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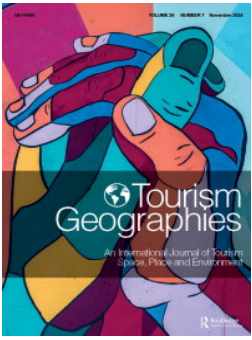
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Tourism infrastructures

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is both infrastructured and infrastructuring. Such a claim speaks to a much wider infrastructural turn unfolding within the humanities and social sciences that has sought to take seriously both the material and social strata that undergird our ways of life, what Berlant has called the 'living mediation of what organises life: the lifeworld of structure' (2016, p. 393). Conventional understandings of infrastructure often rely upon physical and biological metaphors to contemplate the roads, systems, pipes, cables, connections, buildings, routes, regulations and signs that act as grounds, supports, foundations and substrates that facilitate movement and exchange. Certainly, tourism and infrastructure should be easy bedfellows given that infrastructure is primarily understood as the material networks that connect places – that facilitate the mobility of bodies, goods, ideas, data, capital and much more. This paper examines the relationship between tourism and infrastructure as it intersects with predominant geopolitical circulations such as war, security and migration. In considering how the field has addressed this relationship, and where it is going, we contemplate, literally, the roads and verges and other infrastructural formations which are bound up in tourism, but which also signal its more leaky and uncertain boundaries and its contamination with other social and political practices.

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Introduction

Tourism is both infrastructured and infrastructuring. This is, perhaps, an obvious claim to make. Prior to COVID-19's disruption of global travel and tourism, the World Economic Forum recently identified infrastructure as the 'arteries of the industry', and essential to 'tourism growth and competitiveness' (Soshkin, 2019). Moreover, when Urry and Larsen (2011) revamped the *Tourist Gaze*, they signalled the inseparable relation between tourist spaces and practices with infrastructural development. Yet such a claim also speaks to a much wider infrastructural turn unfolding within the humanities and social sciences that has sought to take seriously both the material and social strata that undergird our ways of life, what Berlant has called the 'living

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mediation of what organises life: the lifeworld of structure' (Berlant, 2016, p. 393). Conventional understandings of infrastructure often rely upon physical and biological metaphors to contemplate the roads, systems, pipes, cables, connections, buildings, routes, regulations and signs that act as grounds, supports, foundations and substrates that facilitate movement and exchange. Certainly, tourism and infrastructure should be easy bedfellows given that infrastructure is primarily understood as the material networks that connect places—that facilitate the mobility of bodies, goods, ideas, data, capital and much more. Yet with infrastructure there is always a sense of, and potentially a reliance on, revealing something which has been hidden (Hetherington, 2018; Graham and Marvin, 2002). And so, in contrast to many forms of tourism which are conspicuous, it has been easy to ignore or forget the constitutive infrastructures that support and enable tourism activities, practices and sensory experiences.

This paper examines the relationship between tourism and infrastructure, how the field has addressed this relationship, and where it is going – to contemplate, literally, the roads and verges and other infrastructural formations which are bound up in tourism, but which also signal its more leaky and uncertain boundaries and its contamination with other social and political practices. While constructions of depth and visibility have been important to the advancement and study of infrastructure (Kaika & Swyngedouw, 2000; Graham, 2016), our examination hinges on two problematic assumptions which have perhaps discouraged the more widespread critical examination of tourism infrastructures so far. First, there is a tendency to exceptionalise the mobility of tourists and tourism in relation to other mobile, yet marginal, precarious or violent subjects. This unhooks tourist mobilities and practices from the common material infrastructures that facilitate all mobility from the most privileged to the most dispossessed. Second, there is a tendency to assume that infrastructures are static things, coldly material, hardwired, durable and even sunk and certainly artificial. In some ways this sets infrastructure up in opposition to more romantic, sensory and fantasy-driven notions of tourism as an enchanting experience (Lin et al., 2022), as if infrastructure is only about the banal and unexciting experience of transport. For us, the effect of these assumptions has, until recently, either delinked tourism infrastructures/infrastructuring from other kinds of (im) mobilities, or essentialised tourism infrastructures to the spectacular by rendering the mundane experiences of mobility unimportant.

