RaY

Research at the University of York St John

BUILDING OUR STORIES

Co-creating tourism futures in research, education and practice

Editorial

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Storytelling is a powerful way of exploring the past, crafting values in the present, and imagining the future. Stories, told from different perspectives and drawing from diverse experiences, can build shared understandings, empathy and care. Everyday stories of tourism - coping, success, empowerment, nurturing, disruption, relationship building and activism - are important tools that help students, teachers, researchers, practitioners and community members reflect and learn. The stories that we tell join the streams of wider narratives, shaping our understanding of the world and the ways in which we encounter it, thus providing a worldmaking function. Engaging in storytelling is anything but a benign activity as different narratives are continuously constituting and naturalizing the world and our relations with others. Tourism scholar Keith Hollinshead (2004) describes worldmaking as collaborative processes that essentialize and normalize peoples, places and practices. Hence, the notion of worldmaking calls for critical reflection on the ways in which stories enact, reinforce and alter power relationships by erasing alternative stories and by giving to voices in the margins. For us as tourism educators, storytelling unlock doors, opens new spaces for multiple ways of knowing and being, and moves towards more sustainable, hopeful, caring and ethical worldmaking in tourism.

By sharing stories, we welcome others to visit our imagination (Haraway, 2016, p. 127), but simultaneously create new grounds for stories to come. By co-creating formal and informal stories, we make sense of experience and of the world around us (Alterio & McDury, 2003; Bruner, 1986). Anthropologist and tourism scholar Edward Bruner (2005) uses the notion of 'pre-narratives' to describe the stories that we carry with us that evidently shape our experiences and perceptions. Our pre-narratives, pre-assumptions and stereotypical images are being shaped by stories that are heard, read, shared and felt everywhere around us. Recently, a growing number of tourism scholars have pointed out the problematic nature of the prevailing pre-narrative of the tourist as a self-centred, almost brainless, post-political actor; a person whose capacity to reflect and care weakens when leaving home and becoming a guest in others' homes (e.g. Ek, 2015; Picken, 2014). Similarly, it might be necessary to reflect upon the discourses that are being constructed when describing or grouping tourism students (Blichfeldt & Smed, 2017). In order to discuss ethics and responsibility in

tourism, undermining ways of portraying tourists or categorizing students have been critiqued and disrupted by alternative, reflexive stories where our roles as researchers, travellers, teachers, learners, practitioners overlap and become entangled (Höckert, 2018; Ren, Jóhannesson, & van der Duim, 2018). In line with critical pedagogy, our responsibility is to slow down and reflect upon our own storytelling power and how stories can be used to question the 'grand narratives' of groups of people who we try to place in neat categories. We must also continue to ask who and what might be missing from our stories and how we can diversify the stories that we tell in tourism research and education (Garcia-Rosell, 2017).

The current era of the Anthropocene has shown that there is also a need to engage in more caring forms of storytelling with non-human others. As Donna Haraway (2016) argues, we must engage with multispecies storytelling for Earthly survival. She uses the notion of 'speculative fabulation' to describe academic research that gives voice to more-than-human-nature. Along the same lines, Vinciane Despret's (2016) amusing and thought-provoking book, *What would animals say if we asked the right questions?*, shows how speculative and scientific fables are by no means false stories about science. Instead, while building on previous research her fables offer new perspectives that awaken curiosity and care. The beauty and purpose of Despret's way of fabulating is to complicate, specify, slow down and hesitate so that multiple voices can be heard (Latour, 2012, p. ix). Hence, her scientific fables, as with Haraway's speculative fabulation, encourages us to co-create new alternative stories that recognize multiple forms of care and can open other possibilities for the future. Their thoughts can be used as valuable inspiration when envisioning pedagogies that are committed to give space and time to learning with more-than-human-nature beyond the human story (see also Caton, 2018; Mcphie, 2018).

Our ability to communicate not only our own experiences, but also the experiences of others, allows us to take on wider perspectives and to transcend our personal frameworks (Alterio & McDury, 2003, p. 7). This attribute, together with its transhistorical, transcultural and multispecies usage, makes storytelling a powerful vehicle for communication and a transformative pedagogical tool (Ibid; Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007; Koch, 1998). Diverse areas and schools of thought support the use of narratives for educative purposes as they allow for a wider appreciation of the external influences which shape our understandings. For example, while recognising the social aspect of learning, Deniston-Trochta (1998) encourages the use of storytelling as a means for students to understand how social communities significantly impact their aesthetic taste and how they influence the aesthetic of others (Kent, 2016). In general, it seems like recognising stories as a way of knowing is intertwined with learning processes that are based on critical and multicultural understandings, dialogue and reflection (Ibid; Alterio & McDury, 2003, p. 45). Storytelling as a learning method requires sensitivity towards the context and different ways of capturing and sharing stories. In addition to spoken and

written word, different forms of imagery and performances, storytelling can be connected to all our senses (Christensen, 2012; Kramvig & Methi, 2018).

