



RETHINKING THE CONSUMPTION OF PLACES

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Abstract: The phenomenological concept of embodiment has underpinned the ‘performance turn’ in tourism studies which, along with the ‘mobilities paradigm’, has contributed to the disruption of the occularcentric and static nature of Urry’s original (1990, 1995) thesis on place consumption. In this paper we further the rethinking of the consumption of places by proposing that embodied consumption and construction of places at the point of visitation involves not just corporeal and multisensory aspects, but also cognitive and affective processes. We also argue that consumption and construction of places are simultaneous processes in which both tourists and locals play an active role. This theoretical exploration is supported by relevant findings from an ethnographic study of tourists’ and locals’ experiences at the Acropolis. **Keywords:** consumption, construction, place, embodiment, performance, Acropolis. © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

John Urry’s thesis on place consumption was arguably, inaugurated in his seminal 1990 publication titled *The Tourist Gaze* and further explored in his influential 1995 book length publication, a collection of papers, entitled *Consuming Places* (Urry, 1990, 1995). In these publications Urry essentially suggested that places are consumed at least partly, both literally (e.g. consuming products and services at the destination) and symbolically (e.g. consuming meanings attached to places). Urry continued his preoccupation with this theme in some of his later publications (e.g. see Urry, 1992, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007a). The key assumption within these writings was the essentially visual nature of tourists’ consumption of place and this thesis has undoubtedly been instrumental in furthering tourism knowledge on how places are consumed. However, despite its valuable contribution to tourism studies, a number of tourism related publications over the

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years have, directly or indirectly, pointed to some of its shortcomings (e.g. see Baerenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2004; Haldrup & Larsen, 2010; Larsen, 2001; Löfgren, 2002; Meethan, Anderson, & Miles, 2006; Perkins & Thorns, 2001; Veijola & Jokinen, 1994).

Much of the criticisms have drawn on the phenomenological concept of embodiment to disrupt the hegemony of the gaze in order to illustrate how tourists' consumption of place is multisensory, corporeal and active. In this context, what has been deemed the 'performance turn' in tourism studies (Edensor, 1998, 2000, 2001; Haldrup & Larsen, 2010) recognises the embodied nature of tourists' consumption of place and as such 'dislocates attention from symbolic meanings and discourses to embodied, collaborative and technological *doings* and *enactments*' (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010, p. 3, emphasis in original). The performance turn rejects the predominant focus on representational and semiotic readings of place such as that of Urry in his original thesis on the tourist gaze and instead emphasises the 'ontologies of acting and doing, the corporeality of tourist bodies and their creative potentials' (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010, p. 3). That said, the suggestion is not that performance does not recognise the logic of representation but seeks to also include and to legitimise the 'non-representational' aspects (e.g. see Anderson & Harrison, 2010; Thrift, 2008, or Lorimer, 2005 who prefers to call these 'more-than-representational' aspects), thus providing a fuller understanding of tourists' consumption of place. Indeed, according to Csordas (1994), a theory of embodiment does not seek to 'supplant textuality but to offer it a dialectical partner' (p. 12).

The performance turn also emphasises the quotidian nature of tourists' performances and problematizes the notion of tourism as involving predominantly extraordinary and non-routine experiences. Nevertheless, it recognises that these everyday performances take place within wider societal discourses (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010). Indeed, Urry had also, in his most recent writings, acknowledged the sensate, corporeal and performative nature of both the tourist gaze and tourists' consumption of place. In the third, co-authored, edition of *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (Urry & Larsen, 2011), the authors provide a much needed reconceptualisation in which they argue that the tourist gaze is about 'performative, embodied [and mobile] practices' and they highlight that 'each gaze depends upon practices and material relations as upon discourses and signs' (p.14-15, text in brackets added). Further, in an edited publication on *Tourism Mobilities*, Sheller and Urry (2004) state that 'places are not simply encountered. . . , but are performed through embodied play' (p. 4) and suggest that 'places are thus brought into being through systems of organised and/or informal tourist performances and 'host' performances' (p. 7). Finally, in *Mobilities* Urry (2007b) refers to his 2004 publication with Mimi Sheller and provides a further emphasis on the changing nature of places by stating that 'places are not fixed, given or unchanging but depend in part upon the [performative] practices within them' (p.54, text in brackets added). In other words, Urry's most recent publications, underpinned by both the 'mobilities paradigm' and the 'performance turn', depart from the earlier predominantly representational and occularcentric conceptualisations by

