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Pernecky, Tomas ; Munar, Ana Maria; Feighery, William

Document Version

Final published version

Published in:

Tourism Analysis

DOI:

[10.3727/108354216X14600320851857](https://doi.org/10.3727/108354216X14600320851857)

Publication date:

2016

License

Unspecified

Citation for published version (APA):

Pernecky, T., Munar, A. M., & Feighery, W. (2016). Tourism in a Postdisciplinary Milieu: Final Demarcation Points. *Tourism Analysis*, 21(4), 431-434. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354216X14600320851857>

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Journal article (Final published version)

CITE: Tourism in a Postdisciplinary Milieu : Final Demarcation Points. / Pernecky, Tomas ; Munar, Ana Maria; Feighery, William. In: *Tourism Analysis*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 2016, p. 431-434.

DOI: [10.3727/108354216X14600320851857](https://doi.org/10.3727/108354216X14600320851857)

Uploaded to [Research@CBS](https://research@CBS): January 2018

TOURISM IN A POSTDISCIPLINARY MILIEU: FINAL DEMARCATION POINTS

TOMAS PERNECKY,* ANA MARÍA MUNAR,† AND WILLIAM FEIGHERY‡

*School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

†Department of International Economics and Management, Copenhagen Business School,
Copenhagen, Denmark

‡The Research Methods Laboratory, Neuchatel, Switzerland

This special issue sought to bring to the forefront the latest thoughts on postdisciplinary approaches to tourism and to present new arguments as to why postdisciplinarity is important, even inevitable, as we step further into the 21st century. Whereas disciplinarity was a fundamental attribute of the second scientific revolution that took place in the late 18th century and up to the mid-19th century (Golinski, 2005), disciplinary advances on their own are not sufficient enough in mapping the increasingly complex and changing sociocultural–political terrains. The articles collected in this volume reflect the contemporary realities of the production, flow, and dissemination of knowledge, and they have been put together to cast more light on these important epistemic deliberations. As observed by Christie and Maton (2011), the discourse on the postdisciplinary problematic, but also disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, continues to be undertheorized, and therefore in these final concluding words, we weave together some of the broader postdisciplinary ideas with the specific concerns voiced in this special issue. We must begin by reiterating that the ideas about postdisciplinarity emerged some time ago and have been

advanced on many fronts. They have been linked to the philosophical writings of William James, who in turn inspired Richard Rorty, Louis Menand, and Bruno Latour to write rather provocatively about the “meltdown of disciplinary structures” (Bordogna, 2008, p. 277). Menand (2010), for example, offered four features that are interconnected with postdisciplinarity: methodological eclecticism, boundary crossing, postprofessionalism, and the role of the public intellectual. He also challenged the traditional university institution, whose structure and ways of thinking about education no longer reflect the changing environments—including students, faculties, technology, and industry demands. In a different but pertinent book, titled *The Creative University*, Peters and Besley (2013) wrote that “openness and networking, cross-border people movement, flows of capital, portal cities and littoral zones, and new and audacious systems with worldwide reach: all are changing the conditions of imagining and producing and the sharing of creative work in different spheres” (p. 1).

The first broader point to be accentuated is that the traditional university institution fails to equip

students with necessary skills and know-how to succeed as critical and literary global citizens. This critical proclamation can be further enhanced by borrowing from Brewer (2013), who stated that “post-disciplinarity equips universities for the twenty-first century rather than the fifteenth” (p. 4). Such a recognition has to do not only with how we, the scholarly community, conceive of knowledge but also with what is consequently passed onto students within the university structure and as part of the tourism curriculum. This broader epistemic concern can be detected in all the contributions in this special issue but is most prominent in the writing of Hollinshead as well as Coles, Hall, and Duval. Barry and Bødker further show through their discussions on materialities and on embodied ways of knowledge that innovative approaches are also needed in the classroom.

