



## Research article

# “Atmosphere” - the what? The where? And the how?: Launching the annals of tourism research curated collection on atmosphere 2023



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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the complex phenomenon of atmosphere. More specifically, how atmosphere(s) is produced and consumed in the context of tourism. Interdisciplinary in nature, atmospheres capture the *feeling* of place and space. Atmospheres also work on the body – they have affective qualities. The paper first examines the nature of atmosphere – the what? The second part explores several contexts that have been used to explain where and how atmospheres emerge or are produced – the where? The third, suggests possible approaches for researching atmospheres – the how? In so doing it aims to pull together a range of theoretical perspectives, encourage further research, and set the scene for this special curated issue on atmospherics and tourism.

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## Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the complex, multi-layered, and intriguing phenomenon we call atmosphere. More specifically, how atmosphere(s) is both produced and consumed in the context of tourism. Recent years have seen a growing stream of literature that examines the significance of embodiment, the senses, and emotions – that privilege the unseen, felt, intangible dimensions of the tourism experience. Corporeality and sensory experience are of course vital factors in the tourist experience, yet there are other factors at play that are less easily defined or tangible, which nevertheless are important in understanding both the production and consumption of the tourist encounter. In this regard the role of atmosphere or atmospherics – an indefinable feeling or a sense of place that evokes an emotional response beyond the five senses, has great potential for broadening our conception of place and behavior. From the Greek words for vapor (*atmos*) and sphere or realm (*sphaira*) (Böhme, 2013), atmospheres capture the *feeling* of place and space – the *genius loci* or spirit of place, what is present and what is absent, the tangible and intangible, notions of ambience and aura, as well as traces left behind from people, things, or even through the process of decay.

The word itself is used in everyday parlance to summarize our impression of place and events. We talk about atmospheres as *holiday, festive, tense, lively, dark, friendly, threatening, peaceful, heavy, light*, and so on. But where do these feelings come from? Interdisciplinary in nature, the concept of atmosphere(s) intersects with numerous topics and disciplines from across the broader social sciences including: cultural and human geography, consumption and consumer studies, art, architecture, contemporary ar-

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chaeology, and cultural studies, as well as having a basis in philosophy. But, there remains scope for expanding our knowledge of the nature of atmospheres, how they are produced, and how they are experienced in their many diverse incarnations.

In general, we tend to think of atmosphere as simply something *out there* - we take it for granted, largely because atmospheres are part of daily life. Designers, retail psychologists, architects, and planners, all exert tremendous effort into constructing the *right* atmosphere, constantly looking for that elusive something extra that marks their place as unique. However, despite the clear implications for tourism, atmospheres have not received the full breadth of attention they deserve. But that is not to say that their influence has been ignored. To begin with, the term atmosphere is itself polysemous. Moreover, many aspects of atmospheres have been the subject of in-depth interrogation. In this journal alone there have been numerous papers that have contributed significantly to our understanding of atmospheric properties and their impact. For example, affect (Buda et al., 2014; Carter, 2019; d'Hauteserre, 2015), embodiment (Chronis, 2015; Goulding et al., 2013; Gunjan, 2018; Saxena, 2018; Sun & Lv, 2021), festive atmospheres (de Jong, 2017; Goulding & Shankar, 2011; Neuhofer et al., 2021), imagination (Chronis, 2012; Derriena & Stokowski, 2020; Lovell & Thurgil, 2021; Soulard et al., 2021), haunted and/or spiritual experiences (Goa et al., 2012; Inglis & Holmes, 2003; Singleton, 2017; Stone & Sharpley, 2008; Vidona et al., 2018; Willson et al., 2013), and of course, place (Huang et al., 2018; Jensen et al., 2015; Johannesson & Lund, 2017; Lozanski, 2013; Rantala and Valtonen, 2014). Although not necessarily framed specifically as atmospheres, many of these have direct implications for our understanding of how atmosphere, or its dimensions, have a profound influence on both the production and consumption of people, place and things. Indeed, they are all central to our experience of atmosphere - that illusive thing that is constantly there, lingering lightly above holiday resorts, museums, theme parks, ghost tours, haunted weekends, and sites of atrocities and death. Naturally, they are not always positively felt, nor are they always easy to predict and manage (d'Hauteserre, 2015).

In order to address some key questions relating to our understanding of atmosphere(s) and significantly, to set the scene for this special curated issue on the subject, this paper is divided into three parts. The first part explores the nature of atmosphere - *the what?* It looks at the production of atmosphere and suggests the theatre director and author, Peter Brook's four dramatic types as a framework for conceptualizing atmospheric experience. It then explores the reception of atmosphere through such factors as predispositions, imagination, affect, sound, light and darkness, and finally, embodiment.

The second, looks at a range of contexts that have been used to explain where and how atmospheres either emerge or are produced. Building on the factors that enable the creation and reception of atmosphere, it examines the *where* - the places where atmospheres are experienced. As atmospheres are everywhere, there is no end to the possible cases that could be used to illustrate their presence. However, for the sake of brevity, these have been limited to a range of examples that illustrate the intense nature of atmospheric reception.

Concentrating primarily on non-representational methodologies, including psychogeography, ethnography, and collaborative ethnography, the third part suggests a number of approaches relevant to researching atmospheres - *the how?* It concludes with an introduction to the papers that comprise this curated issue, and points to some future areas of research.

## Atmosphere: the what?

Atmosphere as a field of study has evolved over the years. The term itself has its roots in meteorology, referring to the earth's envelope of air which supports the weather. However, its use in the metaphorical sense did not emerge until the C18th as a description of moods which are *in the air* (Böhme, 2013). Essentially, atmospheres involve production and reception. For example, production can be the result of staged materiality - the construction of space through physical materials so that they represent more than the pure object. In this sense they are designed environments (Böhme, 1995). Conversely, the natural environment, i.e., a glade or a forest, is not necessarily staged, but it still creates an atmosphere of, for example, a space of bodily, sensuous, co-presence, that is experienced and felt (received).

### Producing atmosphere

What remains an important issue for the tourism industry is the production or making of atmosphere(s). Staging may be, according to Böhme (2013), the crux of this, but more specifically, it involves, what he terms "*phantastike techné*". This is the manipulation of material conditions - of things, sound, light, color and so on, that set the conditions for atmospheres to emerge. Whilst conscious of the Janus nature of atmospheres, not only their production, but also their reception, *phantastike techné*, allows the maker to deviate from the accepted model, to take account of the viewpoint of the observer - to construct and manipulate the atmosphere as a stage, so that it will be received in the intended manner.

We can take, for example, the atmosphere of the airport (Huang et al., 2018), which may, on first consideration, be dismissed as places with little atmosphere. Yet beneath the surface, they are worthy of analysis as multi-sensory spaces of atmospheric fluctuation. Airports are not random places. They are organized spatially and temporally. They involve human and material processing - security checks, luggage scans, the checking of passports and boarding cards, surveillance by people and cameras, a movement through designated spaces, and a gradual departure, not only from place, but from the everyday.

They are often the gateway to travel, to holidays, to adventure, the making of business deals, or to say goodbye to loved ones. They are zones of transition, and multiple distinct spaces of waiting. They are places filled with bodies in transit - some bored having arrived too early, others rushing to make the final call. They are shopping outlets, places to eat and drink, or just people watch. They involve a mixture of emotions and moods - excitement, anticipation, happiness, the fear of flying, anxiety, and

frustration. In this sense, multiple atmospheres may be experienced by different people simultaneously. Ultimately, careful planning, and time and order dictate behavior in these transitional, transformative, staged and performed spaces.

#### *Staged atmospheres, or atmospheres as theatre*

Significantly, Böhme (2013) likens the creation of atmospheres to the construction of the 'stage', or the 'art of the stage set'. He further suggests that atmospheres may be divided into moods and phenomena of synaesthesia (a condition in which someone experiences things through their senses in an unusual way). For Bohme, atmospheres are performed, and the important thing that emerges from this is the *character* of the atmosphere. To dig deeper into the metaphorical relationship between atmosphere, theatre, and tourism, and given the idea of the stage as the ultimate metaphor for atmosphere, the renowned theatre director, producer and author, Peter Brook's (1968) book 'The Empty Space' offers a framework of dramatic types that have relevance beyond the physical theatrical performance. Fundamentally, theatre at its most basic consists of a person walking across an empty space whilst someone else watches, a position that resonates with the idea of the theatricalization of the world today. Beyond this, Brook suggests four types of theatre which we can conceptualize as atmospheric performances.

#### *Deadly theatre*

Deadly Theatre is commercial theatre, or theatre as a marketplace offering. It is epitomized by, for example, Broadway or West End productions, aimed at the general public whose objective is to entertain, but not necessarily stimulate thought or critique. These productions are defined by set pieces, with little opportunity for actors to explore meanings or improvise. According to Brook, they are machines operated by *deadly producers* for *deadly spectators*, where profit is privileged over art. For example, Andrew Lloyd Weber's musicals would fall into this category, as would Shakespearean theatre where legitimacy comes from sticking to the script, historical costumes, and long speeches. That is not to say that they lack atmosphere. On the contrary, the atmosphere is constructed through lighting, material props, sound, movement, and human performance. Yet, these are time dependent, rehearsed, and controlled. In contrast, Elizabethan theatre was predicated on exposure, confrontation, contradiction, involvement, awakenings, and passion. This was the atmosphere of the crowd, of salt, noise, sweat, and smell – of atmospheres heady with threat, excitement, fun, physicality, bodies in movement, both on and off the stage, of life and death, tears and laughter.

In turning to tourism as deadly theatre, it is evident in many tourism experiences – in the all-inclusive holiday package – where most behavior takes place within the confines of the hotel resort, or the hotel grounds. It is manifest in tour guides with scripts aimed at selling excursions, events, restaurants, etc., for which they gain a commission. These are staged, the atmosphere is inauthentic, controlled and managed. Space is manipulated, time is ordered and scheduled, borderlands of poverty and leisure are carefully concealed, because confrontation with reality produces discomfort and disorientation (Lozanski, 2013). It is evident in the scripted, staged atmosphere of the heritage tour guide, of physical and psychological distance, of lighting, of separation, of rules, and of order. It defines the organized Safari experience, or the Louisiana swamp tours led by Cajun raconteurs, who deliver a mix of fact and fiction in their twice daily routines through the natural environment (Wiley, 2002). It can also be observed in dark tourism – in the mix of fiction and horror at the lighter end of the scale (Stone & Sharpley, 2008) such as ghost tourism (Goa et al., 2012; Holloway, 2010; Inglis & Holmes, 2003). It may be experienced through immersive performances, such as strategic things *that go bump in the night*, of lights that suddenly go out, of hands on the shoulder, or murder mystery weekends. All of these would be considered deadly theatre due to their consumer-centric, market driven goals, and staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). This is not meant as critique, they also offer escapism, thrills, and fun, but their depth of meaning is more aligned with the inauthentic and insincere – with entertainment. The emphasis of deadly theatre is to understand what the tourist expects, and to design atmospheres that meet these expectations.

