



Research note

Tourism, pilgrimage and the sacred: At home or away

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Introduction

I have been asked to comment on how I see the development of anthropological research on tourism in the last fifty years or so, from the point of view of its socio-historical contextualization and my personal experiences. I have been very fortunate in my academic career to have been introduced to a large number of the key topics. I have written at some length elsewhere on both my personal path which led me into the subject (Graburn, 2006a, 2006b), on the nature of tourism (Graburn, 1977a, 1977b, chap. 1; 1983a, 2017, chap. 7), the anthropology of tourism (Graburn, 1983a, 1983b; Leite & Graburn, 2008; Graburn & Leite, 2019), and the relation of anthropology to other disciplines and multidisciplinary in tourism studies (Graburn & Jafari, 1991; Graburn & Gravari-Barbas, 2016). I will therefore only focus at length on the newer topics of my research involvement as being not only contemporary but leading into the future. These topics still focus on the core concerns of our field: what is tourism, what is its relation to pilgrimage and (non-tourist) life itself? If tourism involves departure and return, what is the nature of “away” and “home” in an increasingly interconnected and digitally represented world?

Progression of topics in our changing world

When I entered anthropology the world had endured hundreds of years of colonialism and more than a century of “internal colonialism” i.e. indigenous “peoples whose lands fall within the national boundaries and techno-bureaucratic administrations of the countries of the first second and third worlds” (Graburn 1976: 1, 1981; see also Nogués-Pedregal, 2019). These people were the major targets of anthropological research and have more recently become the destinations of ethnic tourism. In my own case, I was lucky enough to do ethnography of the Canadian Inuit in 1959, 1960, and 1963–4, 1967–8, 1972 etc. and to discover how their exported arts and crafts not only earned them money and pride in the interest of the outside world, but provided tourists to and within Canada with souvenirs and an icon of Canada’s “northern identity” (Graburn, 1967, 1970a, 1986).

As an anthropologist, I naturally looked for similar processes elsewhere (Graburn, 1969, 1970b) and was lucky to hear about parallel developments, starting much earlier, among the Maori minority in New Zealand. Collaborating with researchers of much of the colonized world I eventually brought together their works in *Ethnic and Tourist Arts* (Graburn, 1976, 1984). This was the foundation of the study of ethnic and tourist arts and contributed to the anthropological understanding of souvenirs (Graburn, 1987; Hitchcock & Teague, 2000), ethnic identity and tourist imaginaries, but it could still be subsumed by the label acculturation (Graburn & Leite, 2019). And stemming from a combination of the former topics, it followed tourism’s impact on and transformations of indigenous, internally colonized “Fourth World” peoples, within a framework of pluralism and multiculturalism (Bunten & Graburn, 2009, 2018).

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Others heard of my work on these acculturated arts and the Lowie (now Hearst) Museum at Berkeley mounted an exhibition illustrating this topic, perhaps the first ever, using their own collections (Dawson et al., 1974). This enhanced my research interest in the nature of museums and their visitors, stimulated by the work of undergraduate student Lee Draper (Graburn, 1977a, 1977b, chap. 1) which we presented at the meetings of the American Association of Museums that year. This was one of the first works on museums in the context of tourism as most research in e.g. the journal *Curator*, was concerned with museums and education (Graburn, 1998b). This research followed the huge global trend of building museums for tourism (and education) which I followed later in Asia (Han & Graburn, 2010; Graburn & Jin, 2017).

When I helped Valene Smith put together her pioneering *Hosts and Guests* (Graburn, 1977b), I was struck by two axes, the first was that it was almost entirely an “acculturation” model, focusing on the effects of tourism on for the most part ethnically minority peoples – Eskimos, Kuna, Tonga, Bali, Southwestern Indians, even Iranian-Jewish merchants – wrapped up in the formula “Tourism as Imperialism” by Dennison Nash. I missed the fundamental anthropological questioning of the nature of tourism itself. Drawing on my Cambridge advisor’s theories of ritual (Leach, 1961) and Van Gennep (1909) I suggested that tourism was, like pilgrimage, something extraordinary, that took place far away from home was metaphorically “secret” i.e. “sacred,” and that special kinds of tourism, such as gap years, (second) honeymoons, and retirement trips, were definitely forms of the human universal way of marking social time, which Van Gennep (1909) called Rites of Passage.