This special issue is inspired by the conversations and debates held at Euro-TEFI 2017 – a regional conference held by the Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI) on 20-22 August 2017 at Aalborg University in Copenhagen, Denmark. The conference theme was *Building our stories: Co-creating tourism futures in research, education and practice* (Dredge & Gyimothy, 2017). The organisers Dianne Dredge and Szilvia Gyimothy (Ibid.) underlined that 'stories allow us to explore how, what and why we value certain things, and it helps unlock our dreams for the future' . Copenhagen was indeed a great place to gather for sharing and co-creating stories. The city is home to many great writers and philosophers, such as the father of the Little Mermaid and the Ugly Duckling, Hans Christian Andersen, and the existential philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. What is more, Copenhagen is the capital of *Hygge*, which can be understood as the co-creation of a warm, cozy atmosphere that enables relaxed ways of being together. In this setting, tourism researchers, educators and practitioners embraced multiple ways of telling stories: through guided tours, movies, pictures, cartoons and lectures. The conference explored themes such as community-shaping narratives, teaching and learning through stories, reflexive tales, existential narratives, collaborative storytelling, staging and conforming narratives, and institutional tales.

The conference included two wonderful examples of storytelling 'from the margins' and giving voice to stories that are normally not heard in tourism settings. Conference participants were invited to join a guided walking tour led by the Copenhagen-based social enterprise *Gadens Stemmer* (Street Voices), which focused on the guides' personal stories of homelessness and different forms of abuse. These tours provided an example of 'enabl[ing] the silent to make themselves heard and talk about their lives on the edge' (Gadens Stemmer, n.d.). The conference also featured a presentation on Tikitut social enterprise from Gothenburg, Sweden, which drew attention to the question of 'who tells stories and whose stories are being told?' In 2015, when many asylum seekers arrived in Sweden, Tikitut adapted their services to welcome refugees, seeing them as guests. In their business idea of 'urban community-based tourism in the North', they bring together immigrants, refugees and tourists by cooking and eating together in local homes and by offering walking tours. One of their purposes was to broaden, diversify and complement the image of Gothenburg that is being shown and sold to tourists by offering the guests a possibility to visit the suburbs, thus forming a more inclusive and progressive tourism narrative.

The complete proceedings of the Euro-TEFI 2017 conference are available open-access at https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3FCyz6drX2WQUNhbi1POTZJYW8/view. The eleventh international meeting of the Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI 11) will be held in June 2020,

in York, United Kingdom, hosted by York St John University. For more information about TEFI, its goals, publications, initiatives, and meetings in different parts of the world, please visit http://www.tourismeducationfutures.org.

Contributions to the special issue

This special issue brings together a range of thought-provoking examples of stories as pedagogical tools and expressions of reflexivity. Our opening paper explores the power of storytelling as a pedagogical tool for reflecting upon and sharing cultural experiences. Nancy Stevenson discusses her approach to delivering an undergraduate module at a British university that focuses on tourism and cultural exchange. Students explore different ways of crafting and telling stories, with the module culminating in a field trip to Indonesia. She guides us reflexively through her pedagogical approach and module design in three phases: before, during and after the field trip. During the field trip, stories are shared with the Indonesian hosts as a way of facilitating cross-cultural communication and social interaction. Stevenson encourages her students to develop multi-sensory stories through 'journey boxes' (Labbo & Field, 1999) comprising photographs, food, music, scents and souvenirs from home that provided a glimpse into the students' lives. This innovative form of storytelling facilitates connections and empathy across linguistic and cultural divides, providing an empowering learning experience for the students. Stevenson demonstrates the dynamic, innovative power of story in teaching and learning as an approach that can facilitate critical understandings of cultural and authentic reflections of the self (Coulter et al., 2007).

In a similar vein, Zachary Stevens, Bryan Grimwood and Kellee Caton endorse storytelling as a moral pedagogical tool that can be used in tourism education to help students become hopeful, values-engaged, responsible practitioners and travellers. The authors conceptualise stories as 'profound sources of meaning-making, identity construction, and worldmaking'. Story, they claim, is one of the oldest and most effective methods of teaching and yet is systemically undervalued within Western education. The paper centres on Stevens' experience of undertaking a course on 'Indigenous Knowledges' at a Canadian university, which is delivered by an indigenous Elder largely through the medium of storytelling. At the conclusion of the course, Stevens writes a story as evidence of his learning, which centres on a fictional character called 'Mutandum' – a boy who loses and then regains his connection to nature. Mutandum's story is open to multiple interpretations, one of which is that it articulates Stevens' personal growth and transformation throughout the course of his learning about indigenous ways of knowing. It provides an example of how stories can bestow new vocabularies for relating to other people and more-than-human others, thus shifting our perspective on our relationship with the natural world. This deeply engaging reflexive account provides a compelling argument for

learning through story in order to prepare students for the moral encounters and dilemmas that they are sure to encounter in tourism.