Instead, we recognise a burgeoning series of arguments for more productive, even antagonistic relationships between tourist mobilities and infrastructure. As forms of mobility, tourist trajectories are never about uniform mobility – they are always interspersed with uneven forms of stopping, resting, waiting, rerouting, returning, lingering, dwelling. Tourism is always uneven, always turbulent – it has a wonky rhythm and an uneven temporality that is often obscured by its home/away/home and work/play/work structure. Nonetheless, these asymmetric rhythms are governed, held in place, even disciplined by well-established tourist infrastructures. Drawing on Berlant's approach to infrastructure, we mean both (a) the durable material forms of the global tourism industry within which the social life of tourism unfolds (e.g. accommodation & transport infrastructures, attractions & leisure industries); and (b) the durable normative orders that enable tourist fantasies and desires, orient host economies, social lives and behaviours, and construct, maintain and govern affective orientations. We acknowledge a debt to previous understandings of the assemblages or social

structures that shape tourist practices and expectations (e.g. Urry & Larsen, 2011), but we mobilize Berlant's work here to develop a more dynamic foregrounding of materiality, affect and power.

We start with the claim that even the most materialized, most entrenched, most enduring forms of tourism infrastructure are always transforming in multiple time-scales, durations and rhythms. To take these transformations seriously, we must understand these mutable tourist infrastructures as always, already intersecting with other forms of circulation that both stabilize and trouble prevailing geopolitical orders. In this paper we unpack these intersections by reviewing existing and developing work that examines how tourism is entangled specifically in a war, security and migration nexus (Coward et al., 2018; Lisle, 2021). While there is sometimes an alignment between durable tourist orders that map neatly onto prevailing geopolitical orders, at other times there is a great deal of friction, for example, when tourist infrastructures are repurposed during particular moments of 'crisis'. Quite suddenly any assumption of tourism as an apolitical leisure practice is challenged when its material structures (e.g. hotels, cruise ships, resorts) become vehicles for violence, dispossession and incarceration. Thus, in our tracing of the pasts, presents and futures of transforming tourist infrastructures we deliberately centre these formations in a series of *already present* entanglements with other mobilizations that support, govern and threaten other mobile subjects. We consider the infrastructures of tourist economies within processes of militarization, securitization and humanitarianism, and look to the wider forces that lead to its short and long term repurposing.

History

When John Urry (1990) noted Joseph Cunningham's Isle of Man holiday camp as an example of organised seaside tourism, *The Tourist* referred to the male-only event as the 'jolliest, most beneficial to health and "Cheapest Holiday in the World"'. He did not acknowledge the camp's simple infrastructure of bell tents and rudimentary sanitation, its inclusions of food, orchestras and other indoor and outdoor entertainments, nor its eventual requisitioning as an internment camp during the First World War. The camp was used for internment precisely because it had been proven as cheap and temporary accommodation for large numbers of people. But underneath that pragmatic repurposing are important futurities and histories: while the First World War internees were put to work on constructing houses and chalets for the camp's future inter-war life as a holiday destination, the island's ferries, beaches, promenades, hotels and boarding houses were once again used as a key site of internment during the Second World War. The island was a legal exception and a material infrastructure that could perform the tricky hospitality of handling 'enemy aliens' at a 'safe' distance from the UK mainland. As these facilities once again served tourists following the war's cessation, the traces of internment would often emerge in unexpected ways—sometimes as part of the island's official wartime history, but often in awkward juxtapositions as the material infrastructural remnants of internment could be simultaneously troubling and familiar (Holden & Adey, *in press*). In other words, whilst Cunningham's camp has been seen as a key site of organised and inclusive tourism in histories of leisure (Rogerson et al., 2020; Ward & Hardy, 1986), that historical frame obscures

how the structural transformations of the camp—as well as the wider Isle of Man hospitality infrastructure of boarding houses, hotels and entertainments—unfolded within, and sometimes served, the strategic purposes of war, migration and geopolitics.

It is notable, then, that Claudio Minca and Lauren Wagner begin their 'Touring Mobilities' entry in the geography textbook *Introducing Human Geographies* (Minca & Wagner, 2014) with the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, many of whom were tourists, in nightspots surrounding two clubs in Kuta Beach. They use this moment to speak to tourism's many interlocking 'facets of our late modern world: our cultural mappings; our political and economic relations and differences'... (806). We agree that the Bali bombing brings together multiple competing discourses, but Minca & Wagner focus on the way infrastructure has been more readily bound-up in struggles over tourism development and its economic and environmental imprint. Here, infrastructure is a key space of tourism development and contestation: 'Can a small tourist town pay for a set of infrastructures (roads, hospitals, sewage system, etc) that are adequate to respond to the needs of a population ten times higher?' (817).