arguing that places are partly constructed through performance where performance refers to embodied modes of active consumption by both tourists and locals such as climbing, collecting, reminiscing, strolling, sunbathing and reading on the part of the tourist, while host performances include guiding, selling, smiling and so on (Sheller & Urry, 2004). Interestingly, Arellano (2004) in a study of tourism performances in Machu Picchu also speaks of ‘corporeal tourist performances’ as playing a role in ‘simultaneously producing, consuming and sensing Machu Picchu’ (p. 67). So in this sense, embodied consumption and construction of places are also increasingly perceived as dual processes which can occur at the very point of visitation.

In this paper, we take these discussions further through a theoretically and empirically informed development of the notion of the simultaneous nature of the embodied consumption and construction of place *in situ*. In keeping with some of the earlier discussions on both the ‘performance turn’ and the ‘mobilities paradigm’, we also argue that, at the point of experiencing or visiting a place, there is no dichotomy between construction and consumption of places and that these processes are dual, active and indistinguishable. We also support the contention that embodied performances of both locals and tourists play an important part in the very creation or at the very least, modification, of the culturally and socially constructed meanings of places. However, we also argue that although the ‘performance turn’ and the ‘mobilities paradigm’ in tourism studies have indeed disrupted the traditional understandings of place consumption (which had encouraged a rather static, ocularcentric, disembodied and representational understanding), these have not done enough in terms of providing a deeper theoretical explication of the phenomenological concept of embodiment and the notion of the social and cultural construction of places.

These recent critical approaches to tourism studies have consequently provided insufficient insight into the link between the embodied consumption and construction of places at the point of visitation. In this paper we present a theoretical discussion in which we contend that the notion of embodiment needs to be seen in a wider context as also encompassing cognitive and affective processes, and we also undertake a more thorough exploration of the notion of the social and cultural construction of places. We argue that the theoretical explications in this paper not only add to existing debates, but importantly further the rethinking of the consumption of places. In order to support our theoretical discussions we include a necessarily brief empirical exploration on how, at the point of visitation, both tourists and locals simultaneously construct and consume the Acropolis in Athens through their embodied performances.

PHENOMENOLOGY, EMBODIMENT AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF PLACES

As mentioned earlier, the theoretical underpinning of the discussions in this paper is rooted in the phenomenology of experiences

(Lock & Strong, 2010). Defined as the study of lived experience or consciousness, phenomenology is ‘a complex system of ideas associated with the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Alfred Schutz’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 27). Phenomenology is concerned with the study of ‘phenomena’: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Schweitzer, 2006; Sullivan, 2000). It is about the ‘meanings assigned to experiences in the context of everyday life’ (Uriely, 2005, p. 200) as well as in the context of ‘being a tourist’ (Crouch & Desforages, 2003, p. 18). Importantly, phenomenological studies tend to focus on conscious experience from the subjective or first person point of view (Smith, 2009) and seek to overcome the mind-body dualism (Blackburn, 2005), a notion that we will return to later in our discussion of embodiment.

Phenomenological studies, which can be underpinned by a wide variety of philosophical approaches (e.g. see Laverty, 2003; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010), thus tend to be based ‘on a reflective description of lived human experiences’ (Martín Alcoff, 2000, p. 49). An interpretivist, constructivist or hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, like the one adopted in this paper, subscribes to the notion that the very phenomena studied and later described are constructions ‘by their very nature’ (Seigfried, 1976, p. 248). This approach is anti-essentialist and rejects Grand Theories which seek to explain all human experiences. As stated cogently by Laverty, some of the key philosophical assumptions in hermeneutic phenomenological studies tend to include:

... a belief in the existence of not just one reality, but of multiple realities that are constructed and can be altered by the knower. Reality is not something ‘out there’, but rather something that is local and specifically constructed. ... Knowledge is seen as the best understandings we have been able to produce thus far, not a statement of what is ultimately real. (2003, p. 26)

