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De-exoticizing Tourist Travel: Everyday Life and Sociality on the Move

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ABSTRACT    Tourism is traditionally treated as an escape from everyday life and tourism theory is concerned with extraordinary places. Tourism and everyday life are conceptualized as belonging to different ontological worlds. The former is the world of the extraordinary while the latter is one of the ordinary. This interdisciplinary review article argues that this separation is flawed by examining research that shows how leisure travel, tourism and everyday life intersect in complex ways. It begins with a conceptual discussion of the everyday, which works as the theoretical foundation for the article. Then the article outlines how everyday routines and conventions inform tourism performances: much traditional tourism revolves around socializing pleasantly with one’s co-travelling family and friends, while more and more tourism concerns visiting friends and family members living elsewhere. The conclusion discusses what consequences an everyday life perspective has for future tourism research.

KEYWORDS: tourism, everyday life, family life, performances, dwelling, networking

Introduction

In tourism studies and the social sciences more broadly, tourism is treated as an exotic set of specialized consumer products occurring at specific times and places which are designed, regulated or preserved more or less specifically for tourism, such as resorts, attractions and beaches. Much tourism theory, such as the seminal work of MacCannell (1976) and Urry (1990, 2002a), defines tourism by contrasting it to home geographies and ‘everydayness’: tourism is what they are not. It is ‘a no-work, no-care, no-thrift situation’, according to Cohen (1979: p. 181). The main focus in such research is on the extraordinary, on places elsewhere. Tourism is an escape from home, a quest for more desirable and fulfilling places. As a result, tourism studies produce fixed dualisms between the life of tourism and everyday life: extraordinary and ordinary, pleasure and boredom, liminality and rules, exotic others and significant others, to mention some. Such ‘purification’ means that everyday life and tourism end up belonging to different ontological worlds, the
worlds of the mundane and the exotic, respectively (exceptions are Crouch, 1999; Löfgren, 1999; Williams & Kaltenborn, 1999; McCabe, 2002; Franklin, 2003; Uriely, 2005; Hall, 2005; Edensor, 2006).

This article discusses the problems of this separation between tourist travel and everyday life. It takes inspiration from everyday life theorist Lefebvre’s (1991) claim that all aspects of social life are infused with elements of everyday life: no practices escape ‘everydayness’. The article discusses some of the ways that everyday life permeates tourism consumption and especially how ‘tourist escapes’ are informed by everyday performances, social obligations and significant others.

Discussion of everyday life is absent from tourism theory and research: they are merely tourism theory’s mysterious ‘Other’: everywhere and nowhere, known and yet unknown. The article therefore begins with a theoretical discussion of everyday life. It is argued that one significant aspect of everyday life is routine and that this is part of the traveller’s baggage. However, it is simultaneously stressed how everyday performances have potentials for creativity and the unexpected, and how many everyday spaces are sites of tourist consumption. Then the significance of significant others and face-to-face sociality in relation to everyday life are discussed.

The main part of the article is concerned with reviewing, elaborating upon and bringing together various research projects within leisure studies, tourism studies, migration studies and social networks analysis addressing connections and overlaps between everyday life and leisure travel. Particular attention is paid to the influential work of John Urry (1990, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2006a; Larsen et al., 2006a, 2006b) because it partly illustrates how leisure travel is no longer merely an escape from everyday life but also a way of performing it. First, Urry’s hegemonic concept of the ‘tourist gaze’ is discussed (1990). While the ‘tourist gaze’ was originally constructed on the premise that its opposite is ordinary everyday life, Urry later clarified this by pointing out that the ‘tourist gaze’ is both constructed and takes place through everyday media cultures. Second, it is shown how the recent ‘performance turn’ destabilizes the ‘tourist gaze’ and highlights how many tourist practices are embodied, habitual and involve ordinary objects, places and practices. Third, migration, diaspora, tourism and social network research showing how leisure travel is concerned with visiting and hosting significant others and attend to ‘obligatory’ social events is discussed. The conclusion discusses the implications that this article has for future studies.

