the important role of individual agency and materiality in making place and non-place, bringing research attention to a necessary and alternative, messy, chaotic understanding of place, with a renewed take on how *non-places* "are" (Augé, 1995).

This paper is inspired by our own performances of romanticising Scottish and Swedish wildscapes we habitually explore by foot, kayak, bike or ski, and despising airport environments as rather dry, obligatory, tightly managed transit spaces – functional, but essentially empty, anonymous and antiseptic. In short, prior to this investigation, we held our own place ontologies dear. Oddly, however, as soon as we posed the question – *What are these places like?* – our answers were no longer clear. The hitherto untroubled place ontologies collapsed, merged and melted. We became fascinated by the apparent paradoxes, inconsistencies and complexities of

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these spaces. We fell a bit in love with airports, found the outdoors less interesting, and then reconciled these perceptions again. Although we draw from fieldwork and literature on place-experiences in wild and airport spaces, we are not concerned exclusively with these spaces; rather they stand as provocative examples for tourists' engagements with (non-) places. Accordingly, our ambition is not to illustrate wildscapes as places-to-be and airports as non-places not-to-be, or vice versa, but rather we look for the significance of intentionality and manifestations of both place and non-place in these highly managed and imagined spaces. Departing from a hermeneutic phenomenological epistemology, a diverse bricolage of research data were collected supporting our ever-unfinished journey towards understanding. Working from the perspective of intentionality, we present the ways touristic engagements with wild spaces and airport spaces bend and fold into one another through acceding to, consuming and conquering directed at non-places.

While we affirm Augé's claim that "the possibility of non-place is never absent" (1995, p. 86), we conclude with a less pessimistic interpretation that evokes Relph's contention that intention can liberate our experience from the deterministic elements of non-places (1976, p. 141). Thus, we attend to the more recent call by (Merriman, 2004, p. 147):

"rather than focusing on the presences and absences associated with the polarities of place and non-place, social scientists should 'try to forge a dynamic sense of place' (Thrift, 1999: 296) and focus upon the multiple, partial and relational 'placings' which arise through the diverse performances and movements associated with travel, consumption and exchange".

In so doing, this paper pulls ideas from human geography on non-place into tourism theory. Notably, while cultural geographers, along with some researchers within mobilities studies, have long evoked the potential of intentionality to affect the experience of (non-) places, this approach has not been thoroughly explored in tourism studies. For example, Edensor (2003) and Roberts (2015), demonstrate the bendability of supposed non-places, particularly of motorways and their associated traffic islands, by rhythm-analysing these spaces and considering processes of becoming and reterritorialization. This paper attempts to converge this literature with the notion of intentionality towards a richer theoretical engagement on tourist-place encounters. We argue that intentionality does not receive enough attention in industry or scholarly discussions of tourism; yet, it is absolutely crucial to the experience of tourism (non-) places.

Departures from place and non-place

Thinking Augé, timelessly

In *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, published in English in 1995, Marc Augé captures his ideas and concerns regarding changes occurring in super-modern contemporaneity. He explores the territories of the *here* and *now* as foreign to us, demanding anthropological alertness and scholarly scrutiny:

"The world of supermodernity does not exactly match the one in which we believe we live, for we live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at. We have to relearn to think about space." (Augé, 1995, p. 35).

He makes a direct link between the substantial physical modifications he observes in modern environments and the ways we experience time, place and self. In his view we are living a "reality of *transit*" (p. 86), passing through "spaces of circulation, consumption and communication" (1995:VIII). Augé contends we experience a very particular feeling of solitude and disassociation in the rational supermodern servicescapes of Corbusian malls, office blocks and airports, designed in large measure with objectives of functionality. Like the ceramic glazes and Teflon coatings of domestic appliances, upon which "messy" materials (food, excrement) are designed not to stick, so the non-place urges thousands of people to pass through without leaving their mark or ever inhabiting the space. Thus, to Augé, supermodernity finds its expression in and is constituted by non-places. Looking at and experiencing non-place he opines that we sense the negation of place, "an absence of place from itself" (p. 69). When Augé speaks of non-place only as an architectural, man-made structure, he means particularly all structures built for transport or consumption: highways, railways, airways, malls, gas stations, etc., where "movement [...] empties the landscape" (p. 75), the individual becomes a passenger rather than a traveller.

Reading Augé one might find a certain comfort in the familiarity of the emotions he evokes and observations he makes (see Merriman, 2004). His writings resonate with similar ideas: Relph on *placelessness* (Relph, 1976), Harvey on *space-time compression* (1989) and Marx's earlier ideas on the annihilation of space by time. He also follows Simmel on the links between modernity, time and space in the *Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903 [1950]) and others concerned with a loss of meaning and neurasthenic coping strategies in contemporary society advocating some kind of place-paradigm shift (Arefi, 1999). Even though there is no agreement on the concrete dynamics of that shift, there is a "general acceptance that something of the sort is going on" (Massey, 1991, p. 24). In regards to place there are mainly two notions: the physical environment is losing significance, or "placefulness", and these changes are paralleled by a spread of uncommitted attitude towards places. This attitude is particularly visible in tourism studies, where tourists' experiences, once regularly portrayed as fundamentally shallow and detached (Relph, 1976), are now reified as offering deep ontological experiments of being with and of the "other", out-of-place, recalling Simmel's account of the *stranger*, or Benjamin's *flaneur*.