When Jafar Jafari asked me to edit the first special issue of ATR on the Anthropology of Tourism (Graburn, 1983a), I picked up on the other relatively Euro-ethnocentric nature of research in *Hosts and Guests* (Graburn, 1977b), the demonstrated assumption that all tourism is Western, Euro-American, imposed on itself or on politico-cultural others. So I did my best to invite scholars who studied non-Western contexts, in these cases domestic tourism (or pilgrimage) as well, such as Moeran on Japan, Passariello on Mexico, Ichaporria on India, and Pfaffenburger on Sri Lanka.

The latter two were my graduate students and ever since 1975 I started teaching on the Anthropology of Tourism (Graburn, 1980, 1988) – the first in the world I am told - I have been inspired by the independent research of both undergraduate and graduate students, in the USA, China and Japan (see also below). In 1990 the participation of two visiting graduate students, William Mazzarella from England and Peter Phipps, from Australia, who spurred us to consider the UK-originated Cultural Studies Movement (Hall et al., 1980), and this directly led me to downplay the singular anthropological disciplinarity of our work and to examine the multidisciplinary of tourism research. The next year I joined Jafar Jafari in editing the first volume to examine the subject, *Tourism Social Sciences* (Graburn & Jafari, 1991) and at a greater depth *Tourism Imaginaries at the Disciplinary Crossroads* (Graburn and Gravari-Barbas, 2016b). The affect of the Cultural Studies Movement on tourism studies was to spawn the now very widespread Critical Tourism Studies movement (Graburn, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Ateljevic et al., 2007).

Home and away or where?

A central theme of the social sciences investigation of tourism remains the focus on consciousness, meaning and representations in the tourist mind, and the relation to sociality and community. Valene Smith’s early definition of a tourist as “a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change.” (Smith, 1977: 2) implies that the tourist is a person - “not a dog or a horse” - who “voluntarily” - not a small child or a dependent granny - is “temporarily leisured” - not a baby, a retired rich person, a denizen of a hospital or a dementia home - who is conscious of wanting a certain kind of experiential change and will return home. This fits the structure of a “voluntary” ritual, leaving the everyday, ordinary, for another, heightened consciousness. As anthropologists have expanded their view beyond the ethnocentric Western post-Grant Tour tourist, they have struggled with the adequacy of the definition, but learned much in doing so. For instance, Malinowski’s (1922) Trobrianders’ Kula Ring was an example of trade, tourism (VFR) and a bit of pilgrimage, and the pilgrimage to Mecca strains the definition of “voluntariness” but is a departure undertaken to experience alterity and return home.

The alterity that tourists seek is of course, culturally constructed. MacCannell’s (1976) urban middle class authenticity seekers are “alienated” by the artificialities [images, voices, artificialities, temporalities, rules and “necessities”] of their home/work environments, and seek truths elsewhere, in the past, in other cultures and most profoundly in “nature”. But suburbanites going “up to town” may find it in museums, galleries, architecture and haute cuisine. Cohen (1979) marks degrees of contact with alterity – recreational, diversionary, experimental and existential. Urry’s (1990) simplified classification divides the collective gaze - those who travel with their own community and enjoy sampling and commenting on alterity among themselves – as Murakami said, the Japanese never actually leave home – from the Romantic Gaze, where the tourists seek some degrees of contact with (in) communities of alterity.