The use of different strands of phenomenology has witnessed a steady increase within studies of tourism since the 1970s concomitant with the increasing legitimacy of the use of qualitative methodologies (e.g. see Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009). Despite the fact that many tourism related phenomenological studies have been criticised for their lack of methodological clarity (e.g. see Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009), a number of these have significantly contributed to the creation of knowledge about tourism. Examples of phenomenological studies in tourism include Cohen’s (1979) phenomenology of tourist experiences, Mannell and Iso-Ahola’s (1986) study on the leisure aspects of tourism experiences, Lengkeek’s (2001) study which reconceptualises and rethinks Cohen’s modes of tourist experiences, Li’s (2000) study of the geographical consciousness within tourist experiences, and Almeida Santos and Yan’s (2010) phenomenological examination of genealogical tourism (for a more comprehensive review of phenomenological studies and different strands of phenomenology in tourism please refer to Szarycz, 2009 and Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). While there are numerous phenomenological notions our chief

concern is with the concept of embodiment (see also Merleau-Ponty, 1945) and its utility for furthering the rethinking of the consumption of places.

Embodiment

Embodiment, according to Crouch (2000, p.63) ‘denotes the ways in which the individual grasps the world around her/him and makes sense of it in ways that engage both mind and body.’ Embodiment, as a phenomenological concept, thus disrupts the traditional Cartesian hierarchical dualism between mind and body (Csordas, 1990; Lock & Strong, 2010; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). In other words, and as Gibbs (2006, p. 4) suggests, embodiment rejects the ‘bifurcation of the person into mind and body’ and therefore incorporates a wide range of elements including physical (corporeal) performances (Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011) all of the sensate (visual, aural, tactile, smell, taste), *affective* (emotional), and also a range of *cognitive* (mental) processes. Indeed, the interrelated cognitive and affective processes (Barrett, Niedenthal, & Winkielman, 2005) are important to our appreciation of embodiment because emotions are not only embodied (Niedenthal, Barsalou, Ric, & Krauth-Gruber, 2005) but are also ‘intricately intertwined with the fabric of our lives’ (Bondi, Davidson, & Smith, 2007, p.13) while emotion can also mediate cognition (Niedenthal et al., 2005, p. 22). In addition, as Gibbs (2006, p.9) states with regards to cognition, it

... is what occurs when the body engages the physical, cultural world and must be studied in terms of the dynamic interactions between people and the environment. . . We must not assume cognition to be purely internal, symbolic, computational and disembodied, but seek out the gross and detailed ways that language and thought are inextricably shaped by embodied action.

Thelen, Schöner, Scheier, and Smith (2001) also indicated that ‘to say that cognition is embodied means that it arises from bodily interactions with the world’ (p. 1) and Burkitt (1999) argued that human beings are ‘thinking bodies’ (p.2). This is not to suggest that cognition or emotion is always a conscious activity but can also be unconscious (see Barrett et al., 2005; Greenwald, 1992). This understanding of cognition and emotion as being both conscious and unconscious is consistent with the notion of tourist performance as also involving routine, everyday activities. Importantly, embodiment is both a ‘generative and an expressive medium’ (Harrison, 2000, p. 504). In other words, the concept of embodiment rejects a view of the body as simply an inanimate object and instead recognises that the body is active in the consumption and creation of subjective meanings and experiences. As Harrison states cogently, an understanding of the sensate nature of the social world requires ‘a shift from considering the body as cadaver to regarding it in and through *performative* embodiment’ (2000, p. 504, emphasis added). Crouch furthers this argument by suggesting that:

‘Embodiment’ is a process of experiencing, making sense, knowing through practice as a sensual human subject in the world. The subject engages space and space becomes embodied in three ways. First the person grasps the world multi-sensually. Second the body is ‘surrounded’ by space and encounters it multi-dimensionally. Third, through the body the individual expresses him/herself through the surrounding space and thereby changes its meaning. It is evident that the world is not only ‘out there’ at a distance but surrounds the individual. It is touched and smelt and so on with all the senses working together. It is grasped multi-sensually. (2000, p. 68)

