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TOURISM (RE)CONFIGURED: GEOGRAPHICAL THINKING IN TOURISM STUDIES

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Turystyka w nowym ujęciu. Myślenie geograficzne w badaniach nad turystyką

Zarys treści: Artykuł przeglądowy poszukuje odpowiedzi na pytanie, w jaki sposób myślenie geograficzne może wzbogacić badania nad turystyką, zwłaszcza w kontekście rosnącego wpływu turystyki na przestrzeń i miejsce oraz jej transformacji w różnorodne konfiguracje przestrzenne i społeczne. Artykuł wskazuje wzajemne relacje między geografiami a turystyką, zwracając uwagę na znaczenie wyobrażeń geograficznych i performatywności miejsc, które są ze sobą powiązane. Turystyka, poprzez wyobrażenia i praktyki, jest przedstawiana jako istotny czynnik w procesie kreowania miejsc, kształtujący ich dynamikę przestrzenną. Artykuł, inspirowany analizą sztuki jako formą „poznawania inaczej” oraz kuratorskim zwrotem w turystyce, przyjmuje formę wirtualnej wystawy, w której znajdują się cztery dzieła sztuki ilustrujące paradoksy miejsc jako „scen turystycznych”, wpływ ekologiczny turystyki, wymiar płci w turystyce oraz powrót do tak podstawowego aktu, jakim jest spacer, jako temat turystyczny. Dzieła sztuki „wystawiane” w ramach niniejszej pracy przeglądowej dostarczają bezpośrednich spostrzeżeń dotyczących doświadczenia, realizacji i postrzegania turystyki. Artykuł sugeruje, że interdyscyplinarne podejście do wiedzy geograficznej, uwzględniające jej różnorodne dziedziny, może przyczynić się do głębszego zrozumienia złożonego wpływu turystyki na przestrzeń i miejsce. Przyszłe badania powinny dążyć do przekraczania granic akademickich i dyscyplinarnych w odpowiedzi na pojawiające się globalne wyzwania.

Słowa kluczowe: geografia człowieka, badania nad turystyką, wyobrażenia przestrzenne, performatywność miejsca, zwrot kuratorski, realizacje

Abstract: This review article delves into the ways in which geographical thought can enhance tourism studies, particularly at a time when tourism is expanding its impact and transforming into diverse spatial and social configurations. The article contends that there is a reciprocal relationship between geography and tourism, and highlights the heuristics offered by the notions of geographical imaginaries and place performances once they become intertwined. The article presents tourism as a key player in place-making, shaping spatial dynamics through tourist imaginations and practices. Inspired by accounts on art as a form to 'knowing otherwise' and the curatorial turn in tourism, the article proceeds as a curated virtual exhibition including four artworks to illustrate the paradoxes of places as 'tourist stages', the ecological footprint of tourism, the gendered dimension in tourism, and the return of such a simple act as walking as a topic for tourism. The artworks 'exhibited' to advance the review offer direct insights on the experience, enactment, and perception of tourism. The article ultimately suggests that geographical knowledge, when interdisciplinarily engaged across its diverse branches can deepen the understanding of tourism's complex impact on space and place, and future research should continue to extend beyond academic and disciplinary boundaries to address emerging global challenges.

Keywords: human geography, tourism studies, spatial imaginaries, place performances, curatorial turn; enactments

Introduction

Tourism studies are an interdisciplinary field to which geography and geographical knowledge have significantly contributed over time. From an academic standpoint, geographers have played a significant role in establishing the field, as evidenced by their contributions to various tourism studies handbooks and by their publications in tourism studies journals. In a long-term perspective, it should also be acknowledged that earlier geographers were travellers, and through their travels, the knowledge they shared and the tools used to share it (maps, travel diaries, pictures) contributed to forging certain travelling geographical imaginaries (Gregory 2009), as well as providing pieces of information and tools that were then used and reproduced by broader travelling audiences (della Dora 2009). The Earth serves as the 'matter' of tourism, drawing a diverse range of travellers, from adventurers to vacationers, who are attracted to specific regions due to their unique environmental and cultural attributes. On the other hand, the contribution of the 'common' traveller or tourist to the Earth cannot be overlooked. Tourists, for better or for worse, are major players in place-making and landscaping. In the age of so-called overtourism (Milano et al. 2019), tourist mobilities contribute to the making of both cities and seemingly remote areas. Tourists are also active agents in shaping spatial imaginaries (Gravari-Barbas, Graburn 2012), and this is an eminent aspect to be considered in the age of visual communication and social media.