However, there is a more sinister side to this as Connell (2019) observes in his analysis of North Korean tourism as political theatre. Alluding to the fact that although not a major tourism destination, North Korea has been open to visitors (apart from South Koreans and US citizens) in a controlled manner since 2017. Today, tourism has become an agent in the construction, perseverance, and performance of the 'theatre' state, an inseparable part of the country's wider functioning, where status, power, and governance are exaggerated through mass performances, spectacles, monuments, public art, and museums. This is an extreme example of produced and tightly controlled atmospheres, with strict narratives and use of symbols that ultimately serve as instruments of propaganda, political indoctrination, and as an ordering force.

#### *Holy theatre*

The second form of theatre that Brook proposes is *holy theatre*, not because it is necessarily religious in nature, but because it is concerned with existential experiences. The aim of holy theatre is essentially to make visible the invisible, to reveal everything that escapes our senses. Its concern is with big issues and real-world problems which are made concrete through performance. Its mission is transformation through discovery and the *happening*, an awakening, whereby we discover and internalize a different way of thinking and being. It is theatre that lifts us to a more emotional, abstract level that goes way beyond the performance itself. Its plays are epitomized in the works of, for example, Antonin Artaud (1896–1948), a major figure in the European Avante Guard, and Samuel Becket, with his existential characters, themes and symbols. The invisible is human consciousness, manifest through rite, spirituality, the intangible, mystery, and ritual. It is possibly the antithesis to deadly theatre, in that it challenges the viewer to think beyond the immediate, physical state of being, to set aside thoughts of entertainment, and to look for a higher level of existence.

In terms of tourism, this different form of atmospheric experience, with its distinct lack of materiality, minimalist narrative, the use of absences and presence, and inner, rather than external experiences is symptomatic of such experiences as sacred quests, visits to spiritual locations (Singleton, 2017), travel to such places as deserts and wildernesses to experience an altered state of mind (Vidona et al., 2018; Willson et al., 2013), or nature's choreography (Johannesson & Lund, 2017). Moufakkir and Selmi (2018) provide a classic example in their examination of the Sahara desert experience. In this case the empty landscape of the Sahara mirrors the inner/spiritual emptiness of the tourist, whilst simultaneously providing them with feelings of physical and emotional security. In the empty desert the participant experiences a dual sense of authenticity that is both nature-centered and existential (Moufakkir & Selmi, 2018). Ultimately, the desert can be understood as a space where existential answers can be found, and self-renewal made possible. It is a place of answers, whose very essence exudes an atmosphere of spirituality.

### *Rough theatre*

Rough theatre, the third type, has the closest relationship with the public. It also has a long historical lineage. Rough theatre is down to earth, a performance, often taking place in informal, sometimes unsavory settings. Primarily it is concerned with making connections with the audience. It may be raw, emotional, spontaneous, and improvised, the like of which is described by Bakhtin (1984) in his treatment of Rabelais and the carnivalesque of the medieval age. It can be observed in the 16th wandering troops of actors, jesters, and minstrels who roamed the lands, performing at carnivals, festivals, and in towns. It is the rough theatre of William Shakespeare where audiences would applaud, hiss, boo, heckle, eat, drink until drunk, join in, and throw things if they disliked what they saw. It continued (after being banned by the Puritans) into the Restoration period, where peasants and aristocracy attended and participated in plays and comedies. It remained popular in the Music Halls of the Victorian age, along with circuses, freak shows, and even public executions. Such atmospheres were festive, embodied, noisy, hedonistic, all encompassing, social, and visceral. This was theatre that did not necessarily belong on constructed stages in physical buildings. It was theatre performed on carts, in tents, in streets, ale houses, in back rooms and in market squares.

We can still observe incidents of rough theatre in certain sectors of the tourism industry today. It is characteristic of festival tourism and events such as Glastonbury. Indeed the modern festival is now firmly a global phenomenon. Woodstock, was possibly the most famous, and notably infamous, landmark in festival iconography (Rolling Stone Magazine 24/06/2004) with over 400,000 attendees (Spitz, 1979). Eleven days after Woodstock, the Isle of White Festival took place in the South of England attended by up to 250,000 participants. The following year attendance had grown to over 600,000 and was considered to be one of the largest human gatherings ever (BBC Hampshire, 2004).

This kind of unfettered hedonism, music, rituals, collectivity, and festival atmosphere is still around today. For example, in the Pagan celebrations at 'Burning Man' festival in the Nevada Desert, USA (Neuhofer et al., 2021). Burning Man, a week-long event, represents a temporary hypercommunity whereby market logics are displaced with an alternative set of practices whereby consumption is characterized as self-expressive art (Kozinets, 2002). It is found in the shamanistic performance of the DJ, combined with the ingestion of 'club drugs' in the rave venues of Ibiza and worldwide. It is in the orchestration of dancers in a collective, spontaneous, one body communitas (Goulding et al., 2009; Goulding & Shankar, 2011). Its principle is hedonism, and atmospheres are created through space(s), whether these be warehouses, fields, or clubs. There is also clever use of lighting, sound, sometimes fire, and physical proximity. This is the atmosphere of the carnival, the mass, the collective, of bodies in motion, of mind-altering substances, and escapism (Goulding et al., 2009).

### *Immediate theatre*

Immediate theatre asserts itself in the present, and the audience reacts to what is happening on the stage. It is not necessarily concerned with abstract existential problems, but it may be used to raise social awareness or change. Fundamentally, it is a combination of the values of Holy Theatre with the sensations of Rough Theatre. It is theatre of the 'everyday', and as such functions by connecting with the audience. Its atmosphere is one of familiarity, accessibility, and openness. An example of this is the 'Immediate Theatre' company, established in 1996 with the aim of working closely with local communities and organizations in order to create performances which engage audiences in the process of change. Their goal is to promote questioning, explore social issues, and support youth programs.

In terms of tourism, it is the staging of experiences concerned with, for example, eco-tourism, tourism dedicated to the promotion of local livelihoods, the environment, and biodiversity (Dass & Chatterjee, 2015). With regard to designing the experience, the creation of atmosphere is key and should take into account the ecological theme, ecological perception, ecological enjoyment, and ecological aesthetic taste (Wu, 2021). This sense of co-production is also key to Arnould et al.'s (1998) analysis of the commercial mediation of a wilderness service-scape. Here they identify a form of dramatic and *communicative staging*, mediated through cultural scripts and a two way interactive communication process between service provider and client. This interaction is not fully scripted but emergent and reactive and relies on cultural understanding and reciprocity. Pickard et al. (2014) provide a further case in their study of the cultural production of indigeneity in a wildlife sanctuary on the Australian Gold Coast. "By ceremonially re-enacting the historical myth of separation between modern civilization and primordial indigeneity, through a tourism enterprise, the sanctuary produces ambivalent meanings about the relationship between 'nativeness' in nature and society" (p.206). It also addresses the "simultaneous emancipation of contemporary indigeneity as a revitalized cultural value together with the social distancing of Aboriginal people as one-dimensional caricatures of primordial nature" (p.206).

There are of course many other types of theatre that may have relevance beyond Brook's framing - musical, melodrama, immersive, fringe, comedy, farce, tragedy, Brechtian, the Absurd, Epic (or political) theatre, Expressionism, and Grand Guignol

(theatre meant to shock) among others. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore each of these, but one thing that they all have in common is that atmosphere is fundamental to the experience.

### *Receiving atmosphere(s)*

Whilst theatre and the “stage” offers a framework to progress analysis of various types of atmosphere, the other side of the coin is that of atmospheric reception – how it is felt. This involves a complex mixture of physical and emotional reactions, including predispositions, imagination, affect, environmental conditions such as sound, light and darkness, and ultimately, embodiment.

*Predisposition and Atmosphere:* The experience of atmospheres is, to a large degree, dependent on predispositions – on what we know, and what we expect. Much of the literature on atmosphere suggests that atmospheres are experienced at the point of entry. Yet, this is not necessarily the case. Preece et al. (2022) posit that our journey into atmospheres is more a process of ‘becoming’, that is often shaped by past experience, structural histories, and expectations. These can serve to orientate, or conversely disorientate the individual as they prepare for entry, ‘land in’, and leave particular atmospheres (see also Hill et al., 2022; Steadman et al., 2021). In this sense atmospheres “have porous or leaky boundaries that are permeable to other spatialities and temporalities” (Steadman et al., 2021 p.149). Indeed memories, and experiences often result in anticipation of what is to come in the future (Steadman et al., 2021).

### *Atmosphere and the imagination*

Linked to the ability to anticipate and look forward, is the complimentary ability to imagine the future event. Whilst anticipation is the result of expectation, often based on past experiences, imagination is the ability to mentally project oneself into the future and construct a mental picture of what that future will look and feel like. In a positive sense, imaginings are pleasurable and based on desire, although we can also feel anxiety about the future (Jenkins & Molesworth, 2018). Time is also a central component in the imagination as participants look backward, to past experiences, and forward to similar future encounters in order to re-fashion and re-assemble, memories of self, place, and time. In the process imaginaries obtain power (Derriena & Stokowski, 2020) and are often the catalyst for action (Jenkins & Molesworth, 2018).

In order for us to feel emotions, we must have some sort of connection, empathy, knowledge, or the ability to imagine ourselves into situations. Of course, imagination is not a universally shared function. Some people have extremely vivid imaginations, whilst others have little or none. This in turn influences our reception of atmosphere. Martin (2004) talks about the *fantastic imagination* and how people use strategies to evoke it, including historicization. An illustration of this is a specialty of the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. Until recently, the practice was to issue visitors with the ID cards of a victim of the Holocaust. They were then encouraged to take on their identity, or imagine themselves in that person's place. As they passed through the three levels of the museum, replete with photographs, artifacts, audio and video footage, and large scale installations, including a Polish transportation railcar, (<https://www.britannica.com/topic>), their journey was updated to track when they were in hiding, when they were arrested, when they were deported to a concentration camp, and eventually, whether they survived or not, and if not, how they perished.

Today, these have been replaced with shorter, smaller booklets that give the basic details. Whichever is used, the idea is to personalize the experience (<https://www.dark-tourism.com/inde>) and create an atmosphere that involves imagination and personal immersion. Here time is a central component in the imagination as visitors re-fashion and re-assemble their meanings of history, self, society, and place. In the process imaginaries obtain power by simplifying reality (Derriena & Stokowski, 2020).