But the most common kind of tourism almost everywhere, is still VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives), examined globally by Sabine Marschall (2017), which involves varying degrees of community integration, as Cohen would lead us to suspect. In Japan and China (Graburn, 1998a, 2008b) The purest form of VFR is to revisit the community where one originally came from, keeping in touch with and seeing again friends and family from a younger age; in Japanese this is called *furusato mairi*, a “pilgrimage back to the old village [home community]”. A more distant connection is visiting places where your parents or ancestors came from, their but not your, *furusato*, where you see places your family always mentioned or have in their photo albums, and perhaps to go to the graveyard and recognise familiar names. The third and commonest form now, is to visit places *like* where your family came from, where the familiarity is typological but not specific. In China there has been a boom in the construction of fake “old villages” for affluent urbanites to move to and “create community.” In Japan it is now said that everyone should have a *furusato* but more recently it has been said that every community - rural, suburban or urban - should *be* a *furusato*!

Tourism and pilgrimage: rituals of separation

Both are rituals, which punctuate, and hence create socio-cultural time (Leach, 1961). There are cyclical rites which mark the passage of seasons and dates in the year, like birthdays, Bank holidays, Christmas or Spring/Harvest (Festivals) and there are Rites of Passage which mark the passage of linear time, e.g. birthdays, graduations, marriages, funerals, centuries etc., marking key changes in social status.

Rituals contrast with mundane life, even when carried out within the home community; “Time and False Noses” was Leach’s (1961) phrase for the idea that masking as a step away from the ordinarily visible, often expressing inversions. Rituals segment and embellish life, using poetry and song vs ordinary words, music, wearing disguises or “costumes” that are not everyday, and consuming special, often rare, or expensive foods and drink. Many rituals are also marked by being secret/sacred because they take place outside of ordinary life and people, or within a *changed* period of time. People are often sequestered in groups and labelled, and distinguished by clothes, hair – people are “away”, hence place, or dressed up, with lights, decor and closures. There is excitement and sometimes risk and daring, again marking the specialness. The “away” is separation – being Away and searching for something which is believed to be hidden from daily life experience. An old saying goes,

“*Partir, c’est mourir un peu*” To leave is to die a little (Haraucourt, 1890). To part from someone or some place dear, especially for a significant length of time and for a great distance, was traditionally felt as “a little death”, i.e. a diminishment of life, life was no longer “whole.” But it had a stronger meaning, especially in past centuries, when travel was by ship, foot or wagon, and communications were slow or impossible – the possibility of dying before seeing the person or place again was very possible. Travel was dangerous and diseases were deadly, such as emigrating from Europe to North American in the 19th century, or making a pilgrimage to Rome or Mecca in earlier centuries.

One fundamental question must be raised – *what* is meant by away? We have always been aware of culturally diverse and widespread beliefs in the travels of *the mind*, in e.g. the imagination, dreams, prayer, shamanic soul-travel and death. In an examination of the Japanese tourist’s *honno*, inner mind, some informants pointed to the importance of imagining past travels and future experiences (Graburn, 1983b, 2012). More important, an unpublished paper by one of his students (Feyerabend, 1997; Graburn, 2001: 45), showed that the “mind” travels ahead of the “body” to visit the destination, and visits the past to recall travels and rituals, and there is a strict ratio between the time away and the mental awareness of the traveller (Fig. 1).

Feyerabend was examining Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock, but the aggregate information from her student respondents illuminated when and where the mind “travelled” in relation to the physical displacement of the body. They showed in increasing positive involvement in the upcoming destination days or weeks ahead of time, but very little “culture shock” when they got there – these are not wildly adventurous exploratory tourists – but often attention to “home” began to increase about half way through the vacation. Once home the mind “plunged” into an unsettled, often negative period – for about half as long as they had been away, followed by a return to “normality.” So if they drove from Berkeley to Lake Tahoe on Friday night, skied Saturday and Sunday but drove home that night, they felt really “down” on the Monday, the first day back in the dorm or going to classes. Or, if they went on a language immersion in a foreign country for an academic year (two semesters), the following fall (autumn) term they returned to Berkeley, they felt really uncomfortable, “out of it.” But, after the Christmas break, coming back for the Spring term felt normal again. Such mental to physical travel ratios are very revealing, from the point of view of client satisfaction, mental health, academic performance etc., and vary obviously. Unsatisfactory vacations experiences raise the pleasure of homecoming, or overwhelmingly wonderful experiences that often lead to permanent displacement, what Cohen (1979) called “existential,” such as British “lifestyle migrants” who go to live in France (Benson, 2009) or mature people who retire to a favored holiday destination.