Moving away from traditional review articles, in this article I will discuss the reciprocal relationship between geography and tourism via a ‘virtual exhibition’ featuring four works of art that explore specific contemporary challenges related to this relationship. This article is not to be understood as a review advancing through a literature review or a set of case studies. On the contrary, the article aims to stimulate the readers’ scientific curiosity by guiding them in accessing jargon concepts typical of tourism geographies and the most novel debates in this field. This approach should support a creative understanding of tourism as a dynamic, chaotic, and ‘wicked’ form of place performance that could be translated into more formal and structured research by further analysis, surpassing the confines of the narrow sub-discipline of tourism geography.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section, two key concepts for tourism geographies – spatial imaginaries and place performances – will be discussed. In the subsequent section, the methodology of curating a virtual exhibition as a strategy for conducting a review article will be detailed before moving to the exhibition itself. Through four works of art, the virtual exhibition will illustrate the paradoxes of places as ‘tourist stages’, the ecological footprint of tourism, the gendered dimension in tourism, and the return of such a simple act as walking as a topic for tourism. Finally, this article will conclude by suggesting that geographical knowledge, when engaged interdisciplinarily across its diverse branches and through creative approaches like art, can deepen the understanding of tourism’s complex impact on space and place.

From spatial imaginaries to place performances

Political, cultural, and tourism geographies widely use the concepts of geographical imaginations, imaginaries, and imaginative geographies. While the meanings of these concepts vary slightly depending on the paradigm from which they originate, they all belong to the same epistemological sphere. Geographical imaginations can be generally defined as the ways in which we spatially represent and make sense of places both near and far, thereby facilitating knowledge of places by making complex and conflicting realities seem simple. Geographical imaginaries capture a spatial ordering of the world that is taken for granted and tied to the collective objectives of a series of imaginative geographies (Gregory 1998). Influenced by the work of E.W. Said (1979) on Orientalism, the concept of imaginative geographies can be comprehended as a shared understanding of places and spaces that circulate in novels, paintings, cinema, television, travel writing, photography, social networks, and, more broadly, in the digital mediascape. Imaginative geographies are performative and inform social and material performances of place.

Tourism and mobilities scholars have widely considered how geographical imaginations, imaginaries, or imaginative geographies shape tourists' everyday encounters with places and their practices (Crouch et al. 2001; Salazar 2013, 2012; Tzanelli 2021). Place entangles with tourism imaginaries, which in turn nurture embodied and performative practices that generate meaning and spatialities (Coleman, Crang 2002; Sheller, Urry 2004; Minca, Oakes 2006; Edensor, Kothari 2018). Increasingly, imaginaries have been conceived in their relationship with tourism as embodied and performative practices (Urry, Larsen 2011) 'that generate meaning and spatiality' (Córdoba Azcárate 2020, p. 199). This perspective suggests that tourism images are approached in a more-than-representational way to access tourism imaginaries (Edensor 2018).

T. Edensor (1998, 2009) introduced the concept of place performance as an analytical tool to reconfigure tourism studies. The concept serves to highlight the shortcomings of essentialized definitions and interpretations of tourism. Tourism is a phenomenon in which definitions expressed in terms of the quantity of visitors arriving or staying overnight, or in terms of the image of an Instagram post, are always surpassed by practical enactments. The performative or performance approach (the two terms are often used interchangeably, although they originate from different fields) in tourism sought to shift the emphasis from disembodied definitions of the tourist to the 'what happens' of travel, moving away from bounded and unlively accounts of tourist destinations and becoming deeply phenomenological in its epistemology (Chapuis 2010). This leads to a recasting of the concept of the tourist imaginary. Tourist spatial imaginaries can be considered enacted 'mindscapes', continuously interacting with landscapes, moving between physical terrain and imaginative realms through place performances. Along this line, places—far from being closed and static spatial circumscriptions—are open, interactive, and 'in becoming' (Massey 2005), produced by, and at the same time producing, assemblages of human, non-human—i.e., animals, plants, viruses—and non-living bodies—i.e., objects, technologies, and atmospheres.