But of course, imagination is a factor that plays a significant role in many tourism experiences, beyond such dark sites of memory. Derriena and Stokowski (2020) for example, examine the deployment of imagination in their study of dark night skies at a U.S. national park. Here they explore how visitors use symbolic language, narrative, and other discursive practices to develop the social, cultural, and spatial contexts of their night sky experiences. Alternatively, many tourist experiences are predicated on escape from reality and engagement with fantasy, fiction and imagination. The settings for the Harry Potter novels are classic examples. Lovell and Thurgil (2021) discuss how tourists and tourism providers blend urban myths about the inspiration for Harry Potter locations with imagination, belief, and disbelief. In the process, the ‘Shambles’ (a series of old, historic lanes in York, UK), is transformed into an atmosphere of magical loci. Ultimately, the ephemeral nature of tourism imaginaries means that they emerge through multiple channels, narratives and images – some institutional (the mass media, community tourism promoters), others by consumers whose socio-cultural understandings and imaginative practices connect with wider social imaginaries (Derriena & Stokowski, 2020).

However, these are not always aligned. As a rule, we enter atmospheres predisposed to their effect. Chandler (2011) gives the example of an early Roman text describing an account of being in sacred groves. Central to this description is the primacy of *stillness*, not a predisposed expectation. The presence of wood, or old trees, induce a feeling of safety and continuity, whilst the myriad of plants and animals, further contribute to the atmosphere. This implies that an openness to the unexpected qualities of atmosphere is important. Essentially, we need to move beyond predispositions, to allow for factors such as light, sound, temperature, silence, sound, absence, presence, and the many variables that can disturb our predispositions.

Indeed, Preece et al. (2022) raise the very question, what about when we *land* in an intense atmosphere for which there is no preparedness? Using the case of spirit religious services in Brazil, they discuss the various feelings of orientation/disorientation and emotional reactions to the unexpected. These are largely determined by the intensity of the landing, bodily affect, the individual's history, and sense of orientation at the time of the landing.



## Affect

Using the stage as the foundational metaphor for the creation of atmospheres allows us to examine the diverse experiences that may be generated. From Brooks categorization, we can observe emotional reactions ranging from entertainment, control, existential contemplation, transcendence, hedonism, pleasure, and escape. These in themselves are grounded in feelings and reactions to atmospheres which are produced and received. However, these deserve closer inspection in terms of exploring atmosphere as a holistic phenomenon. Intrinsically, atmospheres can be apprehended as powers which affect the individual or group in such a way as to induce a characteristic mood (Böhme, 2013). Quintessentially, atmospheres are the combination of feelings and emotions that are created and communicated to tourists and hosts through affect(s).

Affect is a concept closely associated with the experience of atmospheres (Böhme, 2014). But, it is also a highly contested concept that has generated a body of diverse theory and differing perspectives. Broadly speaking there are two dominant themes. The first has its roots in psychology and neuroscience and treats affect as a biological state of primary, precognitive sensory impressions. The second is more commonly associated with the humanities and philosophy and views affect as an intensive force (Ott, 2017). Within these broad traditions, Ott (2017) observes at least eight orientations, which further complicates any attempt at a common definition. Given that this paper is concerned with atmosphere, the focus is on affect as acting on the body, on place, and on emotions (Massumi, 1995; Thrift, 2004).

Thrift, for example talks about affect and the city. “Cities may be seen as roiling maelstroms of affect. Particular affects such as anger, fear, happiness and joy are continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there, and these affects continually manifest themselves in events which can take place either at a grand scale or simply as a part of continuing everyday life” (Thrift, 2004 p.57). Citing Papacharissi (2015), Ott (2017 p.13) points out, that Spinoza, “defined affects as states of mind and body that include, but also extend beyond, just emotions and feelings to describe driving forces that are suggestive of tendencies to act in a variety of ways, or, to not act at all” (Papacharissi 2015 p. 12 cited in Ott, 2017 p.13). For Böhme (2014) atmospheres “designate that which mediates the objective qualities of an environment with the bodily-sensual states of a person in this environment” (Böhme, 2014, p. 92). Whilst atmospheres involve the flow of affective intensities across/among bodies within a space, the felt experience of those flows are rendered subjectively as emotions.

Fundamentally, affects are produced through bodily sensations, feelings, energies, and performances within various settings (d’Hauteserre, 2015). Being affected involves transitions within temporary, spatially situated encounters (Anderson, 2006). Intrinsically, “affect circulates and is found in those intensities that pass body to body” (Vachhani, 2013 p.9) and emotions are formed “through circuits of reactions, which are intense, owned and recognized” (Massumi, 2002, p.28). Indeed “the world is full of affects, working on registers of awareness that often escape the grasp of conscious reasoning” (Barnfield, 2016 p.1).

Consider for example, a lazy day at the beach – the kiss of the sun’s rays on your skin, the feel of the sand between your toes, the salty smell of the sea mingled with the sweet, coconut aroma of suntan oil, the sound of the gentle advance and retreat of the waves lapping against the shore, the contrast between the blue sky and the golden beach, and the welcome relief of a warm breeze. What a delightful scenario – a mixture of pleasurable sensations acting on the mind and body, but, oh how quickly the atmosphere can change. Suddenly the flies descend on your discarded ice-cream cone and then become irresistibly attracted to your oil drenched legs. The peace and quiet of the beach is abruptly disrupted by the arrival of a volley ball team, and the clouds gather and turn the sky grey. Consider also, the relationship between the body, the environment, and feelings, both corporeal and multi-sensorial. Intrinsic to this are also natural elements such as light and darkness and warmth and cold.

Jensen et al. (2015) introduce the term thermascapes, and discuss the agentic role of varying, circulating and intervening temperatures in a diverse range of settings – such as the beach. Moreover, the beach is not only a smooth and deterritorialized space, it is stratified and territorialized. It is a place filled with a range of performances and expectations. It can also be hierarchical, rule-intensive, confining (Saxena, 2018), and further subject to unforeseen human and natural surprises. The unexpected presence or absence of others can disturb the atmosphere. The weather can play tricks, noise levels may exceed individual comfort levels, even unpleasant smells can change the atmosphere. Staging implies a degree of control, yet this is also subject to environmental conditions and the law of nature. Inevitably, even the most carefully thought out strategy is subject to uncontrollable factors.

Of course people themselves can alter the qualities of place when a shared focus aligns the collectives’ emotions and actions. When all works well the result can be a dynamic expression of collective effervescence (Hill et al., 2022). But, incidents before, during and after the event may serve to dampen or even destroy the atmosphere. Using the case of UK football fans, their preparations prior to the match, their engagement in the game itself, and the post-match experience, Steadman et al. (2021) illustrate how the collective atmosphere can be disrupted and eroded by several factors that are beyond the control of the producers. These might include fans leaving matches early to avoid traffic congestion, queues and overcrowded public transport, the crushing co-presence of other fans, even sporadic fights between rival fans, all serve to disrupt the routines and rhythms that lead to positive atmospheric generation.

Intrinsically, place is relationally constructed through territorializing behavioral practices which continuously produce and sustain multifarious versions of place (Cheetham et al., 2018). The production of atmosphere, as in the case of urban planning, town design, and tourism attractions, is further subject to the vagaries of the unexpected. For example, Paiva and Sánchez-Fuarros’s (2021) ethnography of tourism-related practices of atmospheric production in Lisbon, highlights the protests against its unintended consequences. Using the concept of collateral atmospheres they identify how “other” atmospheres emerge in the spaces and times beyond produced atmospheres. They further observe how produced atmospheres mutate over time into collateral atmospheres, which result in negative affective states which impact on neighborhood relationships, personal and familiar well-being, and local identity.

Conversely, people themselves can serve as affect managers. For example, using a case study of student volunteer transformation in orphanage tourism in Malawi, [Freidus and Lennin \(2021\)](#) argue that greater attention needs to be paid to affect management, and in their case, the role that tour influence leaders have in constructing the transformative experience of volunteers. In this instance affect was a result of historically grounded understandings of volunteers and host's cultural backgrounds. It was produced through participants' encounters with each other and with Malawi's less savory aspects - heat, dirt, environmental pollution, and perceptions of Malawi's children and adults, as poor, joyful, and authentic.

Certainly affect and the relationship with the material world has stimulated debate, culminating in a call for a more nuanced approach to understanding the intersection of both. Fundamentally, affect is not always positive. But, reactions to the general atmosphere of destinations can be better understood if their embodied sensual and emotional origin is accepted and understood ([d'Hautesserre, 2015](#)). In short, rather than a dichotomous position that sees the material, tangible, objective world as separate from the 'felt', subjective, intangible world of lived experience, the two are often inseparable. However, [McCormack \(2008\)](#) draws our attention to the various dimensions of affect. To quote, "it is increasingly understood that affectivity is not a subjective, interpretive veneer projected onto material things. Instead, the material force of affectivity, its registering as something sensed, can only be understood if the concept is differentiated"..... Affect "is like an atmosphere. It might not be visible, but at any given point it might be sensed. In distinction, feeling can be understood as these relations of affective intensity (or atmosphere) sensed in moving bodies - human or nonhuman. Emotion, in turn, can be understood as the socio-cultural expression of this felt intensity. To the extent that materiality is affective then, this affectivity is registered-and sensed-differently" (p.64).

#### *Atmosphere and the sonic turn*

Primarily affect occurs in bodies, in that "pre-personal territory lying outside of conscious control" ([Sendyka, 2016 p. 689](#)). It may be rooted in the non-verbal, non-conscious dimensions of an experience and may involve a reengagement with sensation, memory, perception, attention, and listening ([Vachhani, 2013](#)). For example, sound can be intensely affective. Until recently, studies of music and sound have predominantly focused on sound as an object - something to be observed rather than heard or felt. This has resulted in an emphasis on representation, which obscures the ways in which the processes of sound influence us and shape our actions, thoughts and feelings in space and time ([Doughty et al., 2016](#)). However, sound has agency. It transcends borders and defies perimeters. "Sound both performs and is performative. It has the potential to be a form of thinking, and a practice at the same time - a kind of *thinking feeling*" (Logan p.171). Sound can also create, alter, manipulate, lighten or darken an atmosphere. It is a key attribute of affect in that it works on the body, on the mind, it is sensed, it works on the emotions, and it can be intense. It can further influence our sense of space and place. Consider for example, the atmosphere of the football stadium, packed to capacity, and the sudden collective roar of the crowd when a goal is scored, or indeed missed ([Hill et al., 2022](#)). Now imagine it silent.