While we can experience these notions at an individual level or document the changes occurring in our environment (e.g. the spread of airports/malls, our participation in travel systems, proliferation of urban/impervious surfaces, etc.), we have the problem that we can never know how fundamental these shifts actually are, and worse, we may fall into the trap of a rose-tinted nostalgia, remembering bustling, placeful railway stations filled with characterful folk and local shops where the cheerful baker addresses you by name. As Arefi (1999, p. 179) has noted: "A narrative of loss characterizes the literature of place today". And Augé has been

criticized precisely for targeting *particular* spaces (malls, airports, etc.) as non-places, provoking other researchers to demonstrate that his theories do not necessarily endure on a subjective phenomenological level: individuals *can* experience such spaces as meaningful, aesthetic or deep (e.g. Edensor, 2003; Elliott & Radford, 2015; McNeill, 2009; Merriman, 2004; Morris, 1988; O'Doherty, 2017; Roberts, 2015).

Thus, building from this previous research in other fields, namely human geography, sociology and mobilities studies, what we advocate in this paper is to use place and non-place as conceptualizations to consider individual, subjective experiences in tourism studies. In so doing, we view place absolutely as progressive and becoming in Massey's sense (Massey, 2005). In support of Relph's assertion that "in all societies at all times there has been some placelessness" (Relph, 1976, p. 80), we disconnect the idea of non-place from any particular space (urban, constructed, transit, etc.) and specific times (supermodernity, post-modernity, hyper-modernity, etc.). The value of Augé's work is his careful observation of *an experience of non-place*, because it is an experience that is recognizable, an experience of disassociation, solitude, transit, and in-betweenness, which therefore suggests the need to better accommodate non-place in tourism research.

Finding a place for non-place

If we acknowledge human geographers, such as Tuan, Buttner or Relph, who define space as an open field and places as nodes of meaning perceived within space, then we absolutely also need the concept of non-place to speak about experiences. As Augé states: "In the concrete reality of today's world [...] places and non-places intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never absent" (Augé, 1995, p. 86). While he notes that place and non-place are "opposed polarities" (Augé, 1995, p. 64), Merriman asserts that Augé also reconsidered and rewrote this relationship repeatedly to the point that later works evoke place and non-place as "always relational, contingent and continually folded into one another" (Merriman, 2004:149). Further, Merriman (2004:147) contends that Augé overstated "the novelty and difference of contemporary experiences of [non-places], and fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity and materiality of the social networks bound up with the production of such environments". Similarly, Relph reflects in the preface of his 2016 reprint: "My inclination now is to see landscapes not simply as revealing *either* place *or* placelessness, but everywhere as manifestations of *both* distinctiveness *and* standardization." (Relph, 1976 [2016], p. 5, preface reprint).

Addressing spatial experiences one should thus expect to find accounts of experiences of both place and non-place, for, we claim, phenomenologically humans perceive both and may actually welcome the contrast between them. Because speaking of non-place gives in to the human tendency to speak in terms of polarities and boundaries, we developed an approach to the study of experiences that includes diverse spaces (man-made, natural, public, private, etc.), with an eye for the manifestations of both place and non-place. This is not dissimilar to Merriman's (2004) relational approach to non-place, characterised by "hybrid subjectivities, senses of place, dwelling, home and sociality that emerge through these pleats and folds" of place (p. 146).

Indeed, several authors have reconsidered stereotypical non-places, including shopping malls (Morris, 1988), roadways (Edensor, 2003; Merriman, 2004; Spinney, 2007), airports (Elliott & Radford, 2015; O'Doherty, 2017), hotels (McNeill, 2009), traffic islands (Roberts, 2015), and even the Las Vegas Strip (Gottschalk & Salvaggio, 2015), in an effort to uncover the more nuanced complexity of place experiences. For example, Elliott and Radford (2015) trace the evolution of airport "sensory experiences" in line with broader societal changes that have accompanied the rise of the experience economy, including redesign of airport atmospherics, the incorporation of events (art installations, music performances, etc.) within the terminals, as well as diverse retailers (i.e., retail therapy) and even spa facilities.

"One could argue that the explicit attention to delivering the total sensory experience to airline passengers is not simply about 'customer service' but also about embedding a positive memory of the specific airport/airport experience into the lives of those who pass through. [...] Passengers are afforded the opportunity to enjoy the airport experience in the company of others who are doing the same, connected not necessarily through person-to-person interaction and conversation, but through affective shared experience and experimentation." (Elliott & Radford, 2015: 1074)

Conversely, others have worked to expose the humanity of non-places. Edensor's (2003) recounting of part of his daily M6 journey explores how "routine motorway travel can foster familiarity and modes of homely comfort, provoke affective and imaginative connections to other times and places, facilitate kinaesthetic pleasures, and construct complex topographies of apprehension and association" (p. 152). Relatedly, Roberts (2015) "maroons" himself upon a traffic island for 24 h in an effort to strategically enforce the practice of embodied dwelling. Mapping the topography and soundscape of the island, Roberts is able to tease out the limits of his "tuning-in", the potential of mindfulness in non-places, and the role of imagination in the "negation of the negation of place" (p. 596). Such work inspired the authors of this paper to consider the role of intentionality in the experience of (non-) place.