Therefore, there is a dialogic relationship between bodies and the spaces they occupy and indeed it can be argued that both are inseparable (Duffy, Waite, Gorman-Murray, & Gibson, 2010). As Csordas (1999, p.143) argues ‘studies under the rubric of embodiment are not studies “about” the bodies per se. Instead they are about culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the-world’. The application of the concept of embodiment in tourism studies can, arguably, be traced to the publication of the paper by Veijola and Jokinen (1994), which, through its focus on the centrality of the body in tourism, represented an engaging and critical riposte to Urry’s original (1990) seminal thesis on the tourist gaze. Since Veijola and Jokinen’s article, the concept of embodiment has gained some currency in tourism research (e.g. see Andrews, 2005; Crouch, 2000; Johnston, 2001; Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Noy, 2008; Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2007; Waite & Duffy, 2010). Embodiment has been used as a critical approach to problematize the objectification of the body within tourism and leisure, including the female body (cf. Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Pritchard et al., 2007), the homosexual body (Johnston, 2001) and the disabled body (Richards, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010).

Importantly, some of the tourism studies which have incorporated the phenomenological concept of embodiment also contain a critique of Urry’s original (1990) thesis on the tourist gaze which had exercised such dominance in our understanding of tourists’ consumption of place. For his part, Larsen presents a unique and interesting argument which suggests that Urry’s original tourist gaze ‘represents a static way of looking. . . and is therefore not capable of capturing and theorizing practices of mobile seeing’ (2001, p.86). Larsen instead suggests that within the context of travel, the tourist body is not a static but a ‘technologically mediated moved body’ (2001, p. 94). Perkins and Thorns (2001, p. 186) add to this argument and suggest that Urry’s metaphor of the tourist gaze ‘is too passive to encapsulate the full range of the tourist experience’, while Andrews (2006, p. 219) also claims that ‘an emphasis on the gaze renders the tourist experience as pre-determined and static, a subject-object dualism, rather than as a process in which the tourists are fully engaged.’

In addition, Li in his study of Canadian tourists on package tours in China argued that ‘to study a tourist’s experience of a destination, it must be recognised that this is grounded first of all in the body of the tourist, in her/his geographical consciousness’ (2000, p. 874–

875). Borrowing from Seamon (1979), Li (2000) went on to suggest that ‘body subject’ relates to lived space. Indeed, today, it could be argued that tourism researchers have come to recognise that embodiment ‘can provide new challenges to, and exciting possibilities for, tourism research’ (Johnston, 2001, p. 180). Still, while the concept of embodiment has seemingly been embraced by the tourism academy, empirical investigations of how the tourist ‘body subject’ (Li, 2000) interacts with tourism spaces and ‘touristic’ places has still not been sufficiently interrogated. Further, there are also no in-depth examinations of how tourists’ embodied experiences of place involve the dual and indistinguishable processes of consumption and construction of place at the point of visitation. It is important therefore to now turn our attention to an exploration of the notions surrounding the construction of places.

Construction of places

As mentioned, the notion of the construction or creation of places in the context of tourists’ embodied experiences of places is still under-theorised and under-researched. Outside of the mainstream tourism literature, humanist and human geographers, psychologists, sociologists and interdisciplinary scholars have widely acknowledged the contention that both space and place are socially constructed (Overton, 2010) as well as that places and spaces can also be understood or constructed through embodied experiences (e.g. see Tuan, 1977). Space, in many academic publications, and particularly those informed by human geography, tends to be considered as a ‘realm without meaning – as a ‘fact of life’ which, like time, produces the basic co-ordinates for human life’ (Cresswell, 2004, p. 10). However, spaces can also become places once ‘humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way’ (ibid, p. 10). In other words space tends to be perceived as being more abstract than place and in this sense ‘space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning’ (Tuan, 1977, p. 136). Therefore, within this understanding of place and space ‘any locality can be transformed from place to space or vice versa’ (Taylor, 2000, p. 586).

The notion underlying many scholarly discussions is that places are produced or constructed by both social and cultural practices as well as through individual embodied experiences and performances. Among other scholars, Cresswell (2004) differentiates between the two as being framed by either thinking about place through the phenomenological notion of ‘being-in-the world’ or through conceptualising of place as being a social and cultural construct. For example, he indicates that while