
Introduction

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1 Introduction

This special issue of *IJTA* is organised around the core theme of 'Home imaginings: travel, place and belonging'. The readership of a journal dedicated to the anthropology of tourism might wonder on the reasons behind the choice of such 'home'-anchored theme. The main argument is that in order to understand the social practice of tourism (in which 'travel' and 'place' are core elements) there is a need to not disengage it from the social realm of 'home', since they are in fact part of a conceptual continuum of the tourism experience in as much as each is a form of dwelling experienced by the tourist as a social subject. The anthropology of tourism is a relative newcomer to the general field of anthropology. When retracing the brief history of the subfield, almost always the main landmark referred to is the book edited by Valene Smith in 1977, *Hosts and Guests*. In its title and throughout the volume, we already find dichotomy used as an epistemological device for the analysis of tourism as a social practice: the group of people who welcome people from other places (*hosts*), and the latter, i.e., those who go to visit other places away from their place of dwelling (*guests*). We can also find dichotomy as an epistemological device in MacCannell's (1992) ex-primitive and postmodern, in Graburn's (1983) sacred and profane, in Goffman's (1959) backstage and front stage as used by MacCannell (1992). Because dichotomies are not a pre-given, but a power-laden cognitive construction, and because 'tourism is most productively viewed not as an entity in its own right, but instead as a social field in which many actors engage in complex interactions across time and space' [Leite and Graburn, (2009), p.37], the papers in this

special issue strive to move away from a dichotomist approach between being home and being away. In fact, one of the major contributions of the papers here gathered is precisely their ability to ethnographically illustrate the entanglements of the two terms as emoted fields of the self.

2 Home as the harmonious ontological pairing of self and space, and the thaumaturgic power of place.

The word 'home' is a hypernym, i.e., it encapsulates a diversity of lived dimensions that are not necessarily coherent among themselves. Nevertheless, the word 'home' almost always evokes the idea of 'place' and people when uttering the word 'home' (i.e., the place where one lives, be this place of dwelling a result of intentional choice or a geographical fortuity) quite frequently conflate in it a locale and a sense of belongingness.¹ The core issue here is really not spatial but emotional. As Cohen (1979) established and Leite (2005, 2017) additionally explored, travellers can re-elect their centre, i.e., their 'home':

“At the other end of the continuum, individuals who are deeply alienated from their own society will engage in tourism as an existential quest for an alternative, or ‘elective’, center in a society distant from their own. But what of the ‘roots’ tourist, who travels to the land of origin of his or her ancestors? ‘In this case,’ writes Cohen, “the desire for a visit to such a center derives from a desire to find one’s spiritual roots. This visit takes on the quality of home-coming to a historical home. Such travelers, so to speak, re-elect their traditional center” (1979, p.191).” [Leite, (2005), p.279]

Place is a type of space. As Lefebvre ([1979] 1991, pp.2–3) stated, the latter is the term preferred by mathematicians and philosophers² who represent space as a geometric homogeneity [Lefebvre, ([1979] 1991), p.288]. According to Tuan (1977) place is structured space, being the centre of values. To places we give names, to places we feel emotionally related to, either by attraction or repulsion. This quality of place as a central location of values, and thus as constituted in and by emotion, is unavoidably connected to the forms of social regulation of individuals' relation to each other, i.e., to the different set of rights and duties that conforms social interaction in any given setting. The anthropological analysis of social relations as enacted by kinship has in the 20th century shifted from structure, to practice and then to discourse with, from the 1980s onwards, a centralisation of gender, the body and of personhood [Carsten, (2000), p.2]; later, the idioms of relatedness (Carsten, 2000) were brought to the forefront. This in turn, brought the realm of affect as a central element in the anthropological analysis of the early 2000s (see for instance Clough and Halley, 2007). 'Affect' and 'place' are thus two concepts and two dimensions of people's experiences that are intertwined, a relation that the ethnographies part of this special issue on home imaginings show in a clear manner.

