Integrirani pristup proučavanju transformativne uloge turizma u 21. stoljeću

An integrated approach for the study of transformative role of tourism in the 21st century

Activity 3  Output 5

Working paper No 2

TRANSTOURISM –

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION AND TYPOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATIVE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

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1. INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of the TRANS-TOURISM project is to critically investigate the role of tourism in attaining the vision for a sustainable world of peace and harmony, and to develop tools and options in order to provide practical models to harness the transformative power of tourism. This proposition will be analysed from three aspects, by capturing: a) the transformative power of past and present travel experience of the cultural creatives, b) the motivations and practises of pioneering change-makers who create transformational travel products, and c) tourism stakeholders’ receptiveness to integrate transformational view of tourism into design of their products. The project is organised through eight activities, starting from the integration of relevant literature (Activity 1), through a population survey seeking to uncover the transformative tourists travel style (Activity 2), in-depth interviews with transformative tourism providers to gain insights into their motivation and practices (Activity 3) to be conducted during the first year of the project.

The development of a working definition and typology of transformative travel experiences is the second output of Activity 1, related to the first project objective - to integrate literature on the range of views on transformative power of tourism as a catalyst of peace, social justice, well-being and transformative travel world-wide and nationally. It results from a comprehensive literature review on travel experience considered to be transformational and it forms a foundation for Activity 3 that seeks to develop an inventory of transformative travel providers and map out the main features of their travel products.
2. **TOWARDS AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION**

Transtourism is an emerging paradigm and, as illustrated by the Working paper 1 (literature review), there are several broad perspectives advanced by scholars and practitioners. So far, there is a proposition advanced by Ateljevic (xxx) theorising that the emerging class of cultural creatives will lead societal transformation, and this will be assisted by the phenomenon of travel to the extent that tourism offers transformational experience. From the perspective of transformational learning theory, Reisinger (2013) likewise argues that travel is transformational as it features most of the conditions/stages that trigger and lead to personal and societal transformation. From broader sojourner studies there is some evidence that travel to the foreign and unknown is transformational (references). Pollock (n/d), likewise, argues that travel can foster personal and social transformation. She calls such travel conscious travel. The conscious travellers are motivated by self-discovery, value independence, care for places visited, and seek deeper meaning in travel that would foster self-development. From the travellers' perspective, Ross (2010) claims that one has to conscientiously decide to embark on travel that will be challenging and, potentially, transformational.

Implicitly or explicitly, the transformative power of tourism is attributed to some kind of a challenge faced by travellers in new or unfamiliar environments, whether it is culture shock as in sojourn studies/cross-cultural adaptation studies (Lyon, 2002), culture confusion proposed by Hottola (2004) based on studies of backpackers in India and Sri Lanka or disorienting dilemma in transformational learning theory (Taylor, 2007). In all cases it is hypothesised that, faced with situations in which the existing values, norms and learned behavioural response do not function, one becomes confused and disoriented until he/she adapts and this adaptation usually involves deep transformational change including psychological (deeper understanding of self), convicational (beliefs, values, world-view) and behavioural transformations (Nowaczek, 2013).

From this perspective certain travel conditions are necessary to trigger transformation. To start with, it is considered that such travel should be independent (Hottola, 2014), motivated by a desire to transform (Ross, 2010), learn (Brown, 2009), get immersed in local culture (Jandt in Brown, 2009; Kottler in Lean, 2009; Robertson in Ross, 2010) or in activities stimulating contemplation and self-reflection upon return (Lean in Ross, 2010). Furthermore, the new environment should provide significant contrast with the home or ordinary surroundings (Reisinger, 2013a). However, contrary to Ross's argument, transformation can also be unintentional, as one is confronted with disorienting dilemmas beyond planned or anticipated
or, as Reisinger (2013) argues, that for those ready to change it can happen in almost any context.

From this perspective only those types of tourism experiences that are in some way challenging to a traveller are transformational. Ross (2010) identified experiences that can be transformative such as staying at sacred sites, participating in rituals and ceremonies, being in nature and connecting with it, involvement in sustainable practices, learning esoteric and common history, engaging in self-exploration through meditation, yoga, arts, group activities, learning from local teachers, engaging in physically challenging activities and providing community services. Reisinger (2013a) has identified a number of settings conducive to transformation such as – nature as it forces one to reflect and be humble of forces beyond his/her control, adventure as when one is faced with a fear of death, one grows personally and spiritually, farming through the experience of a simple and pure life, culture as it leads to appreciation of the vastness of human talent, wellness through which one gets in touch in oneself, and education through which intercultural understating and self-discovery is facilitated (Reisinger, 2013b). By examining the effects of international travels, Lean (2009), identified study abroad, religious tourism, nature based and eco-tourism, educational tourism, developmental and volunteer tourism and backpacking as possible settings augmenting travel’s transformational potential. A number of scholars have identified various types of tourism as fostering transformation, as presented in Table 1.1.