Everyday Life

It is partly understandable why tourism researchers have distinguished tourist travel from everyday life. In most of the everyday life literature ‘everydayness’ is characterized by repetition, habitual practices, obligations and reproduction. As Edensor says:

The everyday can partly be captured by unreflexive habit, inscribed on the body, a normative unquestioned way of being in the world...The repetition of daily, weekly and annual routines...how and when to eat, wash, move, work and play, constitutes a realm of ‘commonsense’...These shared habits strengthen affective and cognitive links, constitute a habitus
consisting of acquired skills which minimize unnecessary reflection every time a decision is required. (2001: p. 61)

Featherstone contrasts everyday life with ‘heroic life’: ‘The heroic life is the sphere of danger, violence and the courting of risk whereas everyday life is the sphere of women, reproduction and care’ (1992: p. 165). While ‘heroic life’ is male, unpredictable and nomadic, everyday life is fixed to a female and routinized domestic sphere. In this light, since travel has long been associated with masculine values of adventure and self-realization, travel seems to epitomize ‘heroic life’.

However, this crude account of both travel and everyday life can be challenged. As Edensor points out, there is more to everyday life than the habitual, pre-scripted and ordinary. The classical texts of Lefebvre (1991) and de Certeau (1984) show the potential of everyday practices for creativity, subversion and resistance. In particular, de Certeau stressed the need for examining the ‘tactics’ that people in their everyday life employ to manipulate officially inscribed signs, objects and places:

…the presence and circulation of a representation (taught by preachers, educators and popularizers as the key to socioeconomic advancement) tell us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. (1984: p. xi)

In de Certeau’s work, the everyday is the heroic realm of modernity, full of creativity, manipulation and resistance. As discussed by Hingham (2002), most writers on everyday performances highlight ambivalent relationships between possibilities and constraint, scripting and creativity, which reflect that everyday life is a complex notion.

What is less discussed in the literature is the significance of sociality and social relations to everyday life. The classic texts of Simmel (1950, 1997a, 1997b) and Goffman (1959) are exceptions here. Both argue that humans are social beings and that most everyday practices are social interactions which take place in close (visual) proximity to other people. One major aspect of Simmel’s work explores how modern cities create new experiences of proximity: ‘modern times for Simmel are experienced largely through changing relations of proximity and distance and, more broadly, through cultures of movement and mobility’ (Allen, 2000: p. 55). Simmel argued that people in the modern metropolis increasingly found themselves amongst strangers and they therefore had to learn the social skill of distancing themselves from the mobile crowd. Simmel (1950) adopted the figure of the stranger to illustrate the modern metropolis’ unique geographies of proximity and distance: here people are close in a spatial sense, yet remote in a social sense. Yet Simmel also discusses everyday interaction among significant others. Simmel speaks of ‘sociability’ to denote those kind of interactions characterized by free play and non-instrumental and emotional sociality. ‘Sociability’ is a ‘pure interaction’ between, in theory, equal participants who come together for the sole purpose of enjoying each other’s company. One example of sociability is the communal meal (Simmel, 1997b). More broadly, visiting and hosting friends and relatives – crucial leisure activities that often involve some travel – can be seen as emblematic forms of ‘sociability’ (see below).

Goffman’s classical Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) outlines a ‘dramaturgical’ framework to describe everyday social interactions, especially
amongst strangers in public places. For Goffman, the self is a performed character, a public performer with carefully managed impressions. Everyday life is described as fundamentally performative and put on stage for an audience. Everyday life is performed in the ambivalent space between prefixing choreographies and improvisational performances; performances are culturally scripted but they are not predetermined. People, as everyday actors, are reflexive and strategic agents moving between different socio-spatial stages (or regions) requiring and allowing specific performances. These are front-stages and back-stages. A public performance is put on show in front-stages; in back-stage regions these performances may ‘knowingly contradict’; ‘back-stages’ allow masks to be lifted temporarily (1959: p. 114).

**Spatialities and Mobilities of Everyday Life**

Goffman’s work illustrates how everyday life is performed in various places, but home is traditionally regarded the base (especially for women) for everyday life, the ‘back-stage’ where families can be themselves. Heller writes: ‘integral to the average everyday life is awareness of a fixed point in space, a firm position from which we “proceed” (whether every day or over larger periods of time) and to which we return in due course. This firm position is what we call “home”’ (1984: p. 239). While there is a physical and static element to home, it is paramount also to detect how home can be mobilized and connected to other places. Following Berger (1984), we can understand home not solely as being rooted in one particular physical place, but also as something that involves, and can be mobilized through, social habits, small daily rituals, precious objects, mundane technologies and significant others.