Hinting at intention

What then influences the experience of (non-) place? When Entrikin (1991) writes about the *betweenness of place*, he addresses the theoretical tendency to reduce place either to its objective (positivist) or subjective (phenomenological) appearances, claiming that we need both perspectives for fuller understanding (see also Larsen amp; Johnson, 2012). This is similar to Tuan's "two realms of reality: manifested (objective) and manifesting (subjective)" (Tuan, 1977, p. 120). While taking a predominantly phenomenological stance in this paper, we however adhere to the idea that "places differ and that these differences are not imaginary, but rather are actual features of the world" (Entrikin, 1991, p. 13). We also suggest that these differences matter, and we self-consciously employ this knowledge. Such an approach corresponds to Husserl's phenomenology and accounts for a relationship between the subject and

the object of consciousness, which he refers to as “intentionality”. In order to highlight intentionality, we attend to the subtle interplay between how places appear, what is expected and known of them and how they are used in order to inform experience.

According to [Ash and Simpson \(2016: 53\)](#) intentionality relates to “the proposition that an experience is an experience of something – we are always looking at something, listening to something, thinking about something, and so on. The ‘aboutness’ implicates the presence of an intentional subject”. [Husserl \(1900 \[2012\]\)](#) delineated three correlative elements in the structure of thought and experience: intentional act, intentional object and intentional content. While the intentional object is the issue, thing, or focus of an intentional act, the intentional act is the perceiving, remembering, desiring, evaluating, etc., of that object. And while this may seem a simple relationship, the role of the intentional content relates to the way one thinks of the intentional object, the perspective one takes in the intentional act. Thus, [Merleau-Ponty](#), building upon Husserl's phenomenology, took intentionality as expressing “the inextricable unity of world and consciousness, with neither assimilated to the other” ([Gutting, 2001: 188](#)).

In the early pages of *A Thousand Plateaus*, [Deleuze and Guattari \(1988\)](#) describe the various ways we might view a mountain: from a cliff face or with our face pressed into the grass or perhaps from a skyscraper in a large city. The ‘thing’, the mountain, is the same, but its ‘thingness’ – its meaning, sensual conformation, and relevance is not. While we rarely change the physical appearance or manipulate/expand our preconceptions of places fundamentally, our *intention* towards place seems always at hand, a gift of our agency, bendable within an instant. Indeed, [Relph](#) suggests that our experience of place is simply a focusing of intention ([Relph, 1976, p. 141](#)). Considering [Heidegger](#), [Relph \(1976\)](#) explores different modes of being in place (ranging from existential outsidership to existential insidership) and identifies intentionality clearly as one means to manipulate one's experience; “placefulness” [our phrasing] or placelessness are essentially “attitudes” (p. 80) and our “vision and attention are discriminating” (p. 124). He says:

“character and meaning are imputed to landscapes by the intentionality of experience. If we believe suburbia to possess ‘a massive monotonous ugliness’ [citing Blake] and mountains to be spiritually uplifting, then these are probably the experiences we will have of suburban and mountain landscapes.” ([Relph, 1976, p. 123–124](#))

Thus, [Enrikin](#) claims that intentionality “connects the observer and the observed in a manner that cannot be drawn apart” (1991, p. 18), suggesting the human capacity to see beyond deterministic aspects of space to uncover the potential of agency. While viewing place through the lens of intention is very empowering (and tempting), as if the physical did not matter and human creativity in making (non-) place is abundant, some of our findings also point to the limits of intentionality, claiming back the physical context. Thus, the intentional materiality of place also necessitates the question, what is the designed function of the place? In the analysis of airport spaces and wildscapes that follows, we identify *intention* as one key to place and non-place by providing glimpses that support both the bendability and boundedness of (non-) place.

Approaching the experience of (non-) place

Approaching airport and wild spaces, we attempt to add to the research canon around tourism and the (non-) places we travel through (and to), as well as to advance phenomenological methodologies in tourism research (see also [Pernecky & Jamal, 2010](#); [Szarycz, 2009](#)). We adopt a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, seeking to understand, describe and interpret experiences, taking a cue from [Van Manen \(1990\)](#) who summarizes phenomenology as asking questions of meaning: What is the experience like? What is its nature?

While phenomenology is no methodology in itself, it can guide methodological choices ([Pernecky & Jamal, 2010](#); [Larsen amp; Johnson, 2012](#)). A first decision, therefore, was to study experiences in the environments where they occur ([Chhetri, Arrowsmith, & Jackson, 2004](#)): airport and wild spaces. In contrast to positivist approaches, we did not see context (space and place) as interference, a white noise obscuring understanding, but as a necessary frame to become aware of one's perceptions ([Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997](#)). Secondly, we collected fragments of both our own reflections and others' experiences as legitimate material. In following [Cresswell's](#) advice that “when it comes to place, life is fieldwork” ([Cresswell, 2006, p. 125](#)), we took our own experiences seriously, seeing them as valid lived experiences comparable to those of others ([Van Manen, 1990](#)).

We challenge the notion that action (particularly perceiving) is structured temporally as always already realising our pre-given meaning. Hermeneutic phenomenology is thus one philosophical resource offering alternative spatio-temporal perceptions of space and place. To some extent hermeneutics also addresses the many post-structuralist criticisms of phenomenology, including the notion that phenomenological descriptions of the experience of time focus, predominantly if not exclusively, on the manner in which time gathers, or conjoins, rather than disjoins ([Reynolds, 2010](#)). Poststructuralists tend to radically disassociate time from movement, resulting in the worry that “lived time” may be presented as an unproblematic, neat and unified continuum. However, as [Buttimer \(1976\)](#) contends, the way we experience time seems not to be reflected in atomized units of equal duration, and the way we experience space is hardly reflected in a three dimensional grid, or Cartesian, understanding of space. We, thus, turn to Husserl's original work in developing phenomenological analysis that speaks to the historicity and intentionality of experience, as this research demonstrates the ebbs and flows of movement, time, action and meaning conspiring in the unfolding creation of place and experience (see [Stoller, 2009](#)).