Scholars concerned with music and sound have long commented on the atmosphere, the all-embracing mood that arises from music and sounds. Sound and music are not simply physiological outcomes of hearing, or sonic qualities arising within particular social contexts or individual environments. On the contrary, sound and music may move us in unpredictable ways - that is, something happens ([Doughty & Lagerqvist, 2016](#)). The nineteenth-century music scholar Lina Raman suggested that the pianist and composer Franz Liszt was able to change the entire atmosphere in a salon with a single note, at times moving some to tears. In analogy, atmosphere asks how sound and particularly music, effects the totality of things, the affective stirrings, unsayable feelings, collective resonances, embodied perceptions and suggestive motions ([Riedel, 2020](#)).

Of course music and dance are common forms of embodied expression that provide affective connections and atmospheric experience ([Giovanardi et al., 2014](#)). But both are culturally mediated. Using the case of psychedelic beach parties in Goa, [Saldanha \(2002\)](#) proposes that music is capable of organizing 'factions' of bodies along dynamic socio-spatial boundaries. Fundamentally, it is not music itself, but its material connections to bodies, space, time, and objects, that enable social differentiation in the multi-racial touristic environment of Goa. Sound, therefore, can also deeply affect our sense of place, and of being in place. [Doughty and Lagerqvist \(2016\)](#) further consider how musical performances by migrants impact on inclusive forms of place (re-)making, affective enactments of public space, and emotional accounts of belonging and the "other". In short, it has the capacity to reconfigure space, produce new spaces of inclusion (or exclusion), and soothe, animate and soften spaces.

Sound propagates affect through space through differing spatialities of frequency ([Gallagher, 2016](#)). It can lift the atmosphere, or it can respond to situations which call for more somber reflection. For example, [Jones and Fairclough \(2016\)](#), in their study of sound infused creative responses to grief and loss, set against the backdrop of the tidal Severn Estuary (UK), observe the particular sonic qualities of the river, vocal recordings, and the sonic registers of the landscape. "In combination, these speak to loss and trauma" (p.98). They describe how "being in a landscape such as the Severn Estuary and immersed in its space and sound is not only to be in the present but also to be immersed in a whole memory or mythology of sound. Wind sound of course alludes to all kinds of cries and calls" ([Jones & Fairclough, 2016 p.107](#)). What such sonic re-presentations of experience offer is a way to capture how feeling, emotion and affect shape and condition the atmosphere. The emotions and affect generated have "the potential to reconfigure listeners' relationships to place, to open up new modes of attention and movement, and in so doing to rework places" ([Duffy et al., 2016 p.51](#)).

#### *Shades of atmosphere: light and darkness*

A further significant component of atmosphere is light, or more aptly, shades of light and darkness. The transformative atmospheric power of light is eloquently described by [Edensor \(2012a\)](#) in his analysis of the Blackpool Illuminations. To quote: "Light

alters the perception of the color and shape of space and is both a discrete material object comprising an assemblage of elements and a property that extends across space, providing a 'viewing field' that inflects how all objects within it can be perceived..... Moreover, light invariably produces complex relations through its interplay with its ostensibly opposite, dark" (Edensor, 2012a p.1106). Inherently "light and dark possess many qualities that are external across space, but which blend "the representational with the non-representational, and meld sensation, affect and emotion" (Edensor, 2015 p. 331). Illuminated space therefore plays a large role in the 'dense social production of atmosphere' (Edensor, 2012a p.1103). Indeed lightness/darkness have been suggested as the basis of atmosphere, not only in the physical sense, but also at the emotional level – a phenomenon that can re-enchant space and create vibrant and dynamic atmospheres (Sun & Lv, 2021).

Johannesson and Lund (2017) explore the various ways in which Northern Lights tourism is composed and performed. The central focus here is on the interplay between light and darkness and how tourists, and other stake holders engage in, and contribute to affective light-scapes. This is brought to life through the lens of improvised choreography. Ostensibly, the Aurora has come to define the Arctic as "a mysterious and romantic experience that contributes to a particular image of the North as romantic and mysterious" (p.163). Through ethnographic data they examine how through rhythms and choreographies, affective landscapes emerge out of the undulating rhythms of the lights, the stars, the moon, rain, and the natural choreography of the night. In effect, encountering and dancing with the Northern Lights conjures an affective light-scape that involves human and more-than-human actors. The intertwined qualities of choreography and stage management "emerged as darkness creeps in, altering the notion of control and order associated with daylight" (p.189).

Whilst light and day have their own atmospheric qualities, studying tourism in darkness can illuminate the importance of bodies and rhythms and how they intersect with the environment (Johannesson & Lund, 2017; Sun & Lv, 2021). This is further illustrated in Ryan and Martin's (2001) study of the night-time economy and the dimly lit world of the strip club. The performance area of the striptease club is perceived as a socially marginal space within which male and female roles are ritually revealed. For many of the performers, this world of dim lights constructs much of their normality – a normality that stands in stark contrast to the mundane. It is a world of transitions from the licit conventionality of shopping and the other minutiae of daily life, to the tolerated dimness of exotic dancing (Ryan & Martin, 2001).

In contrast, but still on the theme of darkness, Sun and Lv (2021) examine tourist experiences of the Chernobyl zone in Ukraine. Chernobyl was the first major nuclear accident to be rated at level 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale. It has subsequently been used to develop local tourism projects. Fundamentally, they explore how dark experiences exerted a measurable effect on the participants' sensory expression in both photographs and sketches. By interrogating the body–mind synchronization in a dark tourism experience, they illuminate the bidirectional relationship between "seeing" and "feeling" the darkness (Sun & Lv, 2021).

### *Bodies in atmospheres*

Crucially, place, space and the atmosphere surrounding them would be meaningless without human beings to experience them, to occupy them, move through them, be affected by them, and in turn, create the atmosphere that surrounds them. Indeed, up to now, bodies, embodiment, or corporeality have been a constant throughout the various contexts and theoretical positions. Undeniably, the body is at the heart of the experience and has been throughout history, from the baying crowd of the Roman Gladiatorial contests, to the modern day luxury store, where bodies are managed and stratified by class through the material and social cues of the service-scape (Dion & Borraz, 2017). Such techniques are not new and have been noted in early tourism accounts. For example, writing on the role of travel guides of the Vesuvius area from the C18th, Moorman (2003) describes the relationship between the European noblemen and scholars taking the Grand Tour and their guides. In brief, whilst their knowledge was needed and valued, this did not mean "that the guides in these books become persons of flesh and blood: they stay in the shade and function within the world of the people" (Moorman, 2003 p.45).

Today, tourist guides, and their *moving* bodies, remain instrumental in the staging of the tour destination. Using the case of a National Military Park Chronis (2015) suggests that guides enable the construction of the tourism stage through a series of overlapping modes of communication, materiality, and body-space. Conversely, tourists can be seen to enact a range of performances on specific stages. These performances will vary according to factors such as competence, reflexivity, the extent to which they are directed and regulated, or participate in group or solo performances (Edensor, 2000).

But it is also important to consider the non-human body and its/their impact on atmosphere. Using the case of ecotouristic activities such as swimming with dolphins and whale watching in Kaikoura, New Zealand, Cloke and Perkins (2005) discuss how the nonhuman agency of nature is implicated in the performance and meaning of place. Given the unpredictability of nature, such encounters can result in sublime, emotional, and aesthetic relations with humans, or alternatively, grave disappointment. As such, bodies, whether human or non-human, can also disrupt the atmosphere when they are unexpectedly encountered, or encountered in a negative way (Cloke & Perkins, 2005).

Through cultural performances in the tourism context, bodies can further signal historical oppression and exploitation based on, for example, race and gender (Lee, 2017), as well as conflicted cultural norms surrounding sexuality (Malam, 2008). Focusing on traditional Tahitian dance and its commodification for the tourism industry, Kole (2010), suggests that, whilst retaining the authenticity of the moves, such performances produce a primitive Otherness through the deliberate display of bodies. Lozanski (2013) further discusses the manner in which coming across beggars whilst travelling in India leads to a sense of disorientation. "While travel in India is infused with notions of picturesque poverty, beggars disrupt this voyeuristic conception and draw travelers into fleeting relationships that are clearly marked by structural inequalities of wealth and mobility" (Lozanski, 2013 p.46).



The collective body also produces an atmosphere of its own, as in the case of the “Pride” festival, an event grounded in political and cultural, understandings of space, scale and situated knowledge (de Jong, 2017). Or attendance at a sporting event where atmospheres are neither static nor singular. Rather they are porous – planned for, experienced, and remembered. In other words, atmospheres follow the body around, before, during and after the experience (Steadman et al., 2021). Ultimately, the body is the *thing* that is acted upon, it is temporarily transformed, but it also transforms in the process.

### Atmosphere: the where?

Having considered some of the factors that enable the creation and reception of atmosphere, this section looks at the where – the places where atmospheres are experienced. Drawing on Casey’s (2001) exposition of ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ places, Duff (2010) suggests that thick places are places predicated on affect, habit, and practice. These places offer the chance of personal enrichment and rich affective experience. Thin places on the other hand, are designed and designated spaces that lack the resonance of human, socially lived experience. However, through negotiation and changes in use and meaning, thin spaces can be imbued with affective qualities and transformed into ‘thick’ places. Such places may include festivals, which transform fields into places of vibrancy, sound, embodiment, color, smell, touch, dance, and sociality. Transformation may involve multiple factors, or they can be empowered and manifest through a dominant affective enabler. Edensor (2012a), for example, in his analysis of the Blackpool illuminations and the role of light and illuminations in the production of space, points to their power to produce thick atmospheres. In addition, “the affective and emotional attributes of jollity, fun, festivity, conviviality, brightness, and prettiness are counterposed to the classic aesthetic” (p.1119).

Conversely, the quest for the sacred or personal spirituality through travel also touches on the notion of place atmospheres – their thickness embedded in the natural environment (Willson et al., 2013). Similarly, the Sahara desert and other sites of natural tranquility and sacredness serve as natural amenities for those in search of spirituality and escape (Moufakkir & Selmi, 2018). Indeed, it is in places of such wilderness, that atmosphere can be experienced in its most potent form (Arnould et al., 1998). Beyond these real places, others seek utopia, or heaven on earth, through the mythical creation of imaginary places such as Shangri-La (Goa et al., 2012).

### Atmosphere as embodied transformation

Transformation is a recurring theme in much of the work concerned with atmosphere (Soulard et al., 2021). But, these transformative experiences also occur within various spaces, and are enabled by a variety of atmospheric shifts. Goulding and Shankar (2011), for example, consider the mental and corporeal transformation that takes place through ritualized enactment in the rave club. With sensorial tourism such as this, tourists often travel to experience a different state of being rather than to be in a different place. Indeed, the articulation of corporeality is a major part of the dual cultural dynamics in which the profane or everyday order is momentarily laid aside and replaced by a sacred or festival order (Goulding & Shankar, 2011).

