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Learning about 'Home'/Teaching about Place: The Everyday Leisure Experiences of Diaspora Tourism

Introduction

The collective identity of a diaspora is based on a common country of origin. This shared homeland is central to the formation of diasporic identity, creating a unique identity based on the interpretation of homeland in a new context (Brown, 2011). Return visits by migrants, back to the ancestral homeland is often referred to as 'coming home' (Li & McKercher, 2016). Previous work in diasporic travel and tourism tend to regard diasporic groups as being undifferentiated, travel for similar reasons and achieve broadly similar outcomes (Li & McKercher, 2016) except for specific studies focusing on multigenerational migrants (Wessendorf, 2007). Specifically, migration researchers acknowledge the distinct situation of *transnational* practices especially return travel for first or second-generation migrants and the behaviour of these migrants (e.g. Graham & Khosravi, 1997; Kaftnaglu & Timothy, 2013; Zinn, 2005). Discourse among tourism and migration scholars has debated the conceptual understanding of return migration and the definition of migrants and tourists (O'Reilly, 2003; Duval, 2004; Sinatti, 2011). Furthermore, return travel is seen to play an important role in maintaining cultural identity (Durko & Petrick, 2013), but to date, transnational studies have yet to focus specifically on tourism-related phenomena.

Many travelers re-affirm their place identity and attachment for their homeland – their country of origin – with each subsequent return visit (Li & McKercher, 2016). Belonging is an inherently emotional phenomenon often neglected in studies conducted within diasporas despite acknowledgement that in a world of increasing movement, people are often left with a heightened need to belong to a community (Bauman, 2001). One of the ways that migrants experience belonging is through the everyday leisure activities of their host family members while traveling to their homeland (Vathi, 2015) but further research in tourism needs to acknowledge the relationships between tourism and everyday social life especially in the context of returning 'home' (McCabe and Stokoe, 2010). This paper specifically focuses on the conceptualizations of everyday leisure and encounters with place for one migrant family from Canada returning to Cyprus. Using a mobilities framework, the study investigates leisure experiences within the realm of diasporic tourism addressing multiple and increasingly varied conceptualizations of place and belonging.

Literature

Building on Lefebvre's (1991) claims that all aspects of social life are infused with elements of everyday life, the meanings of tourism places should not be simply attributed to the abnormal and extraordinary but are also constructed and communicated in mundane life (Chen & Chen, 2017). Larson (2008) calls for a 'de-exoticizing' of tourism such that tourist encounters are infused with everyday experiences. Nevertheless, there has been little attention that builds on this understanding of everyday leisure experiences of diasporic tourism. Williams and Hall (2000) include the particularities of place as one of the most important factors that impacts the relationship between migration and tourism.

Tourism, especially diaspora tourism, demands new metaphors based on being, doing, touching and seeing rather than just 'seeing' places (Cloke & Perkins, 1998). However, the role of place is far less recognized in the literature on diasporic tourism when compared with leisure tourism (Vathi, 2015). Diasporic tourism is concerned with migrants' attachment to the homeland but according to Crouch (2000) it is leisure/tourism that is important in figuring and refiguring place and establishing links with identity. A few studies in the place and diaspora literature have argued that mobility in different forms can affect place bonding in various ways (Li & McKercher, 2016) but generally it can reinforce place identity and attachment (Gustafson, 2009). In the context of diasporic travel, migrants can experience more complex changes after their return and can renew their perspective of the place of their homeland (Gieles, 2009; Li & McKercher, 2016). For instance, sense of place, built upon everyday experiences and subjective feelings, can be so intense that it becomes a central element in

the construction of an individual's identity (Massey, 1994). Crouch and Desforges (2003) call for a re-envisioning of tourist experiences such that they are about multi-sensuous encounters through which we 'feel' our way, as individuals, as identities, and in relation to cultural and social contexts around us. Sensory encounters – the senses of smell, taste, touch, hearing, sight – inform human engagement and the intangible cultural heritage that breaths life with the homeland (Kearney, 2009; Rodaway, 1994) yet the focus in current research has been on the extraordinary of tourism places; an escape from home, a quest for more desirable and fulfilling places (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006). Tourists encounter a destination by engaging all the senses; touch, smell, sight, hearing, and taste (Andrews, 2009) and there are opportunities to experience place through feelings of insiderness rather than outsiderness (Relph, 1976). Thus, migrants on their return trip home will engage with place in specific and different ways than perhaps other visitors because of their strong cultural heritage connections.