The material presented here is the result of fieldwork by the first two authors. This includes interviews and observations collected by the first author while hiking solo for three months during summer 2014 in the northern Swedish mountains and from the second author's journeys in his kayak along wild Scottish coastlines. Later, over the course of 2015–2017, additional fieldwork was conducted by these two authors at multiple occasions of passing through European airports (Stockholm Arlanda, Oslo, Copenhagen Kastrup, Dublin, Berlin Tegel, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Zürich, Palma de Mallorca, Milano Malpensa, Bologna, Roma, Bergen, Helsinki, Inverness, Heathrow, Edinburgh, Dublin). Experiences and observations were documented in fieldnotes and discussed regularly to

question our progress in understanding. Sixteen solo-hikers were interviewed when met incidentally in the Swedish mountains, while at European airports 22 people in all were interviewed during our standby periods in transit. The interviews were always motivated by the general questions of what being in the place was like and how people experience and engage with wildscapes and airport spaces. Deliberately without a strict script or guide, we would begin with something along the lines of “Where are you going?” “How long is your journey, overall?” We would share details about our own progress and explain our professional interest in these transitory spaces and how people negotiate them. Participants in both spaces were understood as partners in research (Van Manen, 1990), while an informal interview guide allowed for a natural but purposive flow of conversation (Pointdexter, 2002). The outcomes of this interviewing approach differed considerably: providing rich, detailed insights of the hikers' experiences (Schilar, 2015), but quite narrow, terse, seemingly uncommitted snapshots of being in airports. We found this a notable result in itself and return to this issue below. In order to attempt richer insight into the airport experience, we then spent more time at airports documenting observations through (auto-)ethnographic notes (Kosonen, Valtonen, & Alakärppä, 2017; Noy, 2008; Varley, 2011; Varley & Medway, 2011).

Throughout the project, attention was paid to reflexivity and positionality, which is reflected in the authors' individual notes but also in the records of our evolving conversations and developing thoughts over the course of the project. Following Gottschalk and Salvaggio (2015) interpretation of ethnography in non-places, the authors situate themselves as “average” users of these spaces – airports and wild-scapes. As they (Gottschalk & Salvaggio, 2015: 12) explain:

“Because non-places seek to collapse individual differences into a standardised identity, we merge our two voices into one – that of the ‘average’ user/passenger – and reflect on our reactions, adjustments, and sense-making processes as we circulate in this environment.”

These materials were analysed thematically following Saldaña (2009), by interrogating specific accounts that emblemize experiences of place or non-place in both spaces and the inconsistencies and complexities of the (non-) place experience. In the following discussion, we weave together extant theory and collected material (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010) to construct an organic flow of text reflecting the iterative nature of this research. As phenomenological text, it is meant to be accessible to the reader and to provoke feelings of recognition, as well as to deepen reflexive understanding and provoke new questions.

Recovering (non-) places

Our journey towards a deeper understanding of the experience of airport and wild spaces led us to new degrees of freedom and creativity. It seemed pointless to favour only one part of the innately dual rhythm which is ever bound to transform into its opposite – for the two types of place are intertwined. We renewed our curiosity towards these environments. While we still adhere to the notion that these spaces are dissimilar – green vs. white; open vs. enclosed; demarcated vs. restrictive; expansive vs. congested; etc. – we found that people's fundamental way of experiencing them was not so different. Further, the management of these spaces often sees one mimicking and mirroring the other. In Finland one leaves the Helsinki airport to the sound of birdsong played over the speakers, while the Inverness airport in Scotland sports a wallpaper woodland. Signage and boundaries have emerged along the ‘wild’ and apparently free Scottish coastal margins where notices warn of fines for littering and penalties for inappropriate camping. In the limited discussion afforded here we explore how people experience these (non-) places by acceding to, consuming and conquering.

Acceding to (non-) place

We begin by giving into our prejudices and preconceptions of airport and wild spaces. That these spaces evoke such palpable and entrenched archetypes inspired us to push further and take a second look. Of course, when approaching such spaces it is not difficult to find the stereotypical manifestations of airports and wildscapes as non-places. Indeed, intentionality often accedes to functionality of non-place, giving up on apprehending the environment, possibly causing a retreat from it (see also Elliott & Radford, 2015). As Merriman (2004:152) observes “airports are spaces where travellers may experience feelings of boredom, frustration, solitariness or dislocation, but these experiences are neither inevitable nor limited to such spaces of travel and exchange”. Hence, this section offers a consideration of examples of when (non-) places, both airports *and* wildscapes, seem to inhibit divergent intentions, imposing itself and its own rules, and thereby offering a jumping off point for confronting non-place through the lenses of consumption and conquering.

Similar to airports, wild spaces are transitory. We are not meant to dwell in wilderness; in fact, it is antithetical to its hypothetically “people-less” being. We visit, we absorb and listen, exhaust our bodies and reflect upon ourselves, but we do not settle as we aim to “leave no trace”. As Dickinson (2011: b313) notes, “non-placing practices” position wild spaces “as somewhere *to go*, to be *in*, and to move quickly *through*”. While far from the standardization we expect of Augé's non-places, wildscapes are indeed heavily managed, regulated and impose distinct behavioural expectations upon visitors (see Senda-Cook, 2012). Indeed, Drenthen (2009: 226) also following Augé, suggests that in supermodernity we maintain an overabundance of ascribed meanings in the natural landscape - signposts, trail delineations, information pavilions, and so on – such that seeking out wild spaces has become an acknowledgement of our “placelessness”, with ventures into wildscapes interpreted as intentionally driven efforts at “emplacing” our identity once again. Thus, an interesting paradox of wilderness experiences is that despite seeking out moments away from others and “for ourselves” in the expectation of a “people-less” space, we often give a considerable amount of our time to others – those we encounter on the trail or in the campground. Indeed, findings from this research support the notion that within the relatively quiet wildscapes of Sweden and Scotland, participants were very willing to speak at length, about the ways they attempt to *be* in nature.