The frequent association of 'home' and 'place' results in the former as usually associated with a sense of a located and therefore static spatiality: home as a stable entity, both conceptually and materially, is a take on the term central to the very experience and definition of the social practice of tourism as anthropology's earliest texts in the field and their dichotomist perspectives testify to. However, this special volume contributes to the approaches that refuse the linearity of such a perspective. The editorial line here followed takes not only the frequently perceived 'stability' of the concept 'home' as resulting of a

collapsing of time and a freezing of space – the result of which is the frequent assigning to it of stability and structure (and thus order and meaning) rather than the perception of its indeterminacy and movement (Browne, 2004) – but also takes ‘home’ as made to exist through lived experience, phenomenological experientiation and imaginings. Nevertheless, and regardless of the degree of stability and structure or the degree of indeterminacy and movement, ‘home’ in the sense of belonging can be aptly defined as a ‘structure of feeling’ (Appadurai, 1996)³, one that tends to stress ‘the emotional gravity of place’ [Lovell, (1998), p.1]. The outcome of this is the constitution of ‘home-as-place’ as a highly internalised construct resulting in an appropriation of landscape where we are no longer strangers, i.e., where we feel we belong. Then, if ‘home’ is the ‘place’ where one is supposed to find peace through the feeling of belonging, ‘home’ as a concept is best defined as the harmonious ontological pairing of self and space.

Because this special issue is centred on ‘home imaginings’ within the broad realm of the visitor/tourist experience, there is one particular element that this issue’s papers bring into focus: the power of the materiality of place on the individual, or what I call here, the ‘thaumaturgic power of place’, that although reminiscent of it, it is not just the matter of what Bruner (2004, p.24) referred as ‘the sheer materiality of being there’ of the tourism encounter. The etymology of thaumaturgic comes from the Greek *thauma* (marvel) + *ergos* (work) and it means an agent who works wonders or performs miracles.⁴ The term is perhaps more frequently known in relation to the French and English monarchs who were credited with the ability through the laying on of hands to cure their subjects of various conditions and diseases (namely scrofula) (Bloch, 1923). To work a wonder is to achieve a change of a remarkable nature. And this is what is often described in the ethnographies here collected: on how the qualities of a place produced a change (for the better) of the individual expressing them (papers here by Ramella, Pezzi, Zhu, and Skipper and Davidson). Quite often the impact of the materiality of the place is reflected directly on the body of the visitor (see particularly Skipper and Davidson, but also Pezzi and Zhu). The experience of feeling ‘at home’ in a place is always reported as one where the perceived qualities of the place act beneficially over the individual, producing the already referred to harmonious ontological pairing of self and space.

3 Home and away – moving beyond the dichotomy

The texts here collected challenge the spatially stable notion of the hypernym ‘home’ in as much as they are all portraying subjects-in-motion and ‘home’ as a time-imbued, and thus processual, reality. In fact, underlying all of these papers is the understanding that ‘home’ does not simply exist, but is made (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). A sense of home as an harmonious ontological pairing between self and place is also constituted by social relations, imaginaries and local-global connections among mobile people who foster this sense through quite often mundane practices conducted in various places, or even by familiar references which can be found in different locations (Nowicka, 2007; Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014; Rosales, 2016; Leite, 2017). Another shared feature by all of the papers is the blurring of the lines between work and leisure, origin and identity, or movement and mooring. In this way the papers actively subtract themselves from a dichotomist approach and seek to illuminate and critically analyse not just the mutual entanglements of tourism (as a social practice of going away from home) and home (as

the social practice of dwelling in one place), as also posit the actual coterminous existence of these two emoted and performed modes of living.

Visible in the papers in this special issue is also the fact that 'home' is constructed in a field of unequal power relations (Salazar and Smart, 2011) that disrupts the often held linearity sense of 'home'. And because 'the struggles to call a place home in an increasingly mobile world are no longer confined to conventional diasporic groups but relate also to 'a loosely coherent, adaptive constellation of responses to dwelling-in displacement' [Clifford, (1997), p.254], the ethnographically-informed papers part of this special issue encompass a wide cross-cultural range and a variety of lived experiences: a multinational community of location-independent families (LIFs) (Mancinelli), a set of touring musicians who are members of two US bands touring in the USA and in Europe (Ramella), a number of local returning emigrants and foreign lifestyle migrants in the Marche region of Italy (Pezzi), Chinese tourists to Lijiang who become local inhabitants/tourism entrepreneurs in its old city (Zhu), British and Indian cultural producers and the construction of the British Museum as the present day home for a 17th century Assamese textile (Pope) and African-American visitors to slave plantation homes in the Southern USA (Skipper and Davidson).