With clubbing there is a transformation of both mind and body, from the ordinary to the extraordinary whereby the senses are stimulated and the body becomes the locus of the experience (Goulding & Shankar, 2011). This experience is produced as a form of embodied ‘bio-pleasure’ (Goulding et al., 2009) which is a combination of the ingestion of the drug ecstasy and the atmosphere of the clubbing environment. In the club, participants enter a different space, a temporary play zone (Zebracki, 2016), which is divorced from the working week (Goulding et al., 2002). Bodies exist in close proximity and the music is played at volumes that are felt in and through the body. In this context, sound is central to the affective quality of the experience. “The vibration of bodies can be understood as a ‘base layer’ of sound, which may activate or accrue layers of feeling, significance and meaning” (Gallagher, 2016 p.42).

Simultaneously, light and dark intersect through continuous shards of undulating strobe lights, and the rhythms are dictated by the DJ who alters the tempo and dictates the mood over the course of the night. In the process the atmosphere is created as a form of embodied and emotional spiritual euphoria. This is reinforced by the physical surroundings, often deconsecrated churches and other ecclesiastic buildings, and the sacralization of the DJ as shaman. On a similar theme, *Burning Man Festival*, held in the Nevada Desert, is reputed to be one of the world’s most transformative large-scale experiences (Kozinets, 2002; Neuhofer et al., 2021). Burning Man is about people, nature, music, bodies and place atmosphere. On the surface it is less contained, controlled, and more primal than rave, yet the construction of the experience is not totally random. On the contrary, the focus is on the design of spatial elements that serve as a kind of large space/time vessel. These elements facilitate transformation of body and mind which is the combination of outer socio-environmental spheres and inner socio-psychological spheres that trigger a journey of inner transformation (Neuhofer et al., 2021).

From a transgressive perspective, women’s bodies have traditionally provided fertile ground for imagining, confirming, or challenging the fluid borders of moral worlds (Frohlick, 2010). Nowhere is this more evident than in the contentious world of sex tourism. For example, the Red Light District of Amsterdam, renowned as a destination for sex shopping. Here women are the objects of economic exchange, commodified and displayed in windows along the street. These streets represent “recreational globalized settings, where sex is part of a flow of images, bodies, information, capitals, workers and tourists” (Chapuis, 2017 p.608). Representations of women and male access to female bodies are frequently located in places of highly charged atmospheres – of dim lights, (Ryan & Martin, 2001), of bodies in movement or in pose, of heady music, of rhythms, of transitory bodily meetings, and of paid for pleasure.

### *The body as spectacle and the carnivalesque*

As sex tourism affirms, whilst the body can be the object of affect, the body can also be the object of consumption (for example, through film, gaming, beauty pageants), and the way it is consumed, often depends on the atmosphere of the place in which it is consumed. In this sense we also *consume* bodies within particular atmospheric situations. One notable example of this occurred on November 20th, 2002, when the first public autopsy to be held in Britain for 170 years was conducted in front of a live audience of 500, by the German Professor, Gunther Von Hagens.

The autopsy was well publicized and communicated in a way designed to ensure maximum curiosity. And it worked. Chaos preceded the autopsy as the police attempted to control the crowds trying to gain access. The event was accompanied by government warnings, a police presence, a candle-lit vigil, and a film crew from Channel 4 television. But, the orchestration of the atmosphere is what really earns this spectacle a place as a classic case of the production of atmosphere. To begin with is the selection of location. The event took place in London's East End, within the vicinity of the haunts of Jack the Ripper. To add further historical tension, it was held in a Victorian boiler house – the stage. Then of course, there was the actor, Von Hagens himself, who, wearing blue overalls and a Fedora hat, took nearly two hours to conduct the autopsy on a 72 year old man who had died some six months earlier and had been chemically preserved. Throughout, there was careful manipulation of light, sound, the visual display of organ removal, narrative, and performance.

Following the autopsy, Von Hagen's proceeded to take his exhibition of plastinated bodies on a world tour – a tour reputed to be the most successful global exhibition ever (Goulding et al., 2013). Fundamentally, "Von Hagen employed aesthetic techniques of lighting, staging and decorating in order to create a sophisticated atmosphere within a site of various embodied experiences" (Goulding et al., 2013 p.324–25).

The concept of carnival and the carnivalesque is evident in both the autopsy and the exhibition. Other work has also considered the atmosphere of the carnival, its actors, audiences, and participants. Indeed, the traditional British seaside resort remains steeped in the atmosphere of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984). Chapman and Duncan Light (2016) for example, examined employees at a seaside amusement park who, whilst not participants in the carnival, were "affected by the 'playful crowd' that they work with" (p.182). Here employees regularly experienced misbehavior (such as abusive language, attempted theft and violence), directed at them by tourists. They in turn retaliated with tactics such as verbal abuse, cheating, and violence. Other unconstrained behavior involved using alcohol and/or drugs in the workplace, and participation in casual sexual encounters with staff and customers. In so doing, employees inverted and transgressed the norms of the hospitality encounter in ways which reflect the influence of the carnival.

Interestingly, tactics are frequently employed in order to mitigate against the carnivalesque impulse to transgress. For example, destinations are increasingly employing staging principles to control tourist crowds and design atmospheres that foster particular attitudes and experiences (Rickly, 2019 p.258). From a legal perspective, in the UK police are being trained in the theory and practice of atmospheres and crowds. Wall (2019) notes that between 1983 and 2016 police were issued with training materials that were designed to heighten their atmospheric insights. The purpose of these techniques labelled police "atmotechnics" was to act as interventions designed to affect the crowded atmosphere of protest or other disorder. The manuals underline a move from understanding atmospherics as a prelude to the use of force, to an affective feedback loop where special officers "are deployed to 'sense' mood changes among crowds, allowing senior strategic and tactical decisions to take account of atmospheric conditions" (Wall, 2019 p. 43).

### *Atmosphere, absence and presence*

Whilst the carnivalesque is highly visual, material, sometimes transgressive, and *of the moment*, atmospheres can also be shaped and charged by the absent. Throughout history the concepts of presence and absence have been the subject of contemplation by philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to more contemporary thinkers such as Jean Paul Satre, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze. Underlying much of this work are questions concerning, states of being, truth, reality, mediation, and representations (Goulding et al., 2018). Aristotle, for example, developed the idea of the "diaphanous", or the invisible milieu of seeing (Bell, 2017). Moving forward in time, for Husserl, absence was the unseen idea, or absence as *pure possibility*, whilst Heidegger conceptualized absence as the *sous rature* or "under erasure". For Deleuze (1990) the simulacrum is an absent presence, which circles around an images surface (Bell, 2017), whilst Derrida's "*of Grammatology*" (1976) has been described as calculations on absence (Gaston, 2009).

Whilst there is no universal agreement on what absence is, there is evidence to show that absence can be every bit as powerful in the construction and experience of atmosphere as that of the immediate, tangible and material present. Importantly, absences are not empty spaces. On the contrary, absences or absence can evoke strong emotions and may therefore be experienced intensely (de Beer, 2013). As such absence can be better understood if we view it as "a relational phenomenon, something that is produced in the back and forth between absence and presence, materiality and immateriality, the social and the natural: Essentially this requires us to see absence not as existing as a 'thing' in itself but as something that is made to exist through relations that give absence matter" (Meyer, 2012, cited in Meier et al., 2013 p.424).

*Commemorative Sites:* The themes of absence and presence are two that can be noted in many events and spaces of remembrance. For example, commemorative sites and events such as those dedicated to war and disaster are, by their nature, characterized by a sense of absence - in particular, the loss and absence of those whose lives were tragically taken in battle. In effect, these sites are haunted by the ghosts of trauma (Chronis, 2012). When experienced collectively, they culminate in what Sumartojo

(2016) terms, “commemorative atmosphere” – a combination of the affective qualities of space which evokes a sense of connection to each other and also the nation. Such public feelings of togetherness have even been identified in the digital world of Twitter’s “Manchester Together” series of commemorative events on the anniversary of the Manchester Arena bombings of 2017 (Merrill et al., 2020). In this sense, memory plays a significant role in the conjuring of atmospheric affect. Most notably, memory contributes to the experience of spatial atmospheres that are ripe with affective intensities that transcend those found in traditional museums or commemorative displays (Sumartojo & Graves, 2018).

One act of disaster that shook the world is that of 9/11. On the 11th of September 2001, two of New York City’s major landmarks, the Twin Towers, were struck and destroyed in the biggest terrorist attack to occur in the USA on home soil. The resulting devastation and immense loss of life, left both a psychological and physical void, along with a sense of loss, emptiness and absence. Amidst much debate over what to do with the site, the decision was taken to rebuild it as a memorial to those who had lost their lives. Today, the site covers eight acres and the winning design by architects Michael Arad and Peter Walker is entitled ‘Reflecting Absence’. The center point consists of two pools, each nearly an acre in size, containing the largest man-made waterfalls in North America. According to Arad, the pools represent ‘absence made visible’, as although water flows into the voids, they can never be filled (9/11 Memorial and Museum). The intrinsic qualities of such spaces, predicated on an atmosphere of absence, is that visitors can experience a gamut of emotions – sadness, grief, reflection, sorrow, acceptance, and closure. Similarly, Sendyka (2016 p.693) eloquently describes the designed architectural atmosphere of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, accordingly:

“Revealing the presence of souls, providing them with the minimal physicality of apparitions, is a strategy that is also familiar from Daniel Libeskind’s widely debated Jewish Museum in Berlin. The Museum’s basic premises consist in, first the drawing of lines connecting the places formerly inhabited by Berlin Jews, and second, the generation of a sense of spectrality in museum goers: in the Holocaust Tower, that emptiest of emptinesses among the five so called ‘Voids’, you can hear the sounds of the street, snippets of noise that make their way in from outside, but you can also hear the sounds produced by the visitors themselves, bizarrely multiplied and deformed, resulting in a potent impression of being surrounded by whispering spirits”.

On a somewhat less somber note, Goulding et al. (2018) take the case of an industrial living museum in the UK. They focus not on the material presence of artifacts and the physical staging of history, but on those monuments to industry that remain on-site, but are void of physical interpretation in their semi-derelict state. They suggest that “...absence is not simply a case of what is not there. Rather, absence can be experienced, it can be felt and it can be evoked through the medium of heritage” (Goulding et al., 2018 p.25). Crucially, however, beyond physical reproduction, absences have stories to tell. They can resonate in the hauntings of places by those who are lost or gone, or they can reside in the material, in the very stones, bricks and fabric of buildings and places themselves. “Features such as materiality, atmosphere, rhythm, and people may be altered and rearranged, but still their former structures have some resilience. It is this durability of meaning and of materialities that show the transformation of what was there before and is now absent” (Meier, 2012 p.475).