Even though we approached airports with the same objectives as wildscapes, the interviewing experience was fundamentally

different and in a sense was experienced as a kind of personal failure of being unable to overcome its non-placeness. The space *did* seem to impose itself with anonymity and isolation in Augé's sense. Even though airports are crowded with people, approaching a person, getting into conversation and building trust was extremely challenging:

"A man sitting and contemplating calmly. I ask if he is in a hurry or if he would mind to talk to me as researcher about airport experiences. His body changes immediately from relaxed to alert. He says: 'No.'. I say: 'Thank you, no worries. Have a good trip.' But then again I ask: 'May I just ask you why?' He says: 'No, you may not.' Silenced, I return to my seat. We can still see each other and the space has become impossible for both. He sits there two polite minutes, then leaves. I am relieved too." (Fieldnotes, July 2016, Copenhagen, Denmark)

It seemed place was rather scarce and precious. As such, we observed how people built walls around them – the bag in front, the jacket on the chair next to them and the smartphone in their hands as the ultimate sign of a personal, circumscribed place. As Augé (1995), predicted, users are encountering their surroundings through the mediation of screens, signs, and texts interfaces. Similarly, time was different here. The seven interviews we were able to collect seemed short, shallow and relatively uncommitted in comparison to the interviews carried out in the Swedish mountains. We gained the understanding that airports imposed an atmosphere of alertness and distrust, not allowing for genuine exchange. Also, people seemed less self-reflective as both interviewee and researcher had difficulties listening to one another. After attempting to interview on four different occasions in so many airports, we stopped trying and acceded to the airport as non-place:

"Too tired. Too much movement. Too much light. Too diffuse noise. Too difficult to search the conversation. I simply cannot approach people. I am less able than in the mountains – where I was sometimes exhausted, hungry. It feels I am taking precious space off them. And even time does strikingly not seem abundant. People seem busy in a sense that does not let me enter. Reciprocity seems impossible. [...] Maybe I would not want it myself... I don't want to do anything but to take myself out of this space, sleep, put on headphones. I just want to forget that I was here. Not see or speak and let time take me away." (Fieldnotes, July 2016, Frankfurt, Germany)

These examples illustrate that despite our genuine motivation and fascination with the airport space, our intentions seemed not to be able to overcome certain characteristics of, in particular, time pressure. So, we retreated from that space (at least as interviewees) into a world of music, dreams, and elsewhere – just as foreshadowed by Augé. Similarly, some interviewees admitted to not wanting to be there, acceding to the foremost quality of non-place, a space that produces the feeling of only temporary welcome and the anxious need to pass through and not linger:

"Really nobody actually wants to be here. You aren't here to stay, or to build anything, or to invest anything." (Woman, 20–30, Milan, Italy)

"In airports I shut myself off, seeing, hearing. There I shut myself off." (Young woman, Bergen, Norway)

"There is a feeling of anxiety, but it is unconscious. It is tiring psychologically." (Man, 30–40, Bologna, Italy)

Accordingly, people at airports often tended to isolate themselves, creating their own vision- and soundscapes that are not of the physical environment but is more reminiscent of Paul Virillio's prescient glimpses of life in hypermodernity – totally wired, inured to surroundings (Gottschalk, 2018). Inversini (2017) made similar observations recently, calling them "mobile moments", where the individual retreats from the airport environment into the world of mobile devices. Hence, we conclude, following Cresswell (2006), people can *try* to make place, but sometimes it might not work. The airport seemed to somewhat restrain people's capacity to both attend to the space or to actively project their own intentions. Hence spaces, here the airport, are ambivalent, as they are both enabling and indeed constraining (Elliott & Radford, 2015).

Returning to Augé, the remaining question must be: To what extent do people – here travellers in particular – have the capacity to shape their experiences independent from the environment? One possible answer is to affirm the human capacity to make meaning; as Tuan argued, "We create meaning where we go. We are unable not to commit to places" (Tuan, 1977, p. 66). Another possible answer is no, and to return to the assertion that certain spaces, like the airport, inherently inhibit place-making and promote non-place (Buchanan, 1999). This position could be sustained by the fact that literature on non-place, placelessness and commodification of place (Agnew, 1984) paralleled certain physical transformations in the (super-/hyper-) modern world. Yet, another position might suggest that we are constantly *learning* certain environments, as individuals as well as society. Relph, for instance, speaks of "landscapes we have not [yet?] learned" (Relph, 1976, p. 135). As such, we might still be learning the physical and social cartography of the airport, as well as the possibilities of intentionality therein, which may engender new meanings for this (non-) place. Equally, the environment itself might be changing, as it has been documented for the case of airports, which continually become more experiential, sensuous and spectacular in comparison to their raw archetypes dominated by security and surveillance (Adey, 2008, 2009; Elliott & Radford, 2015; Gordon, 2008; Hubregtse, 2016).