In the remainder of this chapter, each type of experience is elaborated in greater detail with a view to uncover the main elements that are considered to foster transformative change in each travel experience and the expected transformational outcome.
Table 1.1. Transformative tourism experiences by author/s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of experience</th>
<th>Author/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backpacking tourism</td>
<td>Brown, 2009; Kanning, 2013; Lean, 2009; O’Reilly 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education tourism</td>
<td>Brown, 2009; Lean, 2009; Reisinger, 2013a; Ross, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecotourism</td>
<td>Lean, 2009; Nowaczejk, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme sports</td>
<td>Brymer, 2005; 2013; Brymer, Downey, Gray, 2009; Reisinger, 2013b, Ross, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga tourism</td>
<td>Ponder, Holladay, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative tourism</td>
<td>Kilroy et. al., 2007; Ross, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural tourism</td>
<td>Reisinger, 2013b; Savener, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual tourism</td>
<td>Heintzman, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm tourism</td>
<td>Reisinger, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tourism</td>
<td>Heintzman, 2013; Jung Lee, Gretzel, 2013; Ross, 2010; Smith, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer tourism</td>
<td>Erdely, 2013; Grabowski, 2013; Lean, 2009; Reisinger, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWOOF-ing</td>
<td>Deville, Wearing, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (wellness) tourism</td>
<td>Smith, 2013; Reisinger, 2013b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Backpacking tourism**

Backpacking, by its nature, involves intense and continuous interaction with other cultures over a longer period of time (Brown, 2009; Kanning, 2013). Kanning (2013) argues that backpacking involves three stages – separation from the familiar environment, liminal zone as unconstrained new environment that gives space for experiencing new roles and triggers the disorienting dilemma and re-entry into the home society leading to self-reflection. In his study of US backpackers (in-depth personal interviews with 22 participants on at least three-month trips), it was found that backpackers perceived their travel as having an effect on their self-awareness, on social issues such as cross-cultural awareness, understanding global issues better, and behavioural change such as change in careers (i.e. working in NGOs, volunteering, searching for jobs with meaning) and lifestyle (i.e. less wasteful, less materialistic). Similarly, Noy’s...
(2004) research of Israelis backpackers based on the narrative identity, found out that the stories of backpackers almost always involve the unexpected, a drama, and describe deep personality change as a whole, but often undifferentiated characterised by statements such as ‘learned a lot’, ‘changed attitude to life’, or ‘became more tolerant’. Although backpacking has evolved nowadays into a mainstream tourism activity widely undertaken by young people as a rite of passage (O’Reilly, 2006), and the view of backpackers as the antithesis of tourism is considered unrealistic and romanticized (Hottola, 2014), there is still evidence that the more adventurous ones are seeking novel routes and destinations, while their travel experience foster inter-cultural tolerance, a sense of common humanity and a changed world-view (O’Reilly, 2006).

**Volunteer tourism**

This type of tourism is identified by most scholars as transformative via its altruistic motivation (Erdely, 2013; Grabowski, 2013; Lean, 2009; Reisinger, 2013b), cross-cultural encounters and immersion with locals. It is argued that participating in volunteer tourism leads to personal development, awareness of global issues, value and worldview change, and long-term reflection of the experience fuelling the life-long persistence for the new patterns of behaviours (Grabowski, 2013; Reisinger, 2013a). Coghlan and Gooch (2011) applied transformative learning theory to the study of transformation through volunteer tourism and concluded that the experience leads to personal development and self-fulfilment - especially empowerment, independence, self-awareness, the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and enhanced interpersonal relations. Conditions for this is the presence of a cathartic experience leading to a disorienting dilemma. However, they found no clear evidence that the outcome leads to a reappraisal of values, world-views or life-style choice, as western values are often propagated by volunteer tourism experiences. Results of other similar studies are not completely supportive of the transformative power of volunteer tourism. Dalwai and Donegan’s (2012) study of volunteer tourism in India found that volunteers benefit in terms of personal development and gaining cultural and corporate capital that help them in their career. Some volunteers gain knowledge and skills but very little in terms of social transformation, as they stay locked in their pro-western attitudes and missionary role of us being here to help you. Similarly, Lee and Campbell (2014), reporting on preliminary results of a study of volunteer tourists in Costa Rica, find that the experience boosts volunteer identity as opposed to mass tourists, while in reality the stereotypes and attitudes that they have at the outset are merely reinforced, due to a very
limited contact with host residents. Coghlan and Gooch (2011) thus concluded that volunteer tourism falls short of its transformational promise due to the lack of the two key elements in transformational learning theory – the opportunities for exploring new roles, and developing a plan of action for reintegration in society upon return. As focusing mostly on 'doing something for the common good' opportunities for life-changing experiences beneficial to volunteers, hosts, society and environments are missing.