In this review article, I will use a virtual exhibition featuring four works of art that explore tourism to provide access in a hopefully more direct way, to the concepts of spatial imaginary and place performance and how they can provide a basis for analysis.

Approaching tourism and geography through a virtual art exhibition

Artists' work is immediate and can extend beyond positivist understanding of a specific topic. Geographers have paid attention to works of art as expressions of space and power dynamics (Cosgrove 1984, 2003). Art is a form of 'knowing

otherwise’—not simply as a visual and material representation but as a means of knowledge production (Hawkins 2013). Art practice has become an expanded field that addresses geographical concepts. Geographers should study how artworks are encountered, what draws viewers back to revisit to the same works of art, and what it means to be an active viewer.

J. Tribe (2008), an eminent tourism scholar, has pinpointed that little attention has been given to tourism as a subject for art. This consideration motivated the decision to use works of art in this review article to illustrate some reconfigurations between tourism and geography. In this review article, curating a virtual exhibition through article writing represents a novel methodology for exploring some of the disciplinary concepts developed by tourism geographers, such as spatial imaginaries and place performance, and how they intersect with debates concerning space, place, and tourism. The debates presented through the virtual art exhibition include the paradoxes of ‘tourist stages’ stuck in overtourism and notions of authenticity; the ecological footprint of tourism; the gendered dimension of tourism; and the renewed interest in walking tourism. While guiding the reader through the virtual exhibition in the upcoming section, the original exhibition locations of the artworks will also be mentioned in order to account for the original curatorial context, as this also demonstrates how art practice is becoming a field interested in tourism and may suggest the necessity of a deeper interest in studying the field in line with the path delineated by cultural geographer H. Hawkins (2013). On the other hand, it shall be acknowledged that curating practices are increasingly influencing tourism and hospitality (Richards 2024), and this is also an aspect that geographers should consider in their study of the dynamics connecting space, place, and tourism.

Tourism reconfigurations: A virtual exhibition

In the last three decades or so, tourism has become the object of artworks, with the iconic photographs of M. Parr and the sculptures of D. Hanson that not only have acquired world fame but have appeared as the cover art for academic books about tourism¹. The virtual exhibition presented here focuses on lesser-known works of art². A brief description of the works mentioned is also provided.

¹ I wanted Martin Parr’s iconic photograph of The Leaning Tower of Pisa (1990) for the cover of my book on tourism, consumption, and places (Rabbiosi 2018).

² Copyright rules apply to some of the referenced artwork, preventing their reproduction in this article. In those cases, readers are encouraged to access the resource via the online link provided. Since certain links may no longer be available over time, submitting the title in a Google image search may reveal any missing work.

The paradox of 'tourist stages': Authenticity and overtourism

Snapshots of Tourism was an exhibition hosted by Augusta Gallery on Suomenlinna Island, Finland, between 18 of June and 15 of August 2010. Located off Helsinki harbour, Suomenlinna is one of the city's main tourist attractions. A fortified island that has been on the World Heritage List since 1991, Suomenlinna attracts visitors both as a heritage site and as an expression of the typical Baltic archipelagic landscape. Curated by M. Jaukkuri and M. Muukkonen, Snapshots of Tourism 'explores the rapidly changing phenomena of tourism, the plethora of its forms, and the *tourist-gazes* it produces' (<https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/36686/snapshots-of-tourism-hiap-suomenlinna-re-launches-gallery-augusta/>). The concept of the 'tourist gaze', introduced by sociologist J. Urry, brings an ocular-centred perspective to tourism studies (Urry 1990). Yet, the exhibition illustrates the staging and enactment of tourism (MacCannel 1973; Edensor 2001), resulting in performances that encompass a diverse range of topics, from tourists to tourism operators, residents to entrepreneurs, who all play with places through tourism mobilities, consequently transforming them (Sheller, Urry 2004).



Starting from the second half of the 20th century, tourism has emerged as an increasingly ordinary spatial, economic, cultural, and political phenomenon (Minca, Oakes 2014). These spheres are not separate in the social lives of people and places. The concept of place, anchored in its procedural and practical interpretation (Massey 2005; Thrift 2008), is key here. To use T. Cresswell's (2014, p. 70) words, place 'provides a template for practice – an unstable stage for performance'. Place

Fig 1. S. Hawkins, 'Disposable Camera', 2005/2006

Ryc. 1. S. Hawkins, *Disposable Camera*, 2005/2006

Source: <https://arthur.io/art/stuart-hawkins/disposable-camera>.