Consuming (non-) place

Holding a pragmatic attitude to (non-) place, some people attended to these different spaces in ways that we frame as *consuming* (non-) place. Rather than acceding to wildscapes and airports as non-places, these individuals "appreciate[d] places for what they are" (Relph, 1976, p. 66; Jensen, 2011) and asked little more of them. For example, McNeill (2009:220) observes of that the airport hotel – "an urban space that combines these two microcosmic institutions" – eases the process of "synchronization" that is fundamental to air

travel and business mobility, and as such, is appreciated by its guests for this function. Consequently, how “placeful” or “placeless” an environment was experienced, was simply not so much in question.

“I came here ‘cause I wanted to hike, I like it.” (woman, 40-50, Northern Sweden)

“It is good out here [wilderness], but at home it is good too.” (man, 20-30, Northern Sweden)

“Taking an airplane is just like taking a bus.” (woman, 30-40, Milano, Italy)

“What do you mean, how it feels? I just gotta go to Oslo.” (man, 40-50, Milano, Italy)

One could also call this an *honest* relationship to place, embracing the place for what it is (Jensen, 2011) and attending to the functionality of a place (Relph, 1976, p. 53). Although we argue here that one risks overlooking such unproblematic relationships to place with wilderness romanticized as an ideal, pure environment, aligning mind, body and world (Nash, 1967; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Solnit, 2001; Tuan, 1977; Vidon, Rickly, & Knudsen, 2018) and the airport dramatized as non-place of solitude and similitude (Augé, 1995; Pütz, 2012), as shallow nowhere (Coupland, 1997). And while some do accede to these aspects of non-place, we also found people consuming these spaces, appreciating their functionality and even expanding the socio-spatial possibilities. Hence, the spaces are experienced by whether they *function*: a safe, efficient passing of the airport with an entertaining shopping zone, a diverse choice of foods, a comfortable waiting area, unlimited Wi-Fi and so on, or the wildscape experience shaped by the perceived beauty of nature, a balance between physical exhaustion and contemplation, good weather, the right amount of infrastructure (paths, huts, etc. ...) yet absence of digital connectivity and so forth.

Nevertheless, such pragmatic attitudes to place did not inhibit intense feelings of being in place. These feelings alluded to the Goethean notion of being human and within the flow of things. At airports people spoke about just sitting somewhere and experiencing space and time as flowing around them:

“I observe people, what they do. Somewhat peaceful just to sit here.” (man, 20–30, London, UK)

“Here it is just me and my thoughts.” (man, 20–30, Mallorca, Spain)

“I quite like it at airports. I feel at home here somehow. I realized that like four years ago. I was going to my girlfriend in Copenhagen. I stepped out of the plane at Christmas time, people sat there, kinda relaxed, and I realized that I kinda liked it, I wished I could stay.” (man, 30–40, Helsinki, Finland)

“Like a library, quite peaceful.” (young woman, London, UK)

Hence, the airport became “a refuge of unexpected tranquility” (Gordon, 2008:259). The setting in the midst of movement also provoked feelings of immersion or mutuality within the masses (Elliott & Radford, 2015) and stimulated a renewed sense of self:

“It is a beautiful feeling... man of the world!” (man, 20–30, Helsinki, Finland).

“Free. Nobody!” (woman, 40–50, Edinburgh, Scotland).

Equally, in the mountains people spoke of a renewed sense of being and what it means to be human:

“For four days I didn't see anyone. I am just like, ... it is a little bit lonely, but it is also pretty nice just to be – the only other sign I have of human life is footsteps in the mud. And there were only (prints from) two other pairs of shoes and that's it.” (man, 30–40 Northern Sweden)

“I mean the feeling that I'm now I am here, I can be here now, I do, now I'm being. That's often the prerequisite for my brain to start just drifting.” (man, 20–30, Northern Sweden).

In sum, the theme of consuming (non-) place grasps people's experiences of attending to the apparent nature of these spaces and the genuine feelings evoked. Our material illustrated that both airports and wild spaces can stimulate strong experiences of being in place with feelings of immersion, renewal, rest and thoughtfulness. Indeed, it has been suggested that both transit as well as nature spaces can be conducive for thought and inner conversation (De Botton, 2002; Solnit, 2001; Merriman, 2004). Airports have further been described as marvellous limbo-lands (Buchanan, 1999) provoking confident feelings of suspension from earthly cares (Rojek, 1993) and liberation from whom we were or are or ought to be (De Botton, 2002; Gössling, Ceron, Dubois, & Hall, 2009; Webber, 1964). In Augé's interpretation, however, such emotions of liberation could exactly be seen as manifestation of non-place, provoking a perfidious pleasure of the emptying of individuality within the masses and symbolizing surrender to supermodernity. Hence, while the profoundness of the experiences documented in both airport and wildscapes seems to illustrate place, in Augé's understanding, the freedom from self could again be interpreted as signalling non-place.

Conquering (non-) place

Whereas *consuming (non-) place* refers to experiences of attending to spaces as perceived places or non-places, the theme of *conquering (non-) place* is about a consciously enhanced engagement or an experimentation with (non-) place and a projection of individual intentions. Hence, acceding gives in to (non-) place, consumption appreciates (non-) place, while conquering resists (non-) place.