*The Haunting Specter of Ruins:* Whilst not necessarily, haunted in the paranormal sense, one sector that comes to mind when considering the nature of haunted atmospheres is the presence and experience of ruins. Ruins have an atmosphere of their own. Ancient ruins have history buried deep in their bones. They have watched history unfold, lived through their glory days, and gradually corroded and faded, sometimes into glorious ruins, others into decayed, abandoned and forgotten structures. Whether they be the classical ruins of Ancient Rome or Greece, or the industrial ruins of Manchester’s industrial past (Edensor, 2012), ruins are haunted by the past, by people long gone, and by stories, lives, and legends. “In its common usage, ‘ruins’ are often enchanted, desolate spaces, large-scale monumental structures abandoned and grown over. Ruins provide a quintessential image of what has vanished from the past and has long decayed.” (Stoler, 2008 p.192)....In short, Ruination is a corrosive process that weighs on the future and shapes the present (Stoler, 2008 p.194).

Ruins “are sites where the absence of maintenance leads to a state of continual transformation” (DeSilvey and Edensor, 2013 p.3). For example, Lee (2009) examines the evolving and multiple interpretations attributed to the ruin of Yuanmingyuan (the Garden of Perfect Brightness), or the Old Summer Palace, China. Once a large and impressive complex of gardens, pavilions, lakes, hills, and pleasure grounds, it was looted and burnt down by Anglo-French troops in 1860. It has since had multiple incarnations; as a site for farmsteads, factories, school campuses, a bohemian colony, and a public park. In essence this ruin constitutes a sphere of politics, spatial configuration and meaning making.

Ruins can also be spaces for remembering and forgetting. Jung (2017), for example, explores the historical significance of Cheorwon, a small Korean city and a site of historical battle. Today it stands as a complex site of the history of recovery. Each one of the city’s ruins represents a different type of memory, and a different actor: the soldiers who fought in the battlefields during the Korean War; the native residents who witnessed the destruction of their hometown, and the new residents who moved to Cheorwon after the war. Moreover, Cheorwon’s history as a recovered territory has generated a dynamic of silencing, leading the residents to hide their identities for fear of reprisal or discrimination in postwar South Korea.

In contrast to the classical ruin, or war memorial, Edensor (2007) draws attention to the sensory experience of moving through the industrial ruin. In stark contrast to the sterile, sanitized and desensitized urban environment, the explorer may encounter pungent, noxious but also strangely enjoyable, and unexpected smells and sounds, and observe things that destabilize urban aesthetic norms. Ruins, therefore, whether ancient, recent, industrial, or modern, are places of sensory stimulation and intense atmospheres.

### *Dark tourism and ghostly encounters*

One strand of tourism research that is ripe for atmospheric analysis is that of dark tourism (Foley & Lennon, 1996), or thanatourism (Dann & Seaton, 2001), sites or events dedicated to horror, death or violence. Stone (2006) categorizes dark tourism

based on a spectrum of shades of darkness, from fun factories, such as the Dracula Museum in Whitby, UK, which would sit at the palest end of the spectrum, to sites of atrocities and camps of genocide, which would be positioned at the darkest end of the spectrum. They may also be straited in terms of affect, which bleeds into dark places with unexpected intensities (Martini & Buda, 2020). For example, Bodie, a California ghost town, and a “modern ruin”, creates an atmosphere of authenticity by bringing to life stories and encounters with its long-departed inhabitants. Such efforts to summon the ghosts of the past, serve to destabilize the ontological security of visitors, transforming sense of time and place as visitors imagine themselves among the ghosts of the town (Wood, 2020).

Singleton's (2017) analysis of the historical spiritualist village Lily Dale in New York considers tourists as spiritual seekers, positioned within an enchanted, affective, constructed sense of place and otherworldliness. Inglis and Holmes (2003) explore the history of ghost tourism in Scotland, a destination renowned for, and marketed as, one of the most haunted places in the world. As they observe: “Ghosts and other paranormal entities exist neither in this world or the next, nor in one particular spatial or temporal location.... the phantom transmogrifies the mundane landscapes of present-day Scotland. It drapes over these terrains a shroud through which the tourist can gaze out of the present and into the mist-covered past, the representatives of which are phantoms and ghouls” (p.50). What is central to all of these is a sense of absence – of people and sites that were once alive but are now departed. Yet, their presence is still tangible in the sense of place, in bodily sensations, and in that unfathomable feeling.

### *Technology and making the absent present*

Still on the subject of absence and presence but moving away from the haunted atmosphere of ruins and reputedly haunted places, a unique example, not only of the production and consumption of atmosphere, but also its actual material manifestation, can be found in the work of the Mexican artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and his exhibition, entitled “Atmospheric Memory”. In this work, the artist goes beyond considering the atmosphere as an intangible, affective, nebulous concept, to attempting to reify and capture it. This work brings together science, technology, art, design and creativity, the material and non-material, and the technological wonder of making atmospheres visible. It contains an immersive installation which scours the atmosphere for voices, transforming them into something visible and tangible. The exhibition was inspired by Charles Babbage, the C19th foundational figure in the field of computing, and his contention that every word ever spoken leaves a permanent trace in the movements of particles in the air.

The sixty-minute immersive experience begs the question – that whilst we live in an age obsessed with absolute recollection where technology captures every act and impression, can the atmosphere be an archive in itself? Essentially, Atmospheric memory is a collection of artworks that scan the air for voices. It is a sensory experience that weaves these voices together in a collaborative performance between visitor and machines. This takes place within the “Atmospheric chamber”. During the visit, multiple technologies are used, drawing from architecture and engineering. Some techniques are based on phantasmagorical effects that connect with Babbage's time, others use the latest technology, from immersive projection and sound, robotics to machine learning. There are kinetic sculptures, anamorphic projections in the round, and a display that writes texts with cold water vapor (Laurent, 2019). Over the course of the visit, atmospheric machines mine the air for turbulence carried by speech, then transform it into clouds of vapor, ripples of water, and 360 degree projections. Ultimately, in the words of the artist, *I hope the project makes the atmosphere tangible so that it's no longer seen as something neutral or invisible that we take for granted. It is something complex, beautiful and irreversible* (Laurent, 2019).

*The Metaverse: Technology and The Future of 'Non-place' Virtual Tourism:* Whilst places and exhibitions such as ruins, haunted spaces, and “Atmospheric Memory”, involve a fusion of past, present and future, one area that is firmly rooted in the future and represents a rich source of potential research opportunities, is the virtual, and developing sphere of metaverse tourism. Following two years of lockdown and imposed social isolation, people have become accustomed to shopping from home, working from home, connecting with people on Zoom and Teams, and indulging in fantasy and escape, not through travel, but through Netflix, gaming, and virtual reality experiences. In the wake of this, and amidst rising concern over the environment, climate change, and further outbreaks of yet to be discovered viruses, the metaverse is emerging as a serious alternative to international travel. Greig (2022) for example, suggests that whilst ideally everyone could visit the Amazon and experience the dangers of deforestation, in reality this is not possible for the average tourist, nor even the most seasoned traveler. What the metaverse does is use digital experiences and stories to bring the experience into the home.

In its simplest form the metaverse is a form of digital immersive interaction where interconnected virtual experiences can emulate real and imagined worlds. These are brought to life through headsets and digital avatars which are capable of connecting people and experiences (Greig, 2022). In effect, the Metaverse breaks down the boundaries between real-world space and virtual space and has the capacity to escape from physical, space and time constraints (Kim, 2021). Whilst a problematic context, one might think of the potential to create atmosphere(s) through ever sophisticated technological developments. Significantly, virtual reality and augmented reality go hand in hand with metaverse tourism. Virtual reality tours provide realistic experiences that can be enjoyed from home. Additionally, virtual concerts, business meetings, theme parks, hotels, and resorts, can also be experienced prior to booking. But, how do we experience the many dimensions of atmosphere (heat, cold, touch, taste, smell, the indefinable) in a place that is lived through a headset? This question has not escaped the technical masterminds behind the innovation.

Greig (2022) asks us to imagine hugging our loved ones virtually during a pandemic, or catching a world class theatre performance right there in our living room, or being able to step away from our desk into a villa in Tuscany. As the metaverse develops, the expansion of 5G technology, with its low latency and high throughput, can allow for full multisensory experiences on the move. One destination that has already taken steps towards embracing the metaverse is Seoul, where in September 2021 plans



were announced to go *meta* by 2023. Its metaverse platform provisionally called *Metaverse Seoul*, will enable tourists to feel as though they are walking through Gwanghwamun Plaza, Deoksugung Palace and the Namdaemun Market, in what will be called a virtual tourist zone. They can even attend the Seoul Lantern Festival surrounded by hundreds of sparkling lights but not by crowds (Woznicki, 2022). Eventually, the technology may lead to full immersive experiences – to the ability to experience landmarks frozen in history, such as the Colosseum at the height of its power, or the city of Pompei, before the volcanic eruption (Woznicki, 2022).

Currently, Japan based First Airlines are already offering virtual flights from Tokyo. The company reports 100 % occupancy on these VR flight to destinations such as New York, Paris, Rome, and Hawaii. The National Geographic VR subscription allows subscribers to use Oculus VR equipment to virtually kayak through icebergs in the Antarctic, or explore the hidden treasures of Machu Picchu. They even allow for time-travel into the past, or into the future (Cursoy et al., 2022). It is a world where individuals can travel without restrictions, wherever and whenever they wish. A world without flight delays and queues at airports, and a world where every experience becomes possible.

### Atmosphere: the how?

Atmospheres are, by their nature, elusive – they come and go, yet answers to questions of how they come and go, why and how they exist, and why they are experienced in particular ways, often elude us. The general view is that we need to start with the understanding “that the world is perceived, atmospherically, that atmospheres are inherently multi-sensory, and that atmospheric perception does not concern discrete forms and movements; rather, it concerns “chaotic-multiple situations” (Griffero, 2014 p. 12). Atmospheres are subjective and in order to try to define and somehow capture their essence, it is necessary for the researcher to open themselves up to them and experience them emotionally (Böhme, 2013). The problem, as noted by Anderson and Ash (2015) is that atmospheres are simultaneously a condition, as well as being conditioned. Therefore, how do we research the formation of an atmosphere? or how it is conditioned? or what it does? i.e., how does it condition or affect those exposed to it? Moreover, to what extent, or in what ways, can we realistically research the non-representational and affective relations, interactions, emotions, and sensations produced and experienced in and through various atmospheres? (Buser, 2014). So, the question of how we research atmospheres is both significant and challenging as we move forward in this ever advancing and evolving field.