**Educational travel/study abroad**

Educational travel distance individuals, geographically and emotionally, from their own culture and expose them to lesser-known and different cultures to which they have to adjust (Brown, 2009; Reisinger, 2013b). Intense cultural exchange in educational travel can trigger personal transformation leading to greater cross-cultural understanding and tolerance, the reduction of ethnocentrism, breaking down stereotypes, psychological and moral development, and changed priorities and lifestyle upon return. Thus, education travel experience can have long-term and significant implications for personal and professional life of an individual (Brown, 2009; Lean, 2009; Reisinger, 2013b; Ross, 2010). Based on a study of international students to a UK university, Brown (2009) identified personal change reflected in greater autonomy as students become independent, self-reliant, self-directed and confident. Observed were also changes in social attitudes, such as growth in intercultural competence, increased tolerance and acceptance of different practices and changing life-priorities, especially the preference for happiness over financial success. These changes are attributed to the exposure to new environment coupled with geographical and emotional distance from home that, initially, caused discomfort and stress, which after resolution would lead to the acceptance of new roles.

**Eco-tourism/nature based tourism**

Ecotourism is largely based on an intensive interaction between people and nature, enabling tourists to experience, first hand, the impact that they have on the environment. Nowaczek (2013) argues that, by offering sustainable and challenging experiences of nature, ecotourism has „high potential to transform us as human beings by making us more interconnected and conscious of our planet's natural system“ (p. 174). Furthermore, Nowaczek argues that ecotourism greatly overlaps with transformational learning theory given its three universally
cited components: nature-based, learning-centred, and conservation-oriented. There are claims that eco-tourism – mostly via skilled guides and interaction with locals, develops ecological awareness (Honey, 2008), increases knowledge about natural and cultural environments, educates tourists about ecological and sustainable lifestyles leading to attitude and behaviour change, and aids in transitioning from the egocentric to an eccentric mind-set (Charters in Lean, 2009; Nowaczek, 2013). Furthermore,

Steiner and Reisinger (2006) suggest that eco-tourism can contribute towards resolving ethical crisis as it offers authentic experiences through which one discovers the authentic self. D'Amato and Krasni (2011) tested this thesis on a sample of participants in university's nature-based educational programs, seeking to foster personal growth (emancipatory learning) and pro-environmental behaviour (instrumental learning). They found the experience to be more beneficial to personal growth, while there was a limited impact on behavioural change, even though the experience has provided a mismatch with the previously held assumption (disorienting dilemma).

**Extreme sports**

Brymer (2013, xxx) was among the first to challenge a dominant understanding of extreme sports as hedonistic, reckless, and risk-taking activities undertaking to conquer nature, arguing instead that it has a profound transformational impact on participants. He defines extreme sports as those where mistakes can lead to a serious accident or death. The activities in extreme sport include BASE jumping (parachuting or wingsuit flying from a fixed structure or cliff, stands for Building, Antennae, Span, Earth), extreme skiing, waterfall kayaking, big-wave surfing, high-level mountaineering and free solo climbing. It is argued that personal transformation in extreme sports is triggered by the experience of being close to accepting the one’s own death. Based on in-depth interviews with 15 extreme sport participants Brymer (2013) finds that the outcome of the experience is increased humility, enhanced spirituality, personal growth, awareness of the connection of humanity to the natural world and, finally, behavioural changes manifested through desire to treat the world in a more positive manner and considering others in a more open way. Personal benefits include psychological balance, courage, self-confidence and receptiveness towards new experiences and people (Brymer, 2005; Brymer, 2013).
Yoga travel