In his writings, Augé was rather pessimistic regarding human agency, tempting other researchers as well as artists to experiment

with the spaces he had designated as non-places and to reclaim their placefulness. However, he never negated the possibility that people might resist the obviousness of non-places. A scholarly example is Roberts' (2015) experimentation on an "island" - a "negative space" as he calls it - between two roadway lanes. Through auto-ethnography, he documents his exploration and overnight stay on the island: mapping its topography, soundscape and flora, as well as his orientation in the thicket while making camp. He suggests that spaces as neglected as this can stimulate imagination and invite *flirtations* with such environments. Indeed, such flirtation or extemporization is in essence an enhanced engagement with (non-) place: searching for the detail, the poetic, the beautiful, the human, as well as it is an experimentation with (non-) place by acting beyond its prescribed functions. We contend that both engagement and experimentation demand a conscious and creative effort towards engendering new meanings, thus exemplifying intentionality. Therefore, we speak of *conquering (non-) place*. These two examples offer, firstly, an enhanced engagement with wildscapes, and, secondly, the authors' experimentation with airports.

In conversation with a young Swedish woman, it became obvious that the ways she experienced wild spaces was strongly shaped by the ways she *intended* to experience: an intentional presence (Ingold, 2011), or in more popular terms a *mindset* (De Botton, 2002; Vidon et al., 2018). As Entrikin (1976) suggested, spaces gain meaning from the intentions we project upon them. For one young woman (20–30, Northern Sweden) it was a search for intensity and slowness:

"Now, I'm like: I will try to do this as 'sloowly' [stretched] as I can... and that could be a challenge for someone as wild and fiery as me."

"Instead of like trying to 'wahahaa' [heavily moving forward without caring] to make my way, I am trying to move as gently as I can ... with a 20-kilo backpack [laughs]."

Instead of a physical achievement, she searched for what she regarded to be depth of experience, bringing her "closer to [her] core", "connecting to nature, connecting to [herself]". She touched plants, drank from rivers and rested often. As a result, she recounted her experience of the natural environment as particularly profound. She said she felt moved by nature, spoke in detail of flowers and small animals, of stillness, of rain, and other sounds.

"I feel, I *feel* [accentuated] I'm getting in touch with things that make me grow as a human being."

"You can feel your breath, you can feel your feet, you can feel your body."

Yet, she also foreshadowed that these conscious efforts to create depth and placefulness are fragile, and she constantly needed to remind herself of her initial intentions, when she, for instance, fell back into a hastened pace.

Similar to her intentional attitude, this project stimulated a new engagement with airports for the authors. The question of what the airport experience is like changed (and charged) our intentions and perceptiveness. It was no longer an obligation for transit, but a fascinating, curious environment. Quite immediately, our engagement with airports accentuated small details that evoked humanness and poetics: the bracelet made by a child dangling on a cleaner's wrist, the forgotten violin bow, the bug crawling along the edge of a hallway or the four teenagers picnicking on a blanket as they would in a meadow. We also experimented with the rules, the strictness of the space. While Pütz (2012) described the dramaturgical performances of the airport in terms of disconnect, passivity and objectified bodies, we made an observation about this ambience of obedience:

"I feel we have learned the airport, its routines, its rules. In a sense it is uplifting to obey. During security checks, you are the one taking off the belt unquestioned, you have your liquids neatly packed, you take out your laptop, keys, phone, and you walk these six steps - quite intimately - in your socks, and there is this elevating moment when it doesn't beep. You are right here. Accepted. Calm and immense." (Fieldnotes, September 2016, man, 40–50, Zurich, Switzerland)

Yet, this atmosphere of collective obedience was also an invitation for play, to disobey the norms attached to this space, to bend the limits of non-place experience. So, for instance, in a small personal experiment the second author walked through the labyrinth of roadways from Zürich airport to her hotel, negotiated this airport's hinterlands via her own discovery, and thereby created meaning beyond function or social norms (Entrikin, 1991; Tuan, 1977):

"Only 1.3 km! People at the airport told me it is impossible, especially for a woman at night. They didn't know the direction. But of course I could do it! Once I had looked at the map again, the roads were not so labyrinthine any longer. I walked through a freight area. Like a movie scene. Dark. There was a snack bar, closed. It was easy and empowering. I feel I will always know Zürich airport. It has a north and south, a mental map and a memory attached to it." (Fieldnotes, April 2016, Hotel Zürich, 1am)

Hence, as these examples suggest, a conscious engagement or experimentation enhances feelings of place. Thus, for some, making (non-) place is essentially a matter of intention (Entrikin, 1991; Relph, 1976) or care (Wollan, 2003). "Intentionality connects the observer and the observed [here the place] in a manner that cannot be drawn apart" (Entrikin, 1991:18). People do have the ability to see beyond the obviousness of certain spaces and *conquer* them with their own interpretations and creativity. While this view on human capability for place-making is very tempting, going beyond Augé's distrust in human agency and liberating people from the constraints of spaces, it carries however the reduction of phenomenological thought which constructs the world as a passive stage (Buttimer, 1976; Ingold, 2011). Hence, we contend, that intention "gives direction to experiences" (Relph, 1976:17) and presents opportunities to free us from a plain deterministic understanding of (non-) place imposing itself.