Keeping in touch

In the past few decades, we have all become aware of the drastically changed nature of “being away” from home. In the late 1950s jet travel shortened the time “away,” and allowed many people to travel further away than ever before. And during more recent periods, international telephones, the internet, and proliferating social media have led us to question what is “away,” as well as saturating the world with information that transforms and creates tourism imaginaries (Gravari-Barbas & Graburn, 2011).

In the past, Western travellers who went away hardly kept in touch with those at home and those “left behind” were aware of events in a destination region through variety of slow media: old news or word of mouth, letters, newspapers and – speeding up – faxes, radio, TV – and more directly through postcards, photos and souvenirs brought home. But not all peoples accepted the totality of such geographical separation. In Japan, those at home set out a token meal for those away at every meal, and those travelling accepted going away gifts, - clothes, money, cameras, guide books (*sendatsu*) – and while away they had to buy appropriate gifts for everyone at home who had given them *sendatsu*. This counter-gifts, called *Omiyage*, are found in a proliferation of gift shops wherever Japanese go (Graburn, 1983b, 1987). Other cultures have different “coping mechanisms” to avoid complete separation and ignorance.

The advent of affordable international phone calls brought new problems for travellers if those left at home expected daily or regular calls and those travelling wanted to ‘detach’ and immerse themselves in the new cultural context. Berkeley undergraduate Sawako Sonoyama (2006) discussed the effects of phone calls and expectations of phone calls between students spending a year in Spain for language immersion and those dear ones, often, boy or girlfriends, left at home. These sometimes led either to complete breaks from the friends/partners at home when the student in Spain refused to wait for regular calls or, in other cases, a

separation from the Spanish educational destination and a grudging return home. The Berkeley overseas studies office was amazed to hear an explanation of these problems which had never appeared in previous years.

In another stimulating commentary on being “away,” [Thurot & Thurot \(1983\)](#) claimed that tourism is the only major modern form of consumption that takes place far away from home, out of site of the usual social circle, so the “facts” brought home, are usually manipulated to enhance either the experience or the travellers! Of course, no one can “bring home” the minute by minute complete “truth” of any travel experience, even if they take videos. What is brought home has often been called the “narrative” ([Bruner, 2005](#)), the story of the trip. Any account or representation of an experience must be selective, because no one remembers all details of even an hour’s experience. Most narratives pick the highlights expressing the success or the surprises of the travel, and bad experiences may be minimized unless they were “somebody else’s fault.” Cards and messages are sent, selecting what is appropriate for the recipient, in terms of relationship closeness, age, gender, past experiences and feedback. Berkeley visiting student Iris Lo ([Lo & McKercher, 2016](#)) showed that even after the trip is over the visual narrative, the selection of photos and videos posted on line, may be changed and manipulated over time, not only for specific recipients, but because the sender’s evaluations and social relationships have changed in the light of post-trip experiences.

The Internet and the cyberworld

With smart phones and modern media, connections are rarely broken, social interaction can be renewed and instant, questioning “You are here *and* there ... !” If one is “not away” then tourism and rituals are less secret and less “sacred.” Nancy Frey (1998) who has researched and conducted tours on the Camino do Santiago for 20+ years is particularly aware of the changed nature of the experience, even the inability of young people to imagine what it is like to be unconnected and “away.” She claimed ([Frey, 2017](#); personal correspondence since 2011) that the “pilgrims” were not ‘there’, they were on a “Cyber Camino,” somewhere “in between,” rather like Jim Clifford’s (1997) claim that modern mobile folks were not “on their way” but “in between.”