These relations are important, and the explicit link between infrastructure and tourism development has taken up most space in understandings of tourism geographies, particularly the unevenness of tourism development and its relationship to sustainability. To be sure, tourism has required lots of infrastructure, and while we might have considered this as an effect of tourism's heavy footprint, we also need to understand how infrastructure directly shapes the diverse sensory, embodied and affective experiences and encounters central to tourism and leisure practices. Here, we recover what has often been lost in many overdetermined applications of the tourist gaze. Certainly, Thomas Cook's invention of the package holiday was also about the extension of the railway to enable the working classes to spend their leisure time in seaside coastal towns and resorts. But the set of material infrastructures bringing tourists to destinations was multi sensorial: these materials brought with them stabilised sets of practice, habits, norms and expectations through which tourist experiences were structured. Infrastructures—material and affective – shape spaces of tourism to insulate tourist bodies from the cold, immerse them in clear waters, and expose them to sun, sand and sea. And yet, somewhat in spite of these concerns, the emergence of an 'infrastructure turn' in recent work has tended to belie the way the material and affective 'stick' together, and how that 'sticking' amplifies existing asymmetries in particular moments of 'crisis'.

Indeed, to return to the Bali bombings, IR scholar Charlotte Heath-Kelly (2015) explores the multiple ways in which the Bali bombsite was enrolled within more immediate projects of tourism redevelopment and memorialisation. Here, she situates local contestations over tourism infrastructure within global discourses of resilience, crisis management and development. She shows how the ruined tourist infrastructure of a bombsite became a powerful infrastructure for the circulation of security and geopolitical narratives that reproduced neocolonial relationships between Australia and Indonesia. In constructing alternative histories to our dominant understanding of tourism geographies and infrastructures, Heath-Kelly reveals intersecting histories of violence, colonialism, insecurity and dispossession (see also Lisle, 2016, pp. 254–263).

Heath-Kelly's approach builds on a longer-term body of work which has challenged the artificial but heavily reinforced boundaries between 'frivolous' tourism infrastructures and the more 'serious' infrastructures of geopolitics, statecraft, security and development. While some of this work has become more common within geographical fields (especially in the work of Claudio Minca, see Minca & Ong, 2016; Altin & Minca, 2016) exploring the spatial figure of the camp (Katz et al., 2018), a spatially attuned IR has brought tourism geographies and infrastructures into wider assemblages of war, militarism, security, migration and humanitarianism. Lisle in particular challenges the geographical boundaries which have demarcated spaces of tourism from the spaces of conflict, through artificial and ambivalent constructions of there and then, here and there, near and far, war and peace, and, above all, safety and danger (Lisle, 2000, 2016). Indeed, Lisle notices how many *infrastructural* connections often break through artificial and strategically constructed separations that both tourism and security seek to reinforce. Indeed, the Bali Bombsite, the remnants of British counterterrorism in Belfast, the destroyed walls of Dubrovnik and the lonely cells of Robben Island are all *preserved* for future tourism, but those acts of preservation require the reproduction of dominant geopolitical orders (Lisle, 2000). We increasingly see these infrastructural juxtapositions in common spaces like airports where, "rich," [...] tourists and business people, frequently use the infrastructure of airports and airplanes in their globe-trotting through our 'global village'. What may be less familiar is how these same facilities are used to 'deport' the less desirable globetrotters, the unwanted asylum seekers and economic migrants' (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2007, p. 320; see also Bianchi et al., 2020).

Current trends

By exposing and challenging the assumed divisions between tourism and more 'serious' geopolitical manifestations, recent work has been able to examine tourism infrastructures through far more flexible, blurring, expanding and contracting qualities. With such a dynamic framework in place, it becomes possible to explore what is at stake in confusing slippages between tourism and its myriad antitheses—war, violence, exclusion, dispossession, incarceration, abjection, abandonment. Four key qualities characterise these emergent relationships: the nature of temporary infrastructures and architectures of suspension; the juxtaposition of tourist infrastructures with other modalities of movement, governance and control; how tourism infrastructures are enrolled into the contraction and expansion of legal and governmental forms of control over mobility; and the traces, echoes and hauntings of durable tourist infrastructures as they reach through time and remain in place. In much of the literature, the repurposing of tourist infrastructures like hotels and resorts into immigration detention and reception centres has taken much of the focus (see especially Minca & Ong, 2016, and more recently Esposito & Tazzioli, 2023; Burrige, 2023).