The bendability and boundedness of (non-) place

Tourism experience is caught up in a subtle interplay between the manifested and manifesting world (Tuan, 1977), half body, half mind (Ingold, 2011), an in-between state (Entrikin, 1991). Augé (1995) interprets the on-going changes in the (super-) modern world as largely deterministic of experience, with individuality surrendering to non-place. He (Augé, 1995) thus suggests a rather pessimistic vision of the potential of individual agency in human experience. In this paper, however, we abstract from the dystopian Augéan view and instead show how his conception of non-place can be used for a deeper, and different phenomenological understanding of place experience in tourism. In contrast to the notion that place is space endowed with meaning (following Tuan and others), and non-place understood as a gap in spatial meaning-making, producing disconnectedness and disassociation, we reclaim the value of the concept and a poetics of non-place in proposing researching it in more progressive terms. “Places and non-places, while they correspond to physical spaces, are also a reflection of attitudes, positions, the relations individuals have with the spaces they live in or move through” (Merriman, 2004:151). While travel spaces are often interpreted via the Augéan archetype of non-place, we contest such limited and pessimistic views and follow the notion that “in all societies at all times there has been some placelessness” (Relph, 1976:80). However, following Merriman (2004), we liberate the non-place concept from the notion of loss and instead proceed with the ideal that all space holds the potential for becoming place and non-place, even for the tourist passing through. Consequently, tourism research and tourism theory must take notice of both of these types of potential experiences and understand place and non-place as evolving relational concepts. While we support Augé’s ideas that non-place experience consists of disconnectedness, passage, solitude, disassociation, we also demonstrate that these qualities are part and parcel of the fluid, shifting experiences epitomized by the ubiquity of everyday nomadism and tourism mobilities. Specifically, we contend that intentionality and individual agency are increasingly recognized as means to a subjective existential project of continual becoming, beyond the alienating experiences of modernity, rationalisation and commodified experience.

In attempting to understand airport and wild spaces, we were struck by the ways both place and non-place experiences manifest themselves. Both are archetypal tourism spaces, yet, one is habitually considered pristine and pure, the other often interpreted as obligatory and transitory. Rather than simply reproducing these views, we posit three ways people relate to and make (non-) place through *acceding to*, *consuming* and *conquering*. In doing so, we draw particular attention to the role of intentionality, illustrating how tourists tease or bend these environments. Our phenomenological journey begins by acknowledging the boundedness of this intentionality. *Acceding to* non-place shows that (non-) place imposes itself and our capacity to shape experiences is sometimes constrained, supporting some of Augé’s fundamental principles of non-places. Alternatively, *consuming* adheres to a pragmatic attitude and a materially existential perspective where the individual “appreciates places for what they are” (Relph, 1976:66) and evaluates them in terms of their believed function. Interestingly, in our findings, both airport and wild spaces facilitated profound feelings of being in both place and non-place. Hence, our results contradict Augé’s view that travel spaces must be the archetypes of non-place (see also Edensor, 2003; Elliott & Radford, 2015; McNeill, 2009; Merriman, 2004; Morris, 1988; O’Doherty, 2017; Roberts, 2015). Finally, and related to this last point, *conquering* (non-) place identifies intention as crucial to experience, arguing that humans can resist the material fixity of environments, tease them creatively and bend their functions. Intention remains key to (non-) place experiences, lifting freedom of choice above other spatial determinants (Entrikin, 1991). Tourists make places, however fleetingly, as they go. In particular, we observed two ways in which people conquer (non-) place: *enhanced engagement* and *experimenting with* (non-) place. These observations support other research that suggests archetypal non-places, such as airports, highways or malls, can actually stimulate creativity (see Roberts, 2015). Yet, our findings suggest that in addition to stimulating creativity, tourists also employ intentionality, engagement and experimentation with these spaces, as conquest, bending and teasing are emblematic of the necessary effort for making place. In essence, these three approaches – *acceding*, *consuming* and *conquering* – suggest that (non-) place experiences are both bendable *and* bounded, thereby confirming Relph’s existential modes of relating to place (Relph, 1976).

Considering tourism more broadly, this research has two implications for tourism theory: one from an industry perspective, the other from an individual traveller perspective. As a service-industry, tourism sells intangible experiences and its success, thus, depends on subjective needs, motivations, expectations and intentions. Intention can be the key to place or non-place within the tourism experience. Intention is, however, different from motivation, needs and expectations in that it is not as simply tackled and it changes rather fluidly. It cannot be marketed in the same ways as place branding; it cannot easily be stimulated like motivation, and cannot be channelled like needs, and so forth. Thus, we would advocate further research to explore concrete ways in which intention can be stimulated by the industry to prompt meaningful experiences. One such response is the change in servicescape design seeking more balance between the facilitation of place experience on one hand and clinical efficiency on the other, with some Scandinavian and Scottish airports featuring forests, reindeer skins on display and even birdsong played on the arrival corridors.

Another way could be as simple as encouraging the view that, in essence, a meaningful travel experience is very much a mindset, and depth as well as placefulness can be found in diverse spaces, as in airports and wildscapes here. We have seen the emergence of this way of thinking in the various “slow” travel movements (slow food, slow adventure, etc.), as well as the staycation and backyard adventuring movements that emphasize that adventure is a state of mind (see Fullagar, Markwell, & Wilson, 2012; Varley & Semple, 2015).

For the individual traveller, a renewed focus on intention can bring empowerment. Playing with intentions, teasing (non-) places, seeing beyond the obvious, bending the function(s) of delineated spaces, and so forth, can be felt as creative and remind us of our humanness. In our tourism experiences, it can make the difference between a passive consumption attitude and an active, deep exploration. Such attitudes could also lead to the realization that the exotic or the meaningful do not necessarily lie on the other side of the planet, but can be found close by, anywhere (see also Gren & Huijbens, 2015). This experiment has reminded us that *both* the subjective and objective are constitutive of experiences, and while one might try to overcome non-place at an individual, creative

level, one might well fail and bump against boundaries, rules and limits. Yet, as Relph (1976) argued, it is the trying, the intention, that counts in the end, as through intention the existential potential of (non-) places and those who inhabit them is always already in the making.

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