Źródło: <https://arthur.io/art/stuart-hawkins/disposable-camera>.

is the 'theatre' of everyday practices. The dramaturgical metaphor has become a powerful metaphor in tourism studies through the seminal work of D. MacCannell (1973), which popularised the idea of a tourist destination as an intertwining of stage and backstage, where an ideal 'authentic' and 'beautiful' version of place is performed for the consumption of tourists. One of the artworks featured in Snapshot of Tourism was 'Disposable Camera' (2005/2006), by artist S. Hawkins (Fig. 1). The artwork consists of an image depicting a man whose face is not visible as he takes a picture framing both himself and the landscape behind him; today, we would call it a selfie (and it would likely be taken with a smartphone). The landscape behind him is clearly fake—a curtain printed with an idyllic mountain landscape.

The notion of place performance and staged authenticity has been reconsidered by geographers with reference to the concept of landscape. Recognising a landscape requires the presence of both an observer and a stage that encompasses all the main features and characters of the landscape. Some landscapes, under the influence of tourism, reinterpret history to become a backdrop and spectacle for visitors in search of distinction (Minca 2007). In the shift from mass tourism, which is characterised by sun, sand, and sea, to postmodern tourism, where heritage, handcraft, and habitat play a central role in the pursuit of meaningful tourist experiences (Uriely 2005), place performances are transforming tourism (Minca, Oakes 2006). Cities and regions have invested in cultural events, heritage conservation, and urban decor to cater to the consumerist desire of a cosmopolitan, highly mobile audience. Neoliberal urban policies have also favoured tourism over the last three decades or so, despite the limited carrying capacity of tourist destinations. The result is urban gentrification (Gravari-Barbas, Guinand 2019) and overtourism (Russo 2002; Milano et al. 2019).

The work of S. Hawkins, however, is not about cities nor cultural heritage; it depicts a curtain printed with an idyllic mountain landscape that includes a rainbow above the peaks and an elephant. In fact, the staging, enactment, and reconfiguration of landscapes are not limited to urban historical centres and cultural heritage sites; it is also about natural environments, as in the case of national parks – from Yosemite in the USA to Ngorongoro in Tanzania. The curtain drapes over what is likely a less idyllic landscape. The landscape (actually a curtain) is torn and broken in some parts, but the man in the foreground takes a selfie with the scenery, unperturbed. From the broken parts, some darker faces of people appear, though they are not clearly visible. They may represent the hidden actors of tourism and its victims, from the low-paid labour force – often of migrant origin – to those who are dispossessed of their homes, and displaced by conservation projects or urban renewal interventions.

The ecological footprint of tourism

The following artwork in the present virtual exhibition is taken from the original exhibition *Plus de Croissance, Un Capitalisme Idéal*, which ran from 24 of March to 22 of July 2012, at La Ferme du Buisson, a centre for contemporary art located in Noisiel, in the province of Marne La Vallée region of France. From a tourist perspective, this area is better known for Disneyland Paris. Marne La Vallée is both the Paris' backstage and a *bone fide* tourist stage in the form of a theme park, a 'postmodern phantasmagoria of capital' (Berdet 2013). The original exhibition's title – *Plus de croissance, un capitalisme idéal* – punned the words 'more growth' and 'less growth' (*pas plus*), but the English press release translated it as 'beyond growth'. While not specifically the focus of the exhibition, it acknowledged that tourism is a significant avenue for capitalist accumulation (Britton 1991). The main question posed by the collective exhibition was: 'In the midst of a worldwide economic and ecological crisis, can we still believe in unlimited growth?' The exhibition called on artists to 'investigate the idea of growth, whether in relation to economics, urbanism, physics, biology, or botany' (<https://www.lafermedubuisson.com/fr/fr/plus-de-croissance-un-capitalisme-ideal?locale=en>).



Fig. 2. Unknown artist, from the collective exhibition *Plus de croissance, un capitalisme idéal*, 2012
Ryc. 2. Nieznany artysta, z wystawy zbiorowej *Plus de croissance, un capitalisme idéal*, 2012

Source: photo by Chiara Rabbiosi.

Źródło: fot. Chiara Rabbiosi.