The question of social relationships with those “away” brings us to the notion of community, and the foundational work if Benedict Anderson (1987). He showed that the idea of a nation as a community was vastly changed by modern media. Previously, the feeling of community applied mainly to people who actually knew each other or were likely to run into each other within a geographical region. But starting with books especially the first travel guides (around 1600), then newspapers, modern travel, photography, films, phones, radio, TV and now on line media have allowed us to feel certain kinds of community with people we have never met – perhaps religious sects were among the few pre-modern examples. Sharing travels together, including joys and challenges forms a special, if temporary community, extended by souvenirs, narratives and images to “home” communities who did not share. The present and ever-growing habit of getting “online” with those at home elsewhere, weakens the solidarity of the travelling community, though less so if the other travellers belong to the same home group. [Frey \(2017 and personal communications\)](#) has suggested that contemporary tourists and “pilgrims” may spend more time with their “cyber community” than they do with fellow travellers or, typically, at the end of a walk or journey, each may turn (away) to get online to elsewhere, “leaving” their fellows who may be doing the same. Many young people have never travelled without the constant ability to be in touch with home or elsewhere and conversely, many at home are hardly out of touch with other members of their community when they are “left behind.”

Modern technology does more than create “virtual communities.” “Virtual travel” in the sense of the wandering mind has always been with us (see above) And this has been enhanced by the proliferation of tourism imaginaries by modern media. These are mainly intended to presented representation to encourage travel. But the opposite, the creation of “places” to substitute for travel has grown recently. Simulacra of far off destinations have probably always existed, substitutes for Jerusalem, Rome, Benares (Varanasi) or Mecca have saved time and effort for the masses. Simulacra of castles, cathedrals, towns and villages, even sharing names, occurred in pre-modern times, and one might consider zoos a similar form.

Such replications are proliferating to promote tourism to “famous” places ([Graburn et al., 2018](#); [Gravari-Barbas et al., 2019](#)).

A special example of architectural simulacra originally aimed directly at encouraging tourism is the “Little World [so-called] Museum” near Nagoya, Japan. In the 1970s the Prime Minister’s Office worked with anthropologists to build two huge national museums, Little World and the more conventional National Museum of Ethnology in Suita, Osaka, to familiarize Japanese with “foreignness” so they would become tourists abroad, partly to counter the huge imbalance of payments caused by the overwhelming excess of foreigners coming to Japan. Little World is a theme park, opened in the 1970s, with over thirty imported “villages” or urban “streets”; about half were brought from overseas and reconstructed and half are Japanese-made “authentic” copies. Many of these mini-destinations, set out on a road around the huge park, have restaurants and shops and some of them have a staff member from the original nations, e.g. France, Germany, Turkey, Taiwan etc. The nearly half a million annual visitors have two main reactions: a stimulus to expand their experience by visiting those places abroad, or a level of satisfaction, enjoying foreign food, being photographed wearing foreign clothes – “cosplay” – and buying souvenirs, e.g., French wines, while being able to use local Yen and the Japanese language. During my visits between 1980 and 2017, two other kinds of visitor-tourists emerged: Japanese who had become overseas tourists and wanted a quick “revisit” to the simulacrum of their foreign cultural experience, and foreigners living Tokyo who got homesick and made a quick trip to the semblance of sights, smells, tastes and voices of their homes – some even got married in the unConsecrated Catholic chapel in the Peruvian hacienda!

Undergraduate Li-Ying [Hung \(2022\)](#) reported on a special case of COVID-caused simulacra. The Taiwanese island of Quemoy (Kinmen) lost all its usual tourists from the PRC China only 10 km away. But after some young Taiwanese tourists posted online pictures of houses and scenes which resembled foreign tourist attractions, the Kinmen government implemented a marketing

strategy called 'pseudo- travelling-abroad' (PTA). This allowed the Taiwanese to travel from Taiwan mainland to "foreign" destinations, flying over the sea, without the then forbidden need to travel abroad!