Continuing with the theme of reflexivity, Stuart Hayes presents an autobiographical story of how his practice as a tourism practitioner and academic, or 'pracademic', has been shaped by his experience of three very different tourism education programmes. Hayes identifies as a member of 'Generation Tourism' (Filep, Hughes, Mostafanezhad, & Wheeler, 2015), that is, as a scholar who has primarily studied tourism through a multi-disciplinary approach rather than arriving at tourism studies from one of the traditional social sciences such as sociology, economics, or psychology. He traces his educational journey across three iterations spanning nearly twenty-five years, beginning with a tourism diploma with a strong management bias that was geared towards vocational outcomes by producing graduates with technical skills and knowledge. He then progressed to a Bachelor's degree that, while still focused largely on tourism management, provided new critical thinking skills and presented ways of seeing tourism as a socio-cultural and environmental force. Finally, Hayes completed a Master's degree that advanced his practice from critical thinking to critical reflexivity – a shift that allowed him to explore his own values, behaviours and responsibilities as a tourism world-maker. This reflexive account powerfully illustrates how tourism practitioners, researchers and educators become shaped, both pragmatically and ideologically, by the stories embedded in higher education curricula.

Joan Flaherty, Jonathon Day and Alison Crerar's paper discusses the importance of uncertainty in transformative learning from the perspective of a tourism field trip instructor. Inspired by TEFI's 2016 Walking Workshop in Nepal, the authors went on to offer a Nepal Field Course on tourism in 2017 and 2018, with the aim of enabling students from their universities in Canada and the United States to learn side-by-side with their Nepalese counterparts and to experience first-hand the impact of trekking tourism in the country. They share three stories from these field trips that evocatively weave together confusion, discomfort and fear. These accounts reflect the experience of one of the instructors as they become entangled in tourism encounters involving the local people, environment and their own students. The authors argue that stories of being immersed in unfamiliar, disorienting and frightening situations can elicit emotional and even spiritual responses that are conducive to transformative learning. Furthermore, they suggest that confronting and recounting moments of uncertainty can allow tourism educators to connect more closely with students and encourage knowledge co-creation. The theme of uncertainty and storytelling can be connected to Haraway's (2016) concept of speculative fabulation, which embraces open ends and hesitation. These stories from Nepal encourage further reflection on how we can communicate uncertainty and not-knowing to both ourselves and our students.

Karla Boluk, Corey Johnson and Meghan Muldoon present their experiences of co-developing and co-instructing an Integrated Curriculum Design (ICD) in two tourism courses in a Canadian university, which aimed to bring together first and fourth year undergraduate students for an experiential industry based project. The teachers' narratives are interwoven with stories from four teaching assistants who participated in this initiative and these stories are used to critically reflect on the teachers' pedagogic values, questions, and learnings over the course of the project. The authors use Creative Analytic Practice (CAP), which frames writing as a method of enquiry and exploration rather than as a transparent medium for conveying pre-determined facts and findings (Richardson, 2000). Vignettes about the experience of designing and implementing the ICD are used as a representational tool to explore personal and social meaning, allowing the teachers to reflexively evaluate and improve their pedagogical practice. A particularly interesting aspect of this paper is the appreciation that is given to the various strengths of the teaching team, which comprises an emergent scholar, a mid-career researcher, a professor in the twilight of his career, and several teaching assistants. These different vantage points within the teaching team showcase a variety of strengths in which scholarly experience can be complemented by the energy and enthusiasm brought by less established faculty members, leading the authors to advocate for a model of 'horizontal mentorship'.

Finally, Stuart Reid uses an unconventional story format to report on three cases of tourism innovation. We follow 'Alice', the inquisitive protagonist, as she leads us through her sense-making journey and encounters three tourism entrepreneurs whose stories of innovation reveal a potent mix of experience, passion, ideas, relationships and resources in bringing to fruition successful tourism enterprises. Reid draws on the literary genre of 'nonsense', which blurs the boundary between deviance and conformity, to contemplate narrative expression in research. He argues that tourism research is largely presented under a 'cloak of objectivity' using the logic of scientific rationalism, yet these academic stories inevitably remain constructed narratives. The literary nonsense genre disrupts this convention, allowing narrative and storytelling to be explored as a rhetorical form and invoking contemplation of alternative forms.

Through this special issue and its six papers, we seek to deepen theoretical engagement with storytelling in tourism education, to better understand the power of stories in the co-creation of values, in shared learning, and in the co-production of future actions. Furthermore, it is our hope that this special issue will stimulate further discussion, reflection and engagement with storytelling in tourism education, research and practice.

Acknowledgements

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