Yoga tourism is generally submersed under the category of meditation tourism, holistic tourism, spa/wellness tourism or spiritual tourism (Lehto, Brown, Chen and Morrison, 2006) and research dealing with yoga tourism itself is in its infancy. Ponder and Holladay (2013) argue that yoga, in itself, is deeply transformational as it connects body, mind and spirit with the self, others and the entire creation and this journey of self is heightened in a new setting provided by tourism. It is claimed that yoga shifts mind-sets and leads one towards enlightenment, self-awareness, and life-satisfaction. Moreover so, this positive transformation experienced by those practicing yoga spills over to communities supporting yoga, so yoga tourism is transformational not only to yogis, but also for host communities which, through supporting yoga, generate transformation of self and their surroundings.

Cultural and creative tourism

It is argued by Reisinger (2013b) that cultural tourism can be transformational as people experience awe for human ingenuity in the presence of great art works or heritage buildings, as they are confronted by power, knowledge and perfection beyond their comprehension. More broadly, Savener (2013) points out to the transformational nature of learning about new cultures and customs is sufficiently different from the familiar one, as the individual is challenged to perceive its own culture and the products of its culture from different perspectives.

Creative tourism, offering people opportunities to develop their own creative potential through participation in workshops and seminars available at a destination ([http://www.creativetourismnetwork.org/about/](http://www.creativetourismnetwork.org/about/)), can also be transformational. It is generally considered that creativity facilitates self-discovery, self-reflection and self-identity leading to improved confidence, mental health and quality of life. The power of art in healing has been recognised in psychology with art therapies used widely under the premise that art is „a transformational act of critical consciousness. Not only is art the making of things; it also awakens new ways of thinking and learning that things can change“ (Kapitan, Litell and Torres, 2011, p. 64). Although long practiced in individual therapy, art can also act as a transformational force at community levels (Golub in Kapitan et. Al. 2011). Furthermore, art therapies are now offered not only in the context of the context of the institutionalised mental
health care, but within the realm of wellness tourism, used for distressing and restoring a healthy balance to life (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006).

**Spiritual, retreat and religious tourism**

This type of tourism is connected to spirituality, in general or related to a particular religious affiliation and presents a growing section of the tourism market. Its transformational potential relates to the motivation of tourists to search for the deeper understanding of the self and meaning of life. Retreat centres, whose popularity is growing, offer a combination of wellness and spirituality, as they offer a holistic approach to personal development, with activities including yoga, meditation, nature-base activities and special diets. However, unlike wellness centres in general, retreats are focused on obtaining spiritual or religious insights (Heintzman, 2013). Although the spiritual travel sites and retreats vary, in Europe they are most often monastic retreats, although different types of retreats are increasingly on offer (ref.). Heintzman (2013), based on a review of a couple of studies related to retreat centres’ visitors, concluded that retreats foster personal transformation by facilitating the restoration of mind and body, relaxation, positive outlook and clear-headed thinking, leads to the acquisition of new skills, knowledge or training (i.e. meditation techniques) and finally results in improved self-identity. He goes as far to argue that retreats potentially lead to community transformation as it develops altruism, compassion and a sense of justice and, on that ground, contributes to a better world. A physical and spiritual removal from the ordinary daily routine, prayer, conversation with spiritual leaders is also at the core of religious pilgrimage (Heintzman, 2013; Jung Lee, Gretzel, 2013). Ross (2010) argues that pilgrimage (historic or traditional, goddess pilgrimages, pilgrimages to sacred sites) are all conducive to transformation as they provide opportunities for reverence, reflection, ritual ceremony and other non-ordinary states of consciousness, provoking the feeling of oneness and unity. Turner defines pilgrimage as temporary replacement of profane with spiritual life where individuals intensively connect with other pilgrims (in Smith, 2013). Pilgrimages create a strong feeling of belonging to one's religious or spiritual culture (Heintzman, 2013). Intensive identification with other pilgrims, the goddesses or sacred sites facilitates personal transformation, strengthens feelings of connection with the God and others, develops altruism, empathy, and promotes peace (Hawks in Heintzman, 2013; Jung Lee, Gretzel, 2013; Ross, 2010; Smith, 2013). Apart from traditional religious pilgrimage, Ross (2010) also notes the importance of modern pilgrimage (i.e. new age/mystic pilgrimage)
and other types of modern rites of passage not necessarily related to religion as transformational since traveller seeks spiritual transformation through experiencing and learning new and different things. Such travel may include meditations, rituals, ceremonies, even consummation of hallucinogenic drugs, or visiting places that promote self-reflection and respect for all living beings.