Households are plugged into an ever-expanding array of communication technologies that connect them to the outside world: land line phones, mobile phones, computers, email accounts, TV channels, cars and so on. The home has become a communication hub infused with mobile messages. The ‘time–space compression’ (Harvey, 1989) that such technologies create means that distant places travel in and out of our living rooms:

> But most of us are on the move even if physically, bodily, we stay put. When, as is our habit, we are glued to our chairs and zap the cable or satellite channels on and off the TV screen – jumping in and out of foreign spaces with a speed much beyond the capacity of supersonic jets and cosmic rockets, but nowhere staying long enough to be more than visitors, to feel chez soi. (Bauman, 1998: p. 77)

Far from being grey and ordinary, our everyday spaces are full of exotic and spectacular signs. ‘Time–space compression’ also seems to involve ‘time–space distancing’ (Giddens, 1990), that is, the geographical spreading of people’s social networks. This is partly the result of recent increases in travel and in longer-distance communications through cheaper international calls, text messages and free emails (Wellman, 2002; Urry, 2003). Larsen et al. show how it has become common to have strong ties at-a-distance and sustain them through phone calls, text messages, emails and occasional visits. Socializing at-a-distance has become a significant everyday practice. The social sciences can no longer equate closeness
and communion with geographical nearness and daily or weekly co-present visits (2006a, 2006b).

Yet geographers and transport researchers often highlight that everyday activities and travel predominately take place within a localized ‘activity space’ (Massey, 1995; Holloway & Hubbard, 2001; Ellegaard & Welhemson, 2004). Such research tends to be somewhat ‘a-mobile’ as it neglects the significance of long-distance travel, occasional sociality and mediated communication to the spatialities of everyday life. Most social life during weekdays revolve around localized areas and routinized, brief trips, while many people undertake longer journeys at weekends and holidays (Axhausen et al., 2002). This article highlights how everyday life research should analyse how everyday practices of caring and socializing also take place at a-distance and how people increasingly need to travel to socialize with their significant others. Everyday socializing is mediated and distanciated.

Thus the notion of the everyday is complex. Some use the notion to highlight the quotidian while others speak of creativity and subversion. This complexity makes ‘everydayness’ a useful concept in relation to studies of tourist performances. On the one hand, it allows an analysis of how ‘tourist escapes’ are full of everyday practices such as eating, drinking, sleeping, brushing teeth, changing nappies, reading bedtime stories and having sex with one’s partner, as well as co-travelling mundane objects such as mobile phones, cameras, food, clothes and medicine. ‘Even when a traveler leaves home, home does not leave the traveler’ (Duncan & Lambert, 2003; Pons, 2003; Molz, 2005). Home is therefore part of tourists’ baggage and bodily performances. On the other hand, while neglecting the everydayness of everyday life (Felski, 1999), de Certeau’s ‘resistance’ perspective can help to write more dynamic and open accounts of performances than is common in the tourism literature, where tourists so often drown in a sea of signs and choreographies (see Larsen, 2005).

Following Simmel and Goffman, an everyday perspective also enables studies of the significance of significant others, sociability and role playing to the tourism experience; to insert the social into tourism research. Tourism studies has mostly neglected issues of sociality and co-presence and thereby overlooked how much tourist travel is concerned with (re)producing social relations. Finally, an attention to everyday media cultures makes problematic the idea that everyday life is grey and uneventful, as the following discussion of the ‘tourist gaze’ illustrates.

The Tourist Gaze and Everyday Media Flows

In The Tourist Gaze (1990) Urry argues that tourism is formed in opposition to everyday life: a ‘key feature would seem to be that there is a difference between one’s normal place of residence/work and the object of the tourist gaze…Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary’ (1990: p. 11). In this early work the distinction between home and away, ordinary and extraordinary, is the identifying regulator of what may come to be constituted as an extraordinary place of the ‘tourist gaze’. However, in Urry’s later work this distinction dissolves. Now it is stressed how ‘post-modern’ media cultures saturate everyday life, which therefore itself becomes not merely grey and
ordinary, but also full of exotic signs and consumer goods. Consequently, in 1994 Lash and Urry felt able to proclaim the ‘end of tourism’:

‘The tourist gaze’ is no longer set apart from everyday life, as it used to be in modern times, but has become part of it. There is a de-differentiation between tourism and everyday life (see also Rojek, 1993). Thus ‘the end of tourism’ actually means not less but more touristic gazing because ‘the post-tourist does not have to leave his or her house in order to see many of the typical objects of the gaze’ (2002a: p. 90). Although Urry occasionally suggests that ‘imaginative travel’ through media cultures replace ‘corporeal travel’, the ‘end of tourism’ thesis really suggests the ‘touristification of everyday life’ and de-differentiation between tourism, everyday life and various form of travel:

…there is no evidence that virtual and imaginative mobility is replacing corporeal travel, but there are complex intersections between these different modes of travelling that are increasingly de-differentiated from one another. (Urry, 2002a: p. 141)

While the ‘tourist gaze’ blurs home and away by ‘exoticizing’ home geographies, it is now discussed how the ‘performance turn’ connects tourism and everyday life by highlighting the everyday and habitual nature of much tourism life.

**Mundane and Collective Tourism Performances**

A ‘performance turn’ can be traced from the late 1990s in tourism theory (Edensor, 1998, 2000, 2001; Franklin & Crang, 2001; Perkins & Thorns, 2001; Coleman & Crang, 2002; Crouch, 2003; Szerszynski et al., 2003; Bærenholdt et al., 2004; Haldrup & Larsen, 2006). This turn is formed in opposition to the ‘tourist gaze’ and other representational approaches privileging the eye and discourses (e.g. MacCannell, 1976; Shields, 1991; Dann, 1996; Selwyn, 1996) by arguing that ‘tourism demands new metaphors based more on being, doing, touching and seeing rather than just “seeing”’ (Cloke & Perkins, 1998: p. 189; see also Edensor, 2006). It is inspired by Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical sociology in seeing tourist staff and tourists as expressive everyday ‘performers’ and by the attention given in ‘non-representational geography’ (for a review, see Lorimer, 2005) to embodied and technologized everyday practices.

The ‘performance turn’ redirects tourism research in several ways. By stressing ontologies of acting and doing, it highlights the corporeality of tourist bodies and the material, multi-sensuous affordances of places that have so often been reduced to ‘travelling eyes’ and dematerialized ‘imagescapes’. It shifts methodological attention from meanings and discourses to embodied, multi-sensuous, collaborative and technologized doings and enactments. Crucially, in relation to this article, the ‘performance turn’ explicitly conceptualizes tourism as intricately tied up with everyday practices, ordinary places and significant others, such as family members and friends, but co-residing and at-a-distance. In Edensor’s work (1998, 2000, 2001) where performances are seen as potentially creative, unreflexive, unintentional and
habitual enactments are also stressed. This differs from ideas of tourism as a liminal zone, where everyday conventions are suspended (e.g. Shields, 1991):

Rather than transcending the mundane, most forms of tourism are fashioned by culturally coded escape attempts. Moreover, although suffused with notions of escape from normativity, tourists carry quotidian habits and responses with them: they are part of their baggage. (Edensor, 2001: p. 61)

Elsewhere, he argues:

Many tourist endeavours are mundane and informed by an unreflective sensual awareness, and hence not particular dissimilar to everyday habits and routines. (2006: p. 26)

Tourists never just travel to places: their mindsets, routines and social relations travel with them. The imaginative geographies of tourism are as much about ‘home’ as faraway places. Such focus upon everyday practices and the ordinary is particularly stressed by Pons (2003) in his Heidegger-inspired dwelling perspective. Against ideas that tourism performances mainly engage the visual sense, that they are extraordinary and somewhat aloof and disembodied, Pons argues that tourism is a multi-sensuous and practical way through which we are involved in the symbolic and not least the physical world; it is a particular way of being-in-the-world, of dwelling in it. He uses the notion of dwelling ‘because it enables a genuinely geographical and social account of tourism that prioritizes everyday embodied practices’ (2003: p. 47, my italics). Tourism, he argues, is essentially about practising space and practising through space, it is about embodied doings:

It is because we are doing something in a particular way that we are tourists and we adopt tourist consciousness. The most relevant embodied practices through which we become tourists are everyday ordinary, and often non-representational, practices. It is, therefore, insufficient in tourist studies to focus only on extraordinary practices, like sightseeing… (2003: p. 52)

Pons asks us to explore the many more or less ‘ordinary’ practices and places that are made pleasurable on a holiday through creative inversions and how tourists make themselves at home in foreign places (see Andrews, 2005). This requires that we de-exoticize tourism theory and adopt a non-elitist approach to tourism practices.