The traditional focus and implicit understanding associated with representational research is often characterized by the collection of specific forms of data; in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations and so forth. Often this assumes that individuals are reflexive and agentic with the ability to remember and recount their experiences. Unsurprisingly, this ontological position has determined the methodological choices and representational tools used to access and present individual or group experiences (Latham, 2003). However, described as a moment of crisis in a history of methodological crises, qualitative, critical tourism research has moved, or is moving towards more reflexive inquiry that privileges positionality and first-person perspectives. In so doing it has brought to the fore its own crisis of representation (Ivanova et al., 2021).

Typically, atmospheres are an intermediate phenomenon, something that sits between object and subject. As such, they have no recognized ontological status (Ivanova et al., 2021). But as Böhme (2013) argues, the way to approach them should be from two sides – from the side of the subjects (reception aesthetics), and from the side of objects (production aesthetics). Ultimately, the study of atmospheres is grounded in a particular mind-set that “values the non-representational, the pre- and transpersonal, the unconscious and the more-than-human (in addition to representations, cognitive expressions and human accounts)” (Buser, 2014 p.240). Moreover, their nature invites risk-taking and supports experimentation and creativity (Buser, 2014). Ivanova et al. (2021) calls for a braver, novel, more creative, and even disruptive employment of methodological approaches to enable tourism studies to shake-up and subvert the entrenched status-quo. One approach that is gaining momentum is that of non-representational research (Anderson & Ash, 2015). d’Hautesserre (2015) further highlights the expanding spotlight on non-representational social processes, and in particular, affect theory as a result of increased calls to add emotions, affects, and senses as a means of critically examining tourism practices.

### *Non-representation research as a mode of atmospheric enquiry*

Atmospheres appear to be a strange category of non-representational phenomenon (Anderson & Ash, 2015). Non-representational theory is popular and is growing in influence, but as Vannini points out, it is also controversial and frequently poorly understood. Its eclectic influences may partly account for this:

“With roots in the fine and performing arts, solid foundations in human geography, and expansions across cultural studies, the humanities, and the social sciences, non-representational theory is a mosaic of theoretical ideas borrowed from fields as different as performance studies, material culture studies, science and technology studies, contemporary continental philosophy, political ecology, cultural geographies, ecological anthropology, biological philosophy, cultural studies, the sociology of the body and emotion” (Vannini, 2015a, 2015b p.3).

More generally associated with the British geographer Thrift (2008), this fragmented body of theory emerged in the mid-1990s, partly out of a concern with the limitations of dominant methods, both quantitative and qualitative, and partly out of a desire for a critical exploration of how we understand social worlds (Buser, 2014). Non-representational methods treat nonrepresentational phenomena, such as atmospheres, as having effects and also the ability to effect. Fundamentally, non-

representational methods seek to amplify the problems that the background poses to social analysis and to sense and disclose how it is composed and organized. (Anderson & Ash, 2015).

But, questions remain as to how we might approach the non-representational background? One idea that is generally shared is that the background matters: The background is not an inanimate backdrop, but a lived and molded condition (Anderson & Ash, 2015). Non-representational theory, is usually concerned with the ever evolving and changing performances of culture and the range of lived experiences that happen in geographical environments and multi-sensual worlds. Accounts of such should describe experiences of individuals and groups in a manner that acknowledges and accounts for the fluid movements of bodies, spaces and objects. In effect, it suggests qualitative techniques such as post-event interviews used for representations of everyday life, might be supplemented by, or in some cases replaced, if necessary, with the idea of onflow – accounts that offer a detailed reflection of experience from within, as well as accounting for the more than human voices (Hill et al., 2014). As Thrift notes, the basic premise of non-representational research is to “capture the ‘onflow’ ... of everyday life” (2008 p. 5). Given this objective, certain methodologies such as psychogeography appear to offer an appropriate position from which to proceed, frame, and practice research on atmosphere.

Psychogeography is an approach that has its origins in the work of such thinkers as Guy Debord and the Situationists, early visionary writers such as William Blake and Thomas De Quincey, the emergence of the flaneur and, the avante-garde (Coverley, 2018). Intrinsically, it draws our attention to how environments effect our emotions and bodies whether real or virtual (Ellard, 2015). Debord (1955) suggests that “psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/geography.html>). It has been used to illustrate a number of situations and phenomenon from the occult, urban walking, political radicalism (Coverley, 2018), tourist places (Long, 2014), to dark tourism (Morten et al., 2018).

In essence, psychogeography emphasizes the connection that individuals have to place and space and provides a different lens for experiencing the environment. Alternatively, non-representational ethnography seeks to cultivate an affinity for the analysis of events, practices, feelings, and the backgrounds of everyday life against which relations play out. Non-representational ethnography emphasizes the fleeting, lively, embodied, material, more-than-human, non-discursive dimensions of complex, temporal life-worlds (Vannini, 2015a).

However, it is important to note that there is no one unique method or data advocated for practicing non-representational research. Classical ethnography and autoethnography are still widely used and there is a growing trend towards other less conventional approaches such as hauntological (Derrida, 1974) or spectral ethnographies that require the researcher to delve below surface appearances, look for disruptions in the normal flow of time and space, and find a route into the imagination that senses the past and an altered sense of place (Armstrong, 2010; Kindynis, 2019; Okello and Duran, 2021). Alternatively, more collaborative approaches to ethnography offer further potential for the study of atmosphere(s).

Collaborative or group autoethnography, is an extension of autoethnography that involves two or more researchers working together to pool their research experiences on particular sociocultural phenomena. This involves the team collaborating through all of the research phases, including problem identification, data collection, and data analysis. “In this sense it is multivocal and presents itself as an alternative to single-authored self-narrative enquiry which is usually the product of autoethnography (Hernandez et al., 2017 p.251). Its benefits lie in the fact that it “offers a potentially catalytic dynamic through engagement with others .... collectively sharing and probing” (p.251). When multiple researchers engage collectively, they can complement, contradict, and probe each other as critical peers. As multiple perspectives and experiences are contested, the singularity of individual perspectives are reduced through intersubjectivity and multivocality (Hernandez et al., 2017). Naturally, human nature dictates that as individuals, we do not necessarily slot seamlessly into a totally democratic team where all voices and actions are equal. Consequently, three dialectical tensions in the process of collaboration need to be resolved if the team is to function successfully: (1) independence and mutual dependence, (2) similarity and difference, and (3) openness and closedness (Young & McKibban, 2014). Central to this should be researcher positionality and reflexivity (Autret et al., 2022).

Intrinsically, when trusting relationships are secured based on intimacy and connection, the result can lead to richer, more open, and broader interpretations (Gale et al., 2013). Collective consensus also addresses challenges to the credibility of a single researcher account. Furthermore, it is a qualitative research method that welcomes multifaceted data from multiple sources (Hernandez et al. (2017). Indeed, several research methods can be combined, including multi-sense ethnography, in order to try and access the ‘nonrepresentational’, and the affective intensities of space, emotions, bodies and atmosphere (Cheetham et al., 2018). This, however, is not an approach without challenges. For example, potential researchers need to manage logistical, relational, and ethical differences effectively. This intensifies the bigger the team, and may also be accentuated if there are geographical, psychological, and/or experiential gaps between collaborators. In addition, the democratic nature of collaborative autoethnography that stresses equality of all members, may be undermined if one voice dominates, there are power imbalances, or even unintentional silencing of certain opinions (Hernandez et al., 2017 p.252).

However, these are only a sample of the possible methodologies that may be utilized. As Vannini observes, non-representational researchers can use many orthodox forms of data, from interviews, to artistic interventions. Moreover, the “non-representational researcher is not characterized by the choice or by the rejection of a particular method”. Non-representational research “can unfold through writing, through photography, through dance, or through poetry, video, sound, art installations, or any of the other research communication modes and media available in the twenty-first century” (Vannini, 2015a, 2015b p.11). The key principle is recognition of the diverse ways of knowing and central to this is the ethos of animation. “By animating life-worlds non-representational research styles aim to enliven rather than report, to render rather than represent, to resonate rather than validate, to rupture and reimagine rather than to faithfully describe” (Vannini, 2015a, 2015b p.11).

### *Non-representational research in tourism*

There are many examples of tourism research that illustrate the non-representational approach and the various methods and innovative techniques used to dig beneath the surface, to look for the hidden, the ignored, the invisible, or the simply taken for granted. For example, [Jensen et al.'s \(2015\)](#) multisensory phenomenology captures the experience of interrailing. In so doing they illustrate how such everyday experiences are multisensory and technologically mediated through rhythms, sonic spaces and thermal atmospheres. Focusing on sound and music as creators of particular types of atmospheres, [Doughty and Lagerqvist \(2016\)](#) trace the affective aspects of encounters with busking and the impact of music on place. Drawing on an ethnographic exploration of South American pan flute musicians, performing at Sergels torg, in Stockholm, Sweden, and through a combination of observation, interviews and sensory methods including photography, video and recorded 'sound walks' they observe how positive encounters with difference through sound, depends on favorable social, physical and temporal contexts, which make marginalized voices heard.

[Larsen \(2005\)](#) draws on ethnographic research of tourist's photographic performances at Hammershus, northern Europe's largest medieval ruined castle situated on the Danish island of Bornholm. Focusing on embodiment and reflexivity, neglected photographic practices are privileged, and in particular, distorted representation. Rather than being a mark of inferior research, Larsen suggests that distorted representation provides an illustration of how visual fieldwork is highly complex, layered, embodied, often habituated, and always relational. Certainly, ideas of embodiment and performance have been crucial in destabilizing the visual dominance of images, cameras, and gazes in tourist studies ([Larsen, 2005](#)). This is further illustrated in [Jensen's \(2016\)](#) study of interrailing which demonstrates the power of distorted representation through blurred and obscure photographs. These are shown to creatively elucidate ephemeral and everyday interrail realities along with the embodied, practical, and affective occurrences which are core to the experience.

Choreography and dance become the lens through which to illuminate reactions to the Aurora Borealis in [Johannesson and Lund's \(2017\)](#) study. Here light/dark, the spectacular, bodies and non-bodies, all interact to create an affective light-scape. In turn the choreography that accompanies the sighting of the lights and the efforts to order the light-scapes exceeds any definite order. As such, the choreography of the Northern Lights is always contingent and partly improvised through a dynamic relationship between human and non-human actors. Alternatively, [Haanpää et al. \(2022\)](#) invite readers to accompany them on a walking tour based on food, and determined by the spatiotemporal dynamics of a Nordic city. Meandering through the streets and green areas of the city, the tour opens up opportunities to leverage the concept of experience through non-representational sensitivities. During the walk, stories are told, reimagined and co-created through embodiment, and entanglements with the materialities encountered in spaces. It is through these embodied experiences of walking and eating that the tour becomes a means to understand the temporalities, materialities and social relations connected to place.