The artwork selected for this virtual exhibition showcases a series of glass or crystal trolley suitcases (Fig. 2). The suitcases contain a sealed plant, which is visible due to their transparency. Regrettably, it is today impossible to identify the author of this particular piece. The trolley suitcases, each containing a single plant, convey the extent to which we travel in pursuit of 'nature' and the impact this has on nature conservation projects that often restrict or isolate nature to specific areas while also causing it to be domesticated. As tourists, we occasionally want to grab that 'piece of nature' as a souvenir, secretly placing it in our suitcase before going home. The project also invites reflection on the substantial environmental impact of tourist travel.

Tourism often performs, mimics, and maintains nature to meet the expectations of tourists seeking wilderness. Human geographers have identified that nature is a social construction (Demeritt 2002), and tourism is a significant agent in shaping the relationship between nature and society, as well as contributing to the production of nature itself (Saarinen 2004). For a long time, the notion of a 'beautiful' landscape has shaped the approach to environmental protection, conservation efforts, and the cultural and tourist activities' promotion. This has resulted in the display of post-card-perfect landscapes in tourism marketing materials, as well as their staging and performance in the tourism industry (Lund 2023). Mountains, for instance, have been aesthetically invented through tourism; for a long time, they were not considered a beautiful landscape in Europe (Bainbridge 2018). For the tourism industry, nature serves as both a resource and a source of exploitation, representing a political and ecological matter (Douglas 2014). Natural parks frequently provide a tamed experience of wilderness while also regulating human interactions with these resources.

Today, the study of tourism geographies reveal the deleterious effects that tourism has on natural resources, especially those that are considered common goods. For instance, tourism produced more than 35 million tonnes of solid waste in the first decade of the 2000s, according to the World Tourism Organisation (2012). Plastic products are an integral part of the single-serve hospitality industry (Juvan et al. 2023), and plastic bottles for water are heavily used during excursions in many destinations; however, they become a greater problem where waste management is poor (Maione 2021). Water management is critical overall, but it is even more so in destinations, where water is diverted to tourist-related services at the expense of residents' needs (Hof, Blázquez-Salom 2015). Even the promotion of 'green tourism' can have significant environmental impacts, such as the promotion of the use of e-bikes in mountainous areas, which may lead to increased soil erosion and exacerbate issues related to battery production and disposal (Nielsen et al. 2019).

The environmental consequences of tourism can be more evident in specific locations but are felt on global scale (Gössling 2002; Gössling, Hall 2006). Tourism has a significant impact on climate through global emissions, with shopping,

food, and transport being major contributors (Lenzen et al. 2018). Since the rise of mass tourism after WWII, private cars have become synonymous with vacationing and have been later replaced by aircraft, which has allowed the world to become smaller. According to a briefing from the decarbonising transport advocacy organisation T&E, more than 6.7 million flights departed from European airports, emitting a total of 164.85 megatonnes of CO₂ in 2023. This represents a growth of 11.2% in terms of the number of flights and 13.2% in terms of CO₂ emissions compared to 2022 (Dardenne, Enriquez n.d.).

Tourism has a significant impact on the environment, acting as a powerful agent of landscape transformation through the urbanization of environmental resources and the touristification of various settlements, which in turn impacts a variety of different ecosystems. Tourism is also affected by the effects it contributes to generating. For instance, climate change shapes tourist destinations, landscapes, and natural and cultural heritage that sustain tourism. Winter destinations denoted by winter, snow, and mountain tourism, and coastal destinations known for summer, seaside, and beach tourism, are vanishing, raising questions not only about the possible adaptive strategies for landmarks but also the ethical and emotional dimensions of engaging with these destinations (Gössling, Scott 2024).

Tourism, gendered and feminist geography

The third artwork for the virtual exhibition that this article moves through is G. Jönsson's painting, titled *Vandrerskan* (2014). G. Jönsson's painting parodies the famous painting by C.D. Friedrich, *The Wanderer over a Sea of Fog* (1818). Friedrich's work is often cited as one of the aesthetic icons of the romantic gaze on natural landscapes, which has also significantly influenced the tourist gaze and performance. Jönsson's painting depicts a woman standing on the same peak and facing the same foggy mountain landscape. However, the woman has a vacuumcleaner in her right hand and is likely determined to clean up the waste on the peak she has climbed and is full of (Fig. 3).