The second, related point that underpins much of postdisciplinary critique is that postdisciplinarity is not merely a temporary fad of a few academics but a deeper, critical concern about knowledge production and dissemination. With respect to tourism (and inevitably its sister fields, such as Hospitality, Leisure, and Event Studies), one of the pressing questions is whether we are succeeding in furnishing students to be critical problem solvers, capable to conceive of tourism phenomena in creative ways, and able to find solutions to a range of problems. Or are we, perhaps, entrapped in ways that continue to program students for the past? We have entered an era of fluidity in which we should prepare students for landing on liquid terrains. In this regard, Hollinshead ponders the training and operative imagination in Tourism Studies, but he also questions the “plural knowabilities score” of tourism academics. The question he puts bluntly before us to reflect on is worth reiterating; he asks, “Are you really happy with your own plural knowabilities score?” We may further add that no thinker should ever be content with his or her plural knowabilities because there are always new ways of looking and thinking. Knowledge is not a stagnant collection of facts. In considering the ontic dimensions of tourism, Bødker eloquently points out through his examples that even nonsounds, when seen as part of a larger whole, can become the most important sounds. However, we have to be prepared and willing to see in such imaginative ways.

The third demarcation point arises out of a misconception shared among some tourism scholars who fear that postdisciplinarity is to necessarily replace disciplinary modes of thinking, or worse, that with the arrival of postdisciplinarity comes the demise of disciplines. This issue has been clarified in many texts, including Giroux (1997), who explained that postdisciplinarity is not about the rejection or ignorance of disciplines but about creating space that is often difficult to hold “within the policed boundaries of the existing disciplines” (p. xii). Similarly, for Shumway (1992), postdisciplinarity is about “forging connections between different disciplines” without the need to create a new field or a discipline; it is about abandoning territoriality “as a principle of survival” (p. 108). There is also the work of Segal (2007, p. 16), in which the term “postdisciplinarity” is employed to suggest the “loosening of disciplines.” These views resonate highly with several of the contributions to this special issue. Darbellay takes into account the roots of disciplinarity and the institutional, social, and material conditions that make academic knowledge possible. He explains that postdisciplinarity “does not kill the disciplines, and it does not collapse the academic landscape,” instead postdisciplinary approaches “both capitalize on the contributions of disciplines while transforming them into new theoretical, methodological, and practical frameworks.” Darbellay and Coles, Hall, and Duval concur in their considerations of the relevance of research that happens at the interfaces between disciplines, and Coles, Hall, and Duval suggest that it is pertinent to remember that “disciplines are a key differentiator and initial, or indeed recurrent, building block for many tourism scholars and their practices of knowledge production.” Therefore, postdisciplinarity is wrongly conceived of as something that is concerned with the abandonment of disciplines (as pointed out in this special issue by Coles, Hall, and Duval; Pernecky, Munar, & Wheeler; and Darbellay) and is better understood in terms of “degrees of openness, interaction, and integration”—a view emphasized by Darbellay.

Hence, many will agree that it is important for progress to continue on the disciplinary front; however, it is also important to create space for other approaches. There is a wider acknowledgment that

disciplinarity “can provide the basis for creativity, disruption of the known and change in our thinking,” and that it is important for building knowledge over time as well as providing academics with a sense of personal identity (Christie & Maton, 2011, p. 5). However, postdisciplinary thinkers are also aware of the disciplinary pitfalls and rigid ways of studying the worlds that we occupy. In the context of sociology, for example, Sayer (2001) has argued that too much reliance on disciplines has been counterproductive when it comes to making progress in understanding society; he has maintained that not only are disciplines parochial and imperialist but that disciplinarity can also lead to sociological reductionism. As exemplified throughout the contributions in this volume, tourism research has become progressively fragmented in its attempts to produce explanations of touristic phenomena.