First, while we note concern for the sustainability of tourism infrastructures especially when dependent upon seasonal trade and traffic during holiday periods, we are interested in how these temporary rhythms have conjoined with other temporal sensibilities. Fregonese and Ramadan have convincingly argued how 'Far from being spaces of detached depoliticised leisure and hospitality, or the neutral back-drops to formal political events, hotels can be seen instead as actively entangled in relations

of power and politics, supporting the circulation of the materialities and relationalities of states and statecraft' (Fregonese & Ramadan, 2015, p. 797). The authors discuss hotels as infrastructures of temporary and conditional hospitality that can easily shift into supporting hostile military logistics. They note, for example, how hotels have historically been targeted for violence, supported militias, held hostages (perhaps tourists), and have been quickly requisitioned as accommodation and coordination centres for military units and emergency governments. They wonder at the speed with which these uses can be swiftly replaced, 'the click of a tourist's camera replaced by the crack of a sniper's gun' (2015, p. 802). More recently, hotels have become commonplace as temporary housing for people awaiting asylum decisions, and de-facto immigration detention centres often referred to as 'asylum hotels'. In some places such as the UK, this use of existing tourism infrastructure to accommodate people seeking asylum has enabled a more informal and ad-hoc strategy of governance that uses claims about pragmatism to avoid the formal processes of accountability necessary in purpose-built infrastructure. Indeed, members of the UK government have mobilised a politics of resentment in which the use of hotels for asylum accommodation shifts from being a 'wasted luxury' for the wealthy, to being perceived as a 'wasted resource' for British citizens that should be restored to 'to their rightful use for local communities' (Home Office & Rt Hon Jenrick, 2023).

Second, while notions of ambivalence and ambiguity have long characterised Tourism Studies (e.g. the liminal space of the beach; the carnivalesque attractions of the seaside resort (Shields, 1991)), it could seem quite difficult to deploy these concepts in the supposedly 'exceptional' spaces of detention and immigration control. However, ambivalence and dissonance (Ong et al., 2015) are becoming increasingly important in research that challenges the completeness of power in these spaces and the durability of a politics of exception (Altin & Minca, 2016). As Orvar Löfgren has suggested, there are commonalities between holiday camps (such as Cunningham's discussed earlier) and prison camps – both 'have elements of a common structure—the idea of large scale, detailed planning and control, self-sufficient communities with clear boundaries' (2002, p. 245). These infrastructural commonalities mean that even in spaces of overwhelming governmentality, like migration containment, it is surprisingly easy for established boundaries to become blurred and confused. This is important because unstable and collapsing boundaries increase the spaces within which counter-conduct, resistance and refusal of overpowering discourses of exception become possible. Scholars are increasingly aware of the break-down of established boundaries and grids of containment as migration detainment is pursued across an increasingly flexible, porous, leaky (Lobo & Barry, 2024), and uncertain landscape. As Lisle has shown in the context of contemporary migration, tourism and security encounters on the Greek island of Kos, 'sometimes the affective echoes of leisure and recreation created unexpected openings for migrant lifeworlds to articulate themselves outside of the reductive framings of either threat or abjection' (Lisle, 2021, p. 266).

Third, such ambivalence persists in part because infrastructural spaces and circulations undo more limited scalar assumptions. Spatially, we know that infrastructures can often be hidden, sunk and even anterior to perception: they are stretched and spaced out at even continental and planetary scales. But that scalar analysis is too often rendered static, as if infrastructure can be neatly divided up into ever more

granular scales. In foregrounding a more dynamic account of infrastructure, we are interested in authors who place this concept in a continuum of mobility and immobility management in order to focus on the apparently contradictory processes of assimilation, concentration, disaggregation, contraction, dispersal and reconstitution. Think, for example, of how tourist infrastructures such as hotels became part of the armature of the border's filtration functions during COVID-19 quarantine. Jerrems et al. (2023) have discussed this phenomena as a broader 'confinement continuum' through which legal and territorial designations can contract and expand tourist infrastructures to perform other kinds of roles.

Finally, the spatial expansion and utility of infrastructures can overlook a more subtle temporal durability—what we might think of as infrastructure's afterlives, residues and echoes, or what Lisle (2021) calls 'stickiness'. This is not just the historical forms of violence that persist in shiny tourist projects, but also the kind of futurity that is enacted upon the erasure of such histories. For example, Valdares's work on the Hope-Princeton Highway in British Columbia describes the construction and promotion of a national infrastructure 'premised on wartime coastal defense, Asian exclusion, and forced labor on the Canadian West Coast' (Valdares, 2023, p. 159). The construction of the road always had a double purpose: it was a road building project for national unity and defense, but it was also a road from which tourists could see, consume and neutralise the landscape and Indigenous people by turning them into pre-war objects of cultural heritage. What Valdares shows us is how a tourist infrastructure enabled the thriving mobility of some (i.e. tourists) by immobilizing others (i.e. indigenous people). But even within that logic, multiple contaminations arise, for example, the use of interned Japanese Canadians during the War to build the road made use of their forced labour, while the road infrastructure today—and a series of roadside signs and boards—caters to Japanese and Japanese-Canadian tourists.