A few years ago, while studying walking and tourism, I started taking notes on my own tourist walking trips. In an article, I reported on the encounter with 'nature', such as alpine ibexes, magniloquent lakes, and peaks (Rabbiosi 2021). The atmosphere in Friedrich's painting subconsciously influenced me even before I reached the peak. However, my tourist experience ended in disappointment. As I arrived at the mountain peak, marking the culmination of my hiking journey, I found it bustling with individuals participating in a range of activities. These included gazing, identifying other peaks, scouting for the ideal photo vantage point, interacting with other hikers, and using the provided table for self-orientation. Other, more prosaic activities included undressing and redressing, climbing



Fig. 3. G. Jönsson, *Vandrerkan*, 2014

Ryc. 3. G. Jönsson, *Vandrerkan*, 2014

Source: <https://gittanjonsson.se/aktuellt.htm>.

Źródło: <https://gittanjonsson.se/aktuellt.htm>.

on the steel cross marking the peak's highest point (such crosses are typical markers of peak summits in the Alps in Italy), eating, and joking with fellow hikers. Vocal engagement accompanied some of these activities. The peak was teeming with shouts and a dense physical presence. As a result, the atmosphere of *The Wanderer over a Sea of Fog* no longer affected me; instead, I felt as though I had been immersed in a contemporary photograph by M. Parr. The atmosphere was closer to the holiday ambiance I had experienced in more common tourist sites, such as on the beach in Rimini, a famous seaside tourism destination in Italy.

A curious comment can be found on Jönsson's own website, written on Friedrich's retrospective exhibition in 2024 in the Hamburger Kunsthalle. The artist's comment specifically stresses the gendered dimension of the painting: 'In a patriarchal society, it was the men who set out on these adventures' (<https://git-tanjonsson.se/aktuell.htm>). Social, cultural, and physical restrictions have historically limited women's freedom to choose when, where, and under what conditions they can leave their homes (Männistö-Funk 2021). Associating women with a reproductive role and men with a productive one, modern society has spatialised gender roles, reinforcing the division by creating spaces that encourage men to use public spaces and women to stay at home (Massey 1994). Consequently, women have often been represented as lacking a mobile subjectivity, as they have been rooted in place and home, while narratives of the masculine have often hinged on travel (Sheller 2016).

Jönsson's painting doesn't want to simply represent a wandering woman. The artist, commenting on the depiction of a wandering woman holding a vacuum cleaner, emphasises that the woman's desire is to escape the confines of her home and immerse herself in the beauty of a landscape. The painting not only juxtaposes the spatial placement of women within the home and domestic roles, but it also pinpoints the tourism-related impacts on the environment. In fact, the artist envisions a woman standing atop the mountain, gazing out at the vastness of the world, yet simultaneously reflecting, "There's a lot of work to be done!" – the artist claims – and perhaps beginning to address the situation. On one hand, the visibility of garbage on the mountain slopes connects to the discussion of the environmental impact of tourism in the previous section. On the other hand, the gendered nature of the painting provides a critique of the unspoken masculine perspective that has defined tourism geographies for a long time.

Since the 1990s, women's increased access to tourism has resulted in a redefinition of tourism studies, which have begun to incorporate feminist perspectives (Pritchard 2014). Tourist spaces are now understood to be the result of many different constraints and power dynamics. Physical appearance can be rendered as a significant mediating factor in the tourist experience for women. For example, feeling that they attract more attention from men can put women in a position of feeling vulnerable (Seow, Brown 2018, Yang et al. 2018; Barmpouza, Rabbiosi 2023). Despite

the constraints on women's travel, recent research shows that women enjoy many benefits by engaging in it. Specifically, tourist experiences have been associated with relaxation, education, and social interaction, as well as with self-empowerment processes, such as self-discovery, and acquiring a sense of autonomy and authenticity in terms of one's existence.

From an economic geographic perspective, it can be observed that tourism frequently perpetuates gendered spatial divisions as labour geographies intersect with gender geographies in the tourism industry. As is widely known, tourism is a service sector industry that primarily provides job opportunities for women, and it has been asserted as a domain where women can achieve empowerment. However, most tourism development policies view women's empowerment as purely economic (Cole 2018). While even this perspective is limited – women in tourism in management or leadership positions are a minority compared to men – it also lacks attention to psychological empowerment, which is, on the contrary, most significant. Women working in tourism often have stronger self-esteem, better self-confidence, and pride because of conversing with tourists, socialising with other tourism project participants, or attending assisted training sessions (Cole 2018). Social and political empowerment can also come from doing things together, giving women the ability to make decisions about a tourist project, which also boosts their self-esteem, raises their awareness of their status and rights, and makes them active project leaders (Cole 2018). Unfortunately, in tourism, as in other labour contexts, women are charged with a double burden: being performative in their job as well as at home, where they maintain their domestic role.