Method

The mobility paradigm rejects 'society as static' (Sheller & Urry, 2006) thus the flow of migrants as tourists from various migrant regions and of different generations back 'home' again demonstrates a complexity with identity and the idea of 'being' and especially 'becoming' through tourist practices and everyday encounters (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Vathi, 2015). Sheller and Urry (2006) suggest several methods for mobilities research and a range of research practices can be invaluable for the investigation of experiences and feelings of movement and mobility (e.g. Mendoza & Moren-Alegret, 2012; Merriman, 2014). This study applies a variety of methods to capture the narrative of the diasporic tourism experience for multiple generations of migrants from Cyprus. Multiple methods consisting of informal active interviews, journals, photo voice, and participant observation create a subjective and reflexive lens with which to interpret the emotional and sensuous travel and leisure experiences of a multi-generational, transnational migrant family (Merriman, 2014). Participants were multigenerational family members of one migrant family from Cyprus migrating to Canada in 1972. Participants consist of six family members from three different generations ranging in age from seven to 83, pseudonyms have been applied to protect anonymity. Informal active interviews, photo voice and journal writing take place while active in various experiences from visiting monasteries, cultural heritage attractions, national historic monuments, and church, coffee shops, visiting family, and just being in the family home. Applying an interpretive narrative analysis, data was subsequently analyzed through transcribing, reading, and re-reading texts allowing for themes to emerge (Bruner, 1991).

Results and Discussion

Return migrants in this study sometimes felt like outsiders (Relph, 1976) not quite belonging to the everyday livelihoods of those living in Cyprus (Li & McKercher, 2016) but at times also felt like insiders. For example, migrants and first-generation Canadians experienced feelings of outsiderness when relatives and friends question why they do not speak better Greek. Staying with family, spending time with relatives and friends, and taking part in the everyday life of 'being', migrants often felt like insiders (Heidegger, 1978; Relph, 1976).

Visiting monasteries, a very common weekend leisure activity in Cyprus among multi-generations of family, were very important for both migrants traveling and first-generation Canadians in establishing meaningful cultural understandings (Kearney, 2009), connecting with place and identity. Individuals as sensual, active and reflexive beings construct themselves as part of the religious experience signifying connections based on relations, objects, feelings (Terzidou, Scarles & Saunders, 2017). For returning migrants, their diaspora tourism experience was conceptualized by a re-affirmation of their place identity for Cyprus. Identity formation is not static nor a hybrid to contradict Brown (2011) but fluid often viscous, difficult to maneuver especially for the migrant as they continuously negotiate their identity through each encounter. One of the discrepancies with diasporic identities is that migrants' have a double sense of belongingness (to their home and host country)

and the actual and imagined histories of the migrant group and their homeland (Vathi, 2015). For first generation Canadians, travel to Cyprus is about learning about place and developing a sense of belonging to something larger than they originally understood.

Especially for migrants, teaching about place for the first generation becomes a primary motivation for travel. Family members, through the act of everyday leisure and mundane encounters such as going to church, eating meals at family members' homes, having family stop by for coffee, barbequing souvla, and visiting monasteries, migrant family members develop (for first generation Canadians) or re-affirm (for migrants) their place identity for their homeland (Stodolska, 2007) engaging with place in deeper and more meaningful ways. Through embodied leisure practice, migrants are not only *in* the place, they also become *of* that place (Mata-Codesal *et al*, 2015). The leisure experiences of return migrants offer insight for a critical discourse of diaspora tourism, what it means to travel to the homeland and to be a 'tourist'. This in turn can have implications for the way in which we move forward in understanding the way new migrants perform tourism in Canada and beyond.

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