Dwelling and building is intimately connected in Heidegger’s thinking (1993). Leisure and tourism research has shown how allotments and summer cottages are significant places of working and dwelling where ‘people are working intensively most of the time’; through free creative play (Jarlöv, 1999: p. 231). Partly therefore, summer cottages are places where people often put down a rooted sense of belonging (Jarlöv, 1999; Löfgren, 1999; Williams & Kaltenberg, 1999; Hall & Müller, 2004). But tourists in rented summer cottages can also be said to be dwelling:

Up for an early morning bath, at the beach all day, bathing, building castles in the sand, collecting mussels at the beach, the children tumbling around in the sand, had lunch on the beach. Walked to our house, decorated the house with shells and stones, played cards with the children. (Diary entry by a German woman, quoted in Haldrup, 2004: p. 444)

Heidegger’s (1993) equation between building and dwelling is evident here. The family is domesticating the vacation stages by building sandcastles and decorating the rented house with the collected shells and stones. This landscape is what Ingold
would call a taskscape (Ingold, 2000; and see Edensor, 2006). The notion of taskscape refers to the ways humans routinely inscribe themselves in space, by using, inhabiting and moving through it: ‘Just as the landscape is an array of related features so – by analogy – the taskscape is an array of related activities’ (Ingold, 2000: p. 195). Taskscape highlights how tourists enact corporally and multi-sensually, routinely and creatively with landscapes. They step into the ‘landscape picture’, and engage bodily, sensuously, and expressively with their materiality and ‘affordances’. And throughout this engagement they build landscapes and things, such as sandcastles.

Löfgren (1999) and Bærenholdt et al. (2004) bring out the social and emotional significance of ‘ordinary’ tourist practices and co-travelling significant others to the tourism experience. Tourism studies have overlooked the fact that many tourists do not experience the world through a solitary ‘romantic gaze’ or the ‘collective gaze’ of mass tourism (Urry, 1990, 2002b), but in the company of friends, family members and partners. Performing Tourist Places opens with a private photograph of two families posing with spades and buckets on a beach in front of the sandcastle they have just built. The communal projects of building a sandcastle and taking photographs show how tourists not only bring their own bodies but travel and perform with other bodies too. Most tourism performances are performed collectively, and this sociality is in part what makes them pleasurable.

These books demonstrate how tourism is not only a way of practising or consuming (new) places but also an emotional geography of sociability, of being together with close friends and family members from home. While travelling together, couples, families and friends are actually together, not separated by work, institutions, homework, leisure activities and geographical distances. They are in a sense most at ‘home’ when away-from-the-home. Performing Tourist Places speaks of ‘inhabiting tourism’ while Löfgren speaks of ‘Robinsonian tourism’. Both concepts highlight how much tourism is bound up with performing social life and building an alternative ‘home’, a utopian performance where everyday routines, doings and roles hopefully become extraordinary: relaxed, jointed and joyful. Tourists are not only questing authentic places and objects; they also search for authentic sociability between themselves (Wang, 1999: p. 364). ‘Getting away from it all might be an attempt to get it all back to together again’ (Löfgren, 1999: p. 269).

Ethnographic studies also show how much tourist travel even to typical tourist sites is about sociability. Kyle and Chick’s (2004) ethnography of an American Fair and Caletrio’s (2003) study of Spanish tourists on the Costa Blanca demonstrate how families repeatedly return to these places because they have turned into meeting places where they meet up with relatives and friends living elsewhere. This focus on ‘significant others’ is also central to the new literature examining how some people travel to ‘distant’ places to meet significant others rather than merely ‘consuming’ the ‘Other’.

Meetings at-a-Distance

As Williams and Kaltenberg say: ‘When we think of tourism we often think of travel to exotic destinations, but modernization has also dispersed and extended
our network of relatives, friends and acquaintances’ (1999: p. 214). And statistical data show that such extended social networks now generate much tourist travel. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) records 154 million international arrivals for ‘VFR [visiting friends and relatives] health, religion, other’ in 2001, compared with 74 million in 1990 (http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/trends/purpose.htm). While holiday visits to the UK are declining, more and more people travel to the UK to visit friends and family members (Travel Trends, 2004) and almost half of all long-distance journeys in the UK are made to visit family and friends (Dateline, 2003: pp. 17, 57).