Future directions

Valdares's (2023) examination of the Hope-Princeton Highway is a good example of tracking the different trajectories, interventions and possibilities that are contained within this seemingly monolithic structure. In that particular case, the circulations of Indigenous people and Japanese internees disrupted dominant formations of Canadian national identity which can only be secured by disavowing Canada's history as a violent Settler Colonial state (see also Grimwood et al., 2019). It is not hard to think of many historical examples of tourism infrastructure that have been complicit in violent forms of nation building and colonial occupation. What is more difficult to expose are the instabilities, porosities and contingencies of those tourism infrastructures that—no matter how seemingly durable—are always open to contestation and recalibration. Following Valdares's example, an important future direction for research is examining how the material and affective forces of tourism infrastructures 'stick' together in various historical moments. By paying particular attention to the *uneven durability* of tourist infrastructures across time, it becomes possible to track how they both reproduce and rupture dominant geopolitical formations like colonialism, development and statecraft. The circulations at work in these formations never quite align as we expect, for example, the performances of

tourists, visitors, migrants, interneers, hosts and locals are often excessive, surprising and unruly.

One way to foreground those unexpected circulations is to pay more attention to the 'structures of feeling' generated in and through tourism infrastructures. These are the affective forces that encourage some subjects to find, 'stick' to and invest time in tourist infrastructures, and in so doing, find commonalities with each other. What futures, possibilities and fantasies are imagined in those attachments, and how are they sustained over time? What dominant discourses hold those attachments together, and how are affective tourist orientations disrupted by other circulations (e.g. migrants 'invading' tourist infrastructures; tourist workers not adhering to 'the script' of gratitude and service). Who, and what, is left out of those attachments? The importance of affect is gaining attention in Tourism Studies, not least in a special issue of *Tourism Geographies* which seeks to explore the non-cognitive forces that connect 'touring bodies and tourism places' (Molz & Buda, 2022). We think there is more work to do putting these insights about affect in conversation with the 'infrastructural turn'. What is often lost in the turn to affect are the brutalizing materialities of tourist infrastructures—especially those that endure over long periods of time (Truscello, 2020). And what is often lost in the infrastructural turn is attention to the power of those indistinct and hard to evidence affective forces that keep the whole tourism enterprise running in the first place: the fantasies, feelings, sensations, moods and vibes even through the colder, gimmicky, seedy and plastic aesthetic judgements and affective relations often associated within tourist experiences (Ngai, 2020). We need more analysis that holds *both* the material and the affective together in terms of infrastructure, but also exposes the embedded logics of power that are reproduced as infrastructures stick together and fall apart.

In considering the uneven durability of tourism infrastructures over time, we need much more attention to their role in the unfolding Anthropocene and their contribution to the slow violence of planetary destruction. For Gibson (2022), these 'volatile times' demand that Tourism Studies pays more attention to the 'dispossession, displacement, commodification, exclusion, extinction' that are unfolding as the planet warms up. For us, infrastructure is a vital part of that conversation because it brings together the major forces responsible for planetary destruction: the materials derived from extractive industries, the subjectivities bequeathed by colonial histories (e.g. host/guest), the logics of power embedded in Modernity, Capitalism and the State, the techno-fantasies of unfettered mobility, and the material and geophysical spaces, natures, circulations and rhythms depleted or transformed in the process of planetary wrecking. Central to this work is a critical rethinking of the relations between tourism, the natural world and planetary mobilities—less on how tourism infrastructures can turn nature into a more efficient commodity or find 'new' natures that are not as threatened by climate change, and more on how tourism infrastructures are complicit in the planetary destruction of biodiversity, species extinction and climate change.

Conclusion

For us, the capacity to map tourist infrastructures in a way that holds both material and affective forces together opens up new terrains of inquiry. It allows

us to keep tourist encounters dynamic in a way that recognizes entrenched logics of power (e.g. host/guest) but is never overdetermined by them. To do this, tourist infrastructures must be understood as formations that are always in the process of being simultaneously bolstered and undone by the multiple mobilities circulating in and through them. They are constantly coalescing and dissipating across different time scales, but those movements are also always uneven, excessive and bumpy. Reimagining tourism infrastructures as material and affective forms that are *always available* for recalibration opens up new ways to find those important moments of disruption and refusal.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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