These papers represent only a small sample of research that deals with the non-representational. There are many more that offer a variety of contexts and innovative approaches to the study of atmospheres and their affective power. However, whilst methods are diverse, often creative, and the field is open to experimentation, there is limited guidance for putting non-representational research into practice. As a useful framework, [Anderson and Ash \(2015\)](#) lay out four proposition that should underpin and guide non-representational research into atmospheres.

### *Some key pointers in non-representational research*

1) The starting point for any study of atmosphere is to recognize what kind atmosphere is the subject of interest. Here naming is viewed as a pragmatic act that makes atmospheres present and provides boundaries. Naming atmospheres is a way of reacting to the ambiguous status of atmospheres by asking whether an atmosphere is a thing with fixed properties, or a volatile and transitional phenomenon. ([Anderson & Ash, 2015](#)).

2) The second thing to recognize is that atmospheres may be both ontologically and spatially different from each other, but it is possible for them to co-exist within the same space without conflict. To account for multiple atmospheres in a single space, the researcher must try to occupy multiple standpoints and account for how a body or object may be contributing to different but simultaneous atmospheres. This requires taking the non, or more than human elements every bit as serious as the human when evoking an atmosphere.

3) The third point concerns building the irreducibility of atmospheres into methodological practices. This requires experimenting with approaches that allow some explanation of the causal powers of atmospheres. Atmospheres may be conditioned by relations, but they are not necessarily reducible to them, nor are they completely separate from them. It is necessary therefore to recognize complexity and to look for instances of causality that indicate how an affective condition takes place.

4) Fourth, it is important to identify how changes in atmospheres take place. For example, through the alteration of objects central to the original atmosphere, or when another atmosphere overrides it or alters its qualities and powers to affect. This requires researchers to become sensitized to internal and external atmospheric shifts and the many factors – material, human, invisible – that may precipitate these.

Becoming sensitive to an atmosphere's volatility does not mean discarding the methods many of us are used to. Rather it may be a matter of style and presentation. Of finding a way to record, analyze and write in such a way as to render visible the numerous things that create an atmosphere and afford it the capacity to change. This involves viewing bodies, objects and affect not in isolation, but from several possible perspectives. But, as [Hill et al. \(2014\)](#) observe, it is important to recognize that non-

representational research is not anti-representational. It does not seek to replace representationalist lines of inquiry. Rather, it looks to enrich accounts that are not necessarily conducive to more traditional methods.

### Conclusion and an introduction to the curated issue

This article set out to present a range of theories, cases, and possible approaches to the study and development of atmospheres as a growing field of tourism enquiry. Importantly, the goal was to bring together a range of pertinent concepts that may encourage future research within the realm of tourism social science. Of course, framing and positioning will be subject to disciplinary loyalties and ontological beliefs, but the scope is broad and exciting. Significantly, the paper also aimed to provide a platform for the special issue on atmosphere and tourism and the novel and multifaceted papers that comprise this curated collection. I have structured the paper in terms of three key themes – the what? the where? and the how? Nevertheless, it is not possible, or even desirable to try to pigeonhole atmospheres strictly into a single category. Atmospheres may be produced or emerge naturally (the what?), but they are experienced and felt in places (the where). They also require a degree of atmospheric reception to understand them (the how?). The papers in this special issue speak eloquently to these three themes and have been grouped according to their emphasis.

*The What:* As discussed, atmosphere is a nebulous, multidimensional concept. It can emerge in an uncontrolled or unexpected way, it can change in an instant, and it can alter the environment. It may be a product of nature, or it can be produced and staged. It may involve shades of light and dark, heat and cold, sound, imagination, and enchantment. Crucially, it has the power to affect and be affected.

Speaking to “the what”? Rokka, Auriacombe, Arnould, and Sitz, gain inspiration from affect theory in order to explore the dynamics of affective atmospheres and their manifestation in the all-inclusive French holiday resort Club Med. Here convivial atmospheres are conceptualized as momentary spheres or “bubbles” that encircle individuals or groups with affective resonance of friendliness, playfulness, and liveliness. The authors propose that convivial atmospheres require and depend upon individuals' affective capacities – to affect and to be affected in their ongoing interactions with others and their surroundings.

On a darker note, Brown's paper leads us into the world of the Gothic and the experience of “atmosfearics”. Situated at the intersection of retailing and tourism, darkness and light, fun and fear, Brown guides us on a tour of a monstrous global retail chain, Primark – a destination in its own right and one that occupies the middle ground between Shopping Tourism and Tourist Shopping. The experience is explored through the cracked mirror of the Gothic, described as an aesthetic, a lifestyle, a double-troubled worldview that appalls and appeals simultaneously. Focusing on affective reactions, it explores the atmospheric encounters between tourists, retailers, objects, and architecture.

Continuing the dark theme, and adopting a documented introspective perspective, Goulding and Pressey explore the nature and meaning of felt atmospheres at the former concentration camp Dachau. Using the concept of the palimpsest as an enabling framework and drawing on a hauntological methodology involving a walk through the camp, they illuminate the various atmospheres attached to the multiple spaces within the site. In so doing they examine such felt experiences as disorientation, haunted images and objects, ghost graffiti, silence and emptiness, and absence and presence.

Lovell's research note poses the problem of the sustainability of future travel and suggests that media tourism may extend into places that are unconnected to narratives, but are infused with their atmosphere. Highlighting the intersection of atmospherics, spatial hinges, and media tourism, Lovell brings to light the possibility of atmospheric practice for evoking unexpected and enchanting experiences.

*The Where:* Whilst these papers focus primarily on feelings evoked through atmospheric experience, they are also dependent on place. Ultimately place is where atmosphere is sensed. Its impact can be felt in situations as diverse as deserts and strip clubs. It can be complex, physical, and sometimes ephemeral. Places can be spaces of solitude, they can be material, or they may be defined by feelings of absence. Place can give rise to memories, reflection, sadness, joy, solidarity, or resistance. Of course, place can also produce negative atmospheres that disrupt the equilibrium.

Paiva's paper addresses the negative consequences of atmospheric change, arguing that whilst atmospheres exist in the air, tourism also leaves things in the air – pollution, noise, and sometimes the air of gentrification. Moreover, as tourism promoters and service providers attempt to produce premium atmospheres for tourism consumption, local vernacular atmospheres may be changed beyond recognition. In short, there is a paradox of atmosphere in urban tourism. In this sense, tourism threatens the very atmospheres that it values. Expanding on emerging ideas about the affective right to the city and the right to atmosphere, Paiva develops the notion of atmospheric justice to contend that urban atmospheres must be recognized as a form of intangible heritage to ensure that urban liveability is guaranteed in tourist cities.

Still on the subject of city tourism and using the case of public art in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Downey and Sherry's work emerges at the intersection of three compelling dimensions that shape the nature of specific place atmospherics – genius loci, religion, and aesthetics. Exploring the concept of “idiosyncratic atmospherics,” the authors position their study in terms of “momentarity”. Here researcher-visitors acknowledge the full multi-sensory presence that attends unscripted forms of atmospherics afforded by public art at city margins. In so doing they create a hybrid format that accurately reflects stakeholder experience of aspects of the tourism scene.

Examining Exarcheia – a neighborhood in Athens renowned for its anti-establishment history and stream of tourists who come to immerse themselves in its rebellious environment, Chatzidakis and MacLaren explore an emergent counterculture, anarcho-tourism, whose members seek the values of freedom, justice and solidarity, values they believe abound in Exarcheia. Using the concept of the ethical spectacle, they elucidate how the production and consumption of an oppositional atmosphere depends on grassroots



initiatives which infuse Exarcheia's spaces and material structures with an air full of utopian possibilities. Ultimately, they reveal a core paradox: the more Exarcheia's fame for anarcho-tourism grows, the more its oppositional atmosphere diminishes.

*The How?* It is clear that atmospheres involve a complex mix of ingredients. Naturally, this poses challenges when it comes to researching their emergence and impact. The traditional, or some might say natural home of concepts relating to atmosphere lies in the abstract, in the metaphysical and the philosophical, in states of being, reality, mediation and representations. These concepts however do not lend themselves easily to the field of social enquiry that refuses to look outside of the box, to question the experiential, the felt or the emotional. It calls for a move beyond conventional theory and methodologies, to look past the material, to incorporate the metaphysical, the physical, the sensorial, and the imagination. All of the empirical papers in this SI draw on a range of approaches – multi-site, group based ethnography (Rokka et al), personal essays and literary criticism (Brown), hauntology (Goulding and Pressey), arts based ethnography, storytelling, and poetry (Downey and Sherry), and longitudinal ethnography (Chatzidakis and MacLaran). One paper however, engages specifically with some of the complex issues and philosophical questions facing researchers of atmosphere.

Confronting the how? Preece, Rojas-Gavia, and Rodner, offer an alternative perspective on atmosphere in their examination of the limitations of both representational and non-representational methods. Arguing for a form of self-detachment to create space for non-judgmental curiosity, they draw on the philosophical enquiries of the Kyoto School and focus specifically on the work of Kitarō Nishida (1870–1945) and Tadashi Nishihira. Turning to the East, they suggest, allows us to move beyond Western epistemological dualism, structured through the fundamental ontological opposition between subject and object of knowledge which permeates much of the current tourism literature.

I hope that this eclectic collection will stimulate debate, further questions, and future research.

### Going forward

Whilst there exists much diverse and exciting work on atmosphere, its potential contexts and questions remain broad and wide-ranging. Such areas and questions that may benefit from further work might include; how are atmospheres produced in the digital age, particularly with advancing technologies and tourism experiences such as the metaverse? In contrast to the environment, what are atmospheres of the mind? How do questions over climate change influence our production, consumption, and experience of tourism atmospheres? How do tourism atmospheres hurt or heal? What can different disciplines contribute to the development of new theories of atmosphere? Can we really capture atmosphere? What role does the body play in both producing and consuming atmospheres? how do different bodies – based on age, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexuality, influence and manage atmospheres? What role does tradition play in the staging of atmosphere and the performance of bodies, for example, the Yeoman of the Tower of London? the Changing of the Guards at Buckingham Palace? What about the role of non-human bodies such as animals? Or, the interaction of human and animal bodies in, for example Safaris or wildlife parks? Even the role of pain in atmospheric conditions would offer new insights? How can we develop new methodologies for researching tourism atmospheres, and what might they look like? These of course are just the tip of the iceberg, but they respond to some of the key issues that would broaden our understanding of this ever evolving and fascinating field of study.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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