Clifford’s notions of ‘dwelling-in-travel’ and ‘travelling-in-dwelling’ deconstruct distinctions between home and away by pointing to the possibilities of being at home while travelling and coming home and dwelling through travel. Now that travel and displacement are widespread, we need to rethink dwelling so that it is no longer the antithesis to travel or simply the ground from which travel departs and returns (Clifford, 1997: p. 44; see also Franklin & Crang, 2001: p. 6). In his Sociology beyond Societies (2000), Urry argues that there is ‘a variety of ways of dwelling, but that once we move beyond that of land, almost all involve complex relationships between belongingness and travelling, within and beyond the boundaries of national societies. People can indeed be said to dwell in various mobilities’ (2000: p. 157).

Tourism and migration researchers are beginning to examine how ‘tourism visits’ are essential to the lives of migrants and diasporic cultures, who often have strong ties in multiple places and feel at home in more than one place. Migration is far from being a one-way journey leaving one’s homeland behind, and is often a two-way journey between two sets of ‘homes’ (Duval, 2004a, 2004b; Mason, 2004). And this generates tourist travel. ‘Many forms of migration’, as Williams and Hall say, ‘generate tourism flows, in particular through the geographical extension of friendship and kinship networks. Migrants may become poles of tourist flows, while they themselves become tourists in returning to visit friends and relations in their areas of origin’ (2000: p. 7; see also Williams et al., 2000; Gustafson, 2002; O’Reilly, 2003; Coles & Dallen, 2004).

While diasporas and displaced people traditionally demonstrate a desire for a permanent return, today’s migrants can fulfil their ‘compulsion to proximity’ (Boden & Molotech, 1994) (the desire to be physically co-present with people) with their homeland through frequent virtual and imaginative travel, and especially through occasional visits. Various studies show how many immigrants and their (grand) children regularly visit their ‘homeland’ and other displaced family members across the world to keep their ‘national’ belonging and family networks ‘alive’ (Kang & Page, 2000; Miller & Slater, 2000; Mason, 2004; Sutton, 2004). Duval (2004a, 2004b) and Nazia and Holden (2006) illustrate how parents of Caribbean and Pakistani origin feel obliged to travel to their homeland and introduce its key features personally to their children. Social obligations to travel are often intricately intertwined with obligations to visit specific monuments and religious sites. Nazia and Holden (2006) call this ‘the myth of return’.

This section ends by discussing a research project on social networks and travel that Urry has co-authored (Larsen et al., 2006a, 2006b, 2007). It researches the geographical ‘stretching out’ of social networks and its implications for sociality
and travel. Their research on ‘youngish’ architects, diverse employees in fitness centres and security staff living in northwest England shows that it has become common to have ‘strong ties’ at-a-distance and to undertake regular long-distance travel to meet friends and family members. This is both because of the historically high levels of migration for work and education, as well as the emergence of low-price long-distance travel and communication. On the average, their respondents live some 400 km from their identified ‘strong ties’ and make ten long-distance national journeys yearly, mainly to visit kin and friends, and attending Christmas parties, weddings, stag or hen nights, birthdays and so on. They compensate for the intermittent nature of meetings and the cost of transport (time, money and weariness) by spending a whole day or weekend or even week(s) together. Research suggests that people are socializing less frequently with each other on a weekly basis partly because networks are now more dispersed (see McGlone et al., 1999; Putnam, 2001), but Larsen et al. thus show that travel at weekends and holidays to some extent counteracts this.

This research indicates that ‘VFR tourism’ is desirable and indeed necessary because even highly regular phone calls, text messages and emails are not enough to reproduce strong ties, which also depend on periodic face-to-face meetings. Larsen et al. argue that the increase in ‘VFR tourism’ stems from a ‘compulsion to proximity’ and from various obligations that require physical co-presence. They note how most tourism theories fail to notice the obligations that choreograph tourism escapes’ and leisure travel more broadly (2006b; see also Urry, 2002b). But it is shown how there are obligations that require face-to-face co-presence, such as birthdays, Christmas parties, funerals, hen nights, stag nights and the weddings of close friends and family members, even if they require substantial travel. Not fulfilling such social obligations often has significant social consequences: social faces and relationships are likely to be damaged. While social obligations required relatively little travel when social networks were socially and spatially close-knit, they trigger much long-distance travel today, when social networks are widely distributed and the world is becoming compressed due to historically cheap and fast transport. They concluded that travel that would have once been classified as ‘touristic’ and by implication a matter of ‘choice’ seems to have become central to many people. Their findings are in line with Franklin and Crang who argue that: ‘Tourism has broken away from its beginnings and ephemeral ritual modern national life to become a significant modality through which [national and] transnational modern life is organised’ (2001: p. 7).