Another shared feature of all the papers relates to the nature of the data collection work: the authors of the papers have all shared of the studied subjects' social universe. Although the degree of immersion in the field does vary from several years to a few months, all the papers have an ethnographic quality that unifies them.

4 The papers

We start with the paper by Fabiola Mancinelli on the home imaginings of LIFs exploring the ways how they negotiate their idea of home located at the complicated intersection between security and freedom, material dispossession and attachment, isolation and sense of community. Mancinelli argues for a sense of home as a process with a core ground on physical presence of family members and on different home-making practices. In the paper that follows Mancinelli's, Anna Lisa Ramella focus on two dimensions of a sense of home: the embodied and the imaginative, while recurring various imaginings of home and movement that are related to aspects of travel, place-making and belonging as identified in the group of touring musicians studied. Ramella shows that the relation between movement and stasis is not monodirectional, but reciprocally informed and that practices created by and for travel can actually contribute to the stability and comfort of a sense of home, even when at home. Multiplicity of dwelling is also central to the case-study brought by Maria Giulia Pezzi who looks at how differentially space-origin located individuals interact in relation to two villages of the Italian region of Marche and the landscape surrounding them. Pezzi argues for a blurring of boundaries between the categories of guest, host, non-guest, non-host, and the different meanings linked to the ways in which the emotional attachment to a certain place and its landscape are constructed through discourses and actions. The last three papers are the only ones that intersect home with 'official' heritage realms, and thus with 'firstness' (Santos, 2018). The experience of a place to where one went first as a visitor and that is later emoted through lived experience as home is present in Yujie Zhu's paper on UNESCO's World Heritage old city of Lijiang. Having as background the increased domestic mobility of (mostly Han) Chinese citizens, Zhu, the same way as Pezzi, portrays a discovery of the

harmonious ontological pairing of space and self, i.e., of home in a place that their subjects came to meet first as tourists. The ethnography offered in this paper shows how the individuals studied emotes their relation to the old city of Lijiang as one that combines the imaginings of home longing, spiritual discovery and capitalist entrepreneurship. Because Zhu's paper is based on a time-deep ethnography, he is able to show that the home away from Lijiang does not lose a place in some of his subjects' lives, who throughout the years develop a lifestyle in between two homes/houses/cities. A dual location of home (namely, present day Britain and medieval Assam) is also present in Georgina Pope's text on the British Museum held nine-metre 17th century Assamese textile known as the *Vindravani Vastra*. In her text, Pope offers a reflection on the textile's roots *versus* its routes as main producers of the cloth meaning. Although her study is made within the context of the exhibition in which the British Museum displayed the textile, the central tenet of her analysis is the creation process by an Assamese monk and artist of a ritualised dance as well as the dance's live performance within the context of the museum exhibition. Presented as 'original' in the sense as stemming directly from medieval Neo-Vaishnavite Assam, Pope argues that in fact both the textile and the dance core meanings have been constructed through the routes travelled through the centuries that mediate the textile's location at the two sites. The set of papers closes with the text by Jodi Skipper and Suzanne Renee Davidson on slavery and roots tourism in the USA. The paper analyses plantation tours that shift the centre of the visit from the master occupied houses to the back of the big houses. As with Pope, we are here presented with contexts of formal display of a meaningful reality. But while Pope's paper focus its gaze on the producers and does not cast its gaze over the audiences' reaction to the museum exhibit or the dance performance, Skipper and Davidson aim precisely at illuminating the mostly African-American visitors' reaction to these places of ancestry. Paying particular attention to the embodied reactions and emotions experienced by the visitors, Skipper and Davidson work shows how the sense of home is processually constructed, permeated by personhood (and its emoted embodiments) and set in a field of unequal power relations.

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Notes

- 1 See, for instance Cross (2003) on the different ways 'home' was emoted by the respondents of her survey, and Schroder (2008) on the five dimensions of place attachment her survey identified in New Zealand.
- 2 Exception made to phenomenologists.
- 3 Taking inspiration here from Appadurai's term enunciated within his analysis of twentieth century ethnicities dynamics as related to the politics of affect [Appadurai, (1996), p.153].
- 4 See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/thaumatourge> (accessed 29 April 2018).