But modern media are able to create virtual realities that are more attractive to tourists than simulacra. For instance, the exact copy of the world famous Lascaux caves {the original if off limits to all but a few} attracts far fewer tourists than the nearby virtual version, which attracts many more tourists due to its 3-dimensional movie-like complexity (Leresche, 2019, chap. 8). Of course reading books, seeing pictures, and watching movies and TV programs, e.g. by Rick Steves, are sorts of virtual travel. During COVID lock downs other forms emerged, developed from travelogues but, e.g. in Japan, "tourists" paid for personal online "tours" or even for a night "in a hotel" and many of these non-physical forms of travel continued after the lock-downs (Lew et al., 2020; Yamashita & Tanaka, 2022).

New Forms of 3-D and virtual travel are inherently attractive and many take the "tourist" to places they could never visit, such as back in history or archeological time or into space. As AI develops we expect more exciting creations which will attract an ever larger proportion of the public. A special form of virtuality or simulacra is "Contents Tourism" which developed in Japan from Anime into touristic "real world" performances of stories and history that have multi-media origins. For instance, young people may visit a place in a small village that appeared with heroes or "idols" in a comic book or TV episode, even though the local inhabitants never knew it (Graburn & Yamamura, 2020; Yamamura, 2020). These performances and the related Japanese Cosplay (costume play) have spread throughout East and Southeast Asia and even to Europe and North America.

Non/hegemonic anthropologies

Much as multidisciplinary has complicated tourism research with a range of methods and foci, the influence of the "postcolonial" imperative (Hall & Tucker, 2004), following critical tourism studies, has urged researchers to contextualize their approaches. Postcoloniality claims that the Western hegemonic gaze has ignored other possible views, especially those of non-Western societies, often the ones which were colonized by the West and become "(post)colonial" tourist destinations, carrying on the imperial tradition of dominance and exploitation (Nash, 1977). Until recently, most anthropological research and publication on tourism has been dominated by the "Anglophone snake [Scotland, England, Canada, USA, {Hong Kong}, Australia, New Zealand]" (Graburn, 2018a), and Western European (Dann & Parrinello, 2009) plus Israeli authors. Nogués-Pedregal (2019) has also warned us of the "Royal We" Anglophone view of tourism studies, imposing "universal" values such as the discovery and protection of "heritage" Other non-hegemonic anthropologies of tourism could be historical-contextual, such as the emergence from decades/centuries of Russian/Soviet domination (Graburn, 2016), or the persistence colonial-like external dominance, such as in the Caribbean or the internal colonialism of Native Americans (Bunten & Graburn, 2009, 2018) and Chinese *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minorities).

Major nations – unique politico-linguistic entities - may try to "decolonize" or "nationalize" terms, approaches, methods and goals learned from the hegemonic west. China has been "domesticating" the tourism social sciences acquired through Japan or the West, focusing on nation building, minority education and assimilative empowerment, economic development and Chinese philosophy, as expressed by Zhaorong Peng (2004) the leading anthropologist of tourism (Graburn & Jin, 2011; Zhu et al., 2017).

I do not believe that anthropology has advanced much beyond colonialism, as long as it continues to claim, like missionaries, to be more "righteous" and maintains the trend of studying "others" unilaterally. I gave a paper at the Musée Quai Branly (Graburn, 2018c) in which I challenged anthropology to attain an egalitarian status, wherein the "We" are in turn studied by others whom we have studied as much as we have studied "them." Though a long way off, one remarkable case is Japanese anthropologist Yuko Shioji (2014) who has studied the nature and continuity of British rural heritage better than anyone else! Recently, a panel of wide ranging nationalities [Belgium, Brazil, China, Cyprus, Japan, UK] assembled for the IUAES (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences) in Florianopolis, Brazil, expressed relative satisfaction with less than total degrees of decolonization, where for them "domestication" was more of an adaptation or melding than a complete rejection (Salazar et al., 2018).

Future summary

Contemporary trends in tourism and tourism research express the overwhelming forces of globalization, in styles, trends and imaginaries, sharing the ongoing homogenization of classes and education, suffering the unavoidable pandemics, wars and economic pressures, with all reactions, escapes and solutions shared on line. Human exploratory urges, personal and class struggles, and possibly international competition, will be stimulated and backed by creative commercial drives, with space travel emerging but falling way behind the emergence of more elaborate and fascinating virtual worlds.

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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