**Conclusion**

This article has documented the need to de-exoticize tourism theory, not to dispense with the exotic and extraordinary as such, but to make space within the theory for ‘everydayness’. It was first argued that ‘everyday life’ should be central to future tourism research because it is a multifaceted notion referring to routines, ordinary objects and familial faces as well as to excitement, creativity and small-scale disruptive ‘tactics’. By incorporating an everyday life perspective into tourism theory it is possible to produce complex, dynamic and contextual accounts of tourism.
Particularly, this article has outlined how everyday routines and habitual dispositions influence tourism performances that nonetheless still have potentials for creativity and the unexpected. Moreover, it was shown how many tourism performances revolve around pleasant sociality with co-travelling significant others. Finally, it was discussed how sociality in tourism also matters in relation to so-called ‘VFR tourism’, which is increasing because social networks are becoming more geographically dispersed.

While this article has explored connections between everyday life, significant others and travel, there is still a great need for research in this field. Future studies should pay attention to the fabric of everyday practices of real holiday experiences to obtain a better idea of what tourists do when vacationing, and how it both ties into and occasionally departs from the lived everyday life at ‘home’. This includes understanding how tourists might ‘discover’ as much about their own culture as the one they tour. As Molz says: ‘On a daily basis, we may not even be consciously aware of the various ways we embody and carry home with us…As travelers are constantly called upon to physically perform the unaccustomed – to eat strange foods, mouth foreign words, or use unfamiliar toilets – they become cognizant of the way certain rituals make them feel more at home’ (2005: p. 5).

The everyday characteristic of the tourist spaces passed through and dwelt within also requires more attention. There has been an obsession with places that are extraordinary, exotic and inscribed through signs as tourist places. Future ethnographies need also to take place in ‘ordinary’ tourist places, and this includes places typified more by ‘global flows’ than by the ‘local’ culture, such as MacDonalds, Starbucks and western-style supermarkets. And we need to follow the flows of emails, text messages, postcards, photographs, souvenirs that tourists make, produce, purchase and circulate to their social networks at home or elsewhere, both while on the move and when at home again. Such mobile ethnographies make it possible to explore how tourist images and objects (re)produce social networks and decorate home geographies.

Much of the research discussed in this article suggests that networking is now an illuminating concept to work with. As discussed elsewhere, networking highlights how leisure/tourist travel is a social practice that involves significant others, face-to-face proximity and non-commercialized hospitality. It further highlights how tourist travel is not only a way of seeing the world but also a way of socializing with significant others and attending obligatory social events. It suggests that the analysis of everyday practices, social obligations, networks at-a-distance and social capital should be central to 21st century leisure and tourism theory (Larsen et al., 2007).

This also means that the term tourist needs some deconstruction as people undertake leisure travel for many different reasons (see also Rojek & Urry, 1997). Those spending the summer in a second home or visiting their best friend who now happens to live abroad are not likely to consider themselves tourists in the same way as someone spending two or three weeks on a package tour. Indeed there is the probability that they will not consider themselves tourists at all. Nonetheless, the WTO will include them as tourists in its statistics. The WTO uses overnight stays to differentiate between day trips and tourism, and leisure travel becomes ‘tourism’
whenever it involves an overnight stay, no matter where this takes place (hotel or private accommodation).

This definition is both problematic and constructive. The former because it mixes together forms of leisure travel that have little in common except perhaps the journey and the overnight stay. Moreover, it neglects that tourist consumption can take place at home. The latter because it highlights how tourism increasingly overlaps with other forms of mobility and has become central to much social life in ever more mobile societies. In the process of de-exoticizing theory, this article suggests ‘de-purifying’ the disciplines concerned with travel and mobility, such as leisure studies, tourism studies, migration studies and transport studies. Rather than a distinct discipline of ‘tourism studies’, therefore, we need to develop transdisciplinary ‘mobilities studies’ (Urry, 2000; Coles et al., 2005).

References


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