**Rural and farm tourism**

Reisinger (2013b) is of the opinion that rural and, more specifically, farm tourism has transformative potential via tourists' involvement in rural way of life, participation in farm activities and the farm stay. These experiences offer the joy of a pure and simple way of life, face visitors with the cycle of life and death and provide a satisfaction of learning about farming and its dependency on nature. However, such claims may be over-enthusiastic. Sharpley and Jepson (2011), investigating whether staying in natural and rural environments is an experience with a spiritual meaning (testing the Graburn's proposition that tourism is a secular spiritual experience), find that the participant’s emotional engagement with nature is influenced by the socially and culturally constructed meaning around the place. Furthermore, summing up the profile of commercial farm stay visitors in New Zealand, McIntosh and Bonemann (2008) point out that, although these visitors are motivated by a search for personal and meaningful experiences, their stay is short, they are not particularly interested in village/farm activities and are primarily attracted to farm stays for scenic beauty, proximity to tourist routes and regional attractions, preferring passive activities such as observing farm life and sightseeing. An exception to this is WWOOF-ing – World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms. It is a world-wide movement and a specific type of tourism that connects volunteers willing to work on organic farms in exchange for lodging, food, and learning about organic farming (http://www.wwoof.net/). There is some evidence that through these arrangements, WWOOF-ing experience is transformational for, both, hosts and visitors. Deville and Wearing's (2013) study of WWOOF visitors or WWOOF-ers in Australia revealed that, through social engagements, they develop deeper relations with hosts than it would be possible for other type of travel and the experience fosters self-development, increased environmental awareness and preference for a simple way of life. Similarly. McIntosh and Bonnemann's (2006) study of WWOOF-ers in New Zealand revealed that it attracts mostly those wishing immersion in local
culture and contact with host, while in terms of travel the WWOOF visitor profile is very much similar to the backpackers.

**Wellness and health tourism**

The commentators on the transformative power of tourism often identify health tourism as potentially ripe with transformational opportunities. The arguments relate, mostly, to the emotional and spiritual dimension of health and, as such, deal mostly with wellness tourism directed at the maintenance and improvement of the quality of life in contrast to the health tourism focused on preservation and improvement of one’s state of health. Reisinger (2013b), for example, argues that health tourism is motivated by the need to for a balance and harmony of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual values. Expanding on this, Smith (2013) argues that the concept of wellness goes beyond happiness and wellbeing to include physical, mental and spiritual development, social harmony, environmental sustainability, emotional wellbeing and satisfaction with social relationships. As such, through health and wellness tourism, one confronts the self and engages in a process of personal development and transformation. However, there is very little empirical evidence on the role of health and wellness tourism, apart from the contribution of this type of tourism to the overall quality of life that may, eventually, foster a better society.
3. TRANSTOURISM OPERATIONALLY DEFINED

In the working paper featuring a literature review, transtourism is conceptually defined. The purpose of this report is to identify the types of tourist practices that are conducive to transformation, with a view to build a functional definition of transformative travel that would serve to identify and map-out transtourism entrepreneurs. This group is important to the TRANSTOURISM project as it relates to one of the main aim of the project – to gain insights into the motivations and practices of pioneering change-makers who create transformational programs and travel products. Although, as a number of researchers point out (Reisinger 2013b; Lean, 2009...), transformation is not context or place bound – it can happen anytime and anywhere. Given the vast array of tourism activities it is highly impractical and uneconomical to start mapping the enterprises randomly. Instead, it is reasonable to assume that such travel providers will be found in the activities most likely to offer transformational experiences. The functional definition proposed here, therefore, sets a foundation for this exercise.

Upon identifying the underlying rationale for transformation, transformation mechanism and likely outcome of the variety of potentially transformative travel experiences, the following definition is proposed:

Transformative tourism is a type of tourism where tourists participate in travel that offers a high level of immersion with the host culture through backpacking, volunteer, educational/study abroad, ecological/nature based and cultural/creative programs. Their key foundation is the engagement in activities designed for personal and spiritual development – through particular forms of primarily spiritual/religious travel; wellness/health tourism; and/or immersion in nature through rural tourism and extreme sports.

This operational definition of transtourism attempts to capture perspectives of tourists as well as travel providers who intentionally seek and create sustainable travel experiences, that assist and lead to the process of transformation at both personal and societal level.
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