The fourth point to be underscored speaks further to the knowledge claims about tourism. Allowing for the variations among postdisciplinary views, there is a broader spectrum of concerns articulated by the contributing authors. Postdisciplinarity has been depicted and accentuated in different ways: by Hollinshead as epistemologically pluralistic, contextually collaborative, and as a way of problematizing research hegemonies and Western certitudes; by Barry as a research enquiry that adopts reflexive methodologies and merges practice and theory, thereby having the potential to reveal creative forms of knowledge generated in daily processes and in the human–nonhuman boundaries of interaction; and by Bødker as a epistemic endeavor that embraces the nonrepresentational. Pernecky, Munar, and Wheeler appeal specifically to semantic, methodological, and epistemic pluralism and invite others to embrace the “lived” and the “personal” in their work. Some contributors see links with constructionist epistemologies (Pernecky, Munar and Wheeler), whereas others (Coles, Hall, and Wheeler) take postdisciplinarity to be representative of the flexible and integrative research approaches that are needed to examine the major issues facing the research community. However, most contributors would agree on the emic, relational, reflexive, and subjective approaches to the study of tourism. Elsewhere, Hollinshead (2012) purported that tourism is better thought of as a panoramic domain; he envisioned

flexible cogenerative, and permeable ways of designing research studies which—rather than unquestioningly uphold universal laws and generalised cultural values here, there and everywhere—endeavour to respond differentially to the new sorts of inculcations of being and becoming that are arising in every nation and across every continent. (p. 55)

The above outlooks are a foray into the epistemic, methodological, and methods-related aspects of postdisciplinarity. Although this particular flavor has not been the predominant focus in this first special issue, it is useful to highlight some developments that bear relevance to the postdisciplinary project. From origins in visual anthropology and visual sociology, critical visual studies, for example, have moved out of the rather insular institutional and disciplinary contexts of early work to explorations of everyday visualities through what may be regarded as postdisciplinary research and theorizing embracing subjectivity and reflexivity. As *Tourism Studies/Tourism Management* have evolved over the last four decades or so, the influence of visual culture in and through tourism and the practice of visual studies in tourism research have also grown (Burns, Palmer, & Lester, 2010; Crouch & Lubben, 2003; Rakic & Chambers, 2012). Because visual studies are often interwoven in contexts that require emergent approaches and methodologies, such work increasingly embraces perspectives beyond the bounded parameters of disciplinary tradition and tends toward hybridity, mobility, and postdisciplinarity.

The contributions of Barry and Bødker are exemplary of such approaches. In the case of Barry, her study of packing a bag reveals how tourism processes can “open our awareness to aesthetic and relational qualities of materials—as sensual, embodied, or processual interactions” and indeed “provide foundations for the decisions, motivations, and actions that are undertaken by both individual tourists and also within the increasingly globalized culture of tourism.” Bødker’s “meditations” are an example of a methodological orientation that focuses on embodiment and design trespassing across a number of disciplinary boundaries. The use of narrative in research is another tool whose value has been advocated by proponents of postdisciplinarity in other fields—including Segal’s

(2007) work in health research. Segal persuasively argued that narrative “gives meaning and texture and humanity to what might otherwise be just cases; the embodiments of disease, disability, and trauma” (p. 20). In this regard, the tourist, the worker, and the host are not some abstract, etc (i.e., objective, distant, observer-determined) objects of study to be taken out of context, and the same can be said of academics who make sense of the world via tourism theorizing, as pointed by Bødker as well as by Pernecky, Munar, and Wheeler.

We are reminded by Golinski (2005) that “one should not assume that there is only one way for a subject to be ‘scientific’ and only one path of development it can follow” (p. 8). Postdisciplinary thinkers concur on the important point that there is a wide repertoire of methodologies and methods as well as different philosophical stances that researchers can adopt. The production of knowledge in and of tourism, from a postdisciplinary stance, is not a project grounded in monistic visions (i.e., one world, one truth) but an eclectic one. The final argument, therefore, is that postdisciplinarity is not ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically prescriptive—it is an “open,” critical, and imaginative attitude toward research and the researched. It is also a pragmatic necessity as we face global problems that demand creative solutions.

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