G. Jönsson's painting also talks about another dimension that shall reconfigure tourism studies, that is, feminist thinking focussing on the intersection between female subordination and the exploitation of nature. Starting in the 1970s, some militant groups have begun defending natural resources (such as forests) and a substance economy that is often more aligned with natural cycles. Feminist thinkers from the Global South have criticised modern science and industrial development as the product of the patriarchy, hostile both to women and nature. Today, some studies claim that women pay more attention than men to environmental problems and adopt more impactful behaviours. Researchers have developed the concept of the ethics of care, aiming to expand its scope beyond the family and its boundaries to encompass various domains, including human and non-human subjects, environments, and other scales. Considering this, C. Ren (2021) claims that it is crucial to continue addressing tourism as a problem, advocating for this approach through the lens of relational feminist thinking (Haraway 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017) and alternative and collaborative methods of knowledge.

Tourism geography is made on foot

The last picture frames a heritage site – the Danish Elmelund Church – and a piece of design – a specific bench that walkers can find along Camøno, a Danish walking route (Fig. 4). Camøno is a walking trail on the island of Møn designed to leverage tourism in Southern Denmark (<https://www.museerne.dk/camonoen/>). The Camøno was deployed by the Møn museum in 2016 to connect and valorise local resources across the island for tourism purposes. Along the route, designer benches have been set in specific spots that have been called *Camøno's pauses*. The benches recall the logo of the walking route and were designed by a company whose work, including the Camøno bench, was featured in the exhibition *Territory for Dreaming* in 2016. The exhibition introduced small Danish companies showing 'a strong sense of nature and landscape' (<https://danishdesignreview.com/blog/2016/12/1/norrrn-territory-for-dreaming>). The aesthetics of the designers' bench and the verbal and visual narrative on the Camøno website work together to design, promote, and infrastructure the walking route, making it seem like a curatorial project (see also Richards 2024 on the role of curation in tourism).

The idea that 'geography is made on foot' is widely shared within the geographic community, often attributed to French anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus. Even though we live in an age that is both highly carbon transport-based and virtual thanks to digital technologies, walking can still provide a very enriching frame for geographical thinking.

There is increased emphasis on promoting short, middle, and long-distance walking routes for tourism purposes



Fig. 4. The Elmelund Kirke along the Danish walking route Camøno. Close-up view on a circular bench

Ryc. 4. Elmelund Kirke na duńskim szlaku pieszym Camøno. Widok z bliska na okrągłą ławkę
Source: originally shown in the exhibition 'Territory for Dreaming', at the Danish Architecture Centre, 2016. No longer available online.

Źródło: Pierwotnie prezentowany na wystawie „Territory for Dreaming” w Duńskim Centrum Architektury, 2016. Niedostępny online.

(UNWTO 2019). The concept of 'slow tourism' has gained prominence in framing walking tourism (Dickinson, Lumsdon 2010; Fullagar et al. 2012; Cisani, Rabbiosi 2023). Lumsdon and McGrath (2011) break down slow tourism into four main dimensions. The first is a counter-cultural perspective, which this kind of holiday-making may represent in front of the most common contemporary time-society nexus that prizes being fast and being hyper-productive; the second strand concerns the interaction with the locality that is supposed to be more richly intertwined with a slower rhythm rather than other 'faster' ways of travelling; the third relates to the mode of transport chosen to move within and reach the locality, prioritizing those modes that run at relatively few kilometres per hour; finally, one dimension of slow tourism may be listed according to the environmental consciousness that this form of tourism apparently demonstrates with the choice of modes of transport that have a low carbon footprint. Walking holidays often embody all four dimensions associated with slow tourism.

Walking tourism also intersects with pilgrimage tourism, with a specific revival of ancient pilgrimage routes, rediscovered or sometimes even designed anew. Pilgrimage tourism can also be considered from a secular or even a post-secular viewpoint (Collins-Kreiner 2010; Nilsson, Tesfahuney 2018), given the transcendental meanings attributed not only to reaching a specific 'sacred', though not necessarily religious, destination but, even more importantly, to the journey and the 'circulation' itself. In this sense, nature and its transcendental meanings play a significant role.

The Danish Camøno is named after the renowned Camino de Santiago de Compostela, which has become a popular long-distance tourist destination over the past thirty years. Regarding the secularization of the motives that lead to a walking route, such as Camøno or other routes, extending beyond religious experiences, we can list both the possibility to enact inner trips and connect embodied sensations to spheres of personal regeneration through fatigue and loneliness but also, as the opposite, as occasions of sharing and sociality, mixing the cards that strictly distinguish the profile of a pilgrim from that of a tourist or simple visitor (Rabbiosi, Meneghello 2023), a dynamic recently documented by the international scientific literature (Nilsson, Tesfahuney 2018; Shinde, Cheer 2024).

Numerous actors, such as guides, tour operators, local retail and hospitality, civic networks, volunteers, and – indeed – walkers play a major role in the promotion and management of walking routes. The role of cultural and political agencies operating at a higher level shall also be acknowledged, as they can foster the development of a route's supporting network and the establishment of its political and economic foundation. The Council of Europe (CoE) is the most famous European actor of this kind, promoting the European Cultural Routes (ECRs) programme. While the European Union also supports the deployment of walking routes to promote lesser-known destinations and foster European economic integration, particularly

in rural regions, the unique feature of the Council of Europe's ECR programme is its use of tourism to achieve cultural Europeanization (Groth 2023). In line with the CoE's goals and objectives, the ECRs help people make connections with (not always) neighbouring countries based on tangible and intangible things they have in common. These can be traditions like olive harvesting or the tangible nature of biodiversity and archaeological sites. Political and socio-cultural assumptions, which change over time and connect to political geography, therefore regulate heritage-making, a process that selectively attaches meaning and value to cultural phenomena (Harvey 2014).

Using long-distance walking routes to foster European territorial cooperation and cultural Europeanization raises a range of critical questions that remain unanswered. For example, does this approach revitalize the social capital of vulnerable or marginalized areas by embracing dynamic demographic and cultural shifts, or does it primarily reinforce ethnocentric perspectives on the regions the routes traverse and the heritage they celebrate? How do tourist walking routes intersect and contrast with refugee walking routes, which often pass only a few kilometres away? These are questions that are yet to be answered, and geographers nurtured by the knowledge and concepts of all the discipline sub-branches, are probably in one of the best positions to answer, contributing to the debates about how tourism is currently reconfigured.

Conclusion

This article has explored the intricate relationship between geography and tourism, emphasising the key concepts of spatial imaginaries and place performances. Through the lens of geographical thinking, we have seen how tourism shapes and is shaped by cultural, economic, political and environmental geographies.

The paradoxes of places as tourist stages, the ecological footprint, gendered perspectives, and the resurgence of walking tourism – which brings to attention the embodied and spiritual emplacements of space, place and tourism – highlight critical areas where geographical insights can deepen the understanding of the tourism impact. As tourism evolves in the face of climate change, social inequality, and cultural transformation, the integration of geographical knowledge will be crucial in addressing social and spatial challenges. On the other hand, given the current broad reach of tourism, it is crucial for geographical scholarship, regardless of its sub-branch, to increasingly acknowledge tourism as a dimension that defies dismissal as 'superficial'. Indeed, tourism has an impact far beyond the Earth's metaphorical or morphological surface.

Future research could explore the entanglements between spatial imaginaries and place performances as a way to understand geographically societal facts that haven't been touched here but that are of major importance, such as those connected to digital technologies and artificial intelligence, global warfare, natural disasters, and the uneven access to travel and vacationing.

Through the curation of a virtual exhibition of artworks, the performative nature of tourism has been discussed. Curating a virtual exhibition has been deployed as an innovative methodology to approach a review endeavour. While scientific research will continue to evolve by adjusting methods that each scientific community considers more solid for its aims and scope, the possibility of dialogue, if not contamination, with ways of 'knowing otherwise' such as art (Hawkins 2013), could become a way to address and advance geographical concepts. How tourism is represented, enacted, and understood through the arts remains fertile ground for critically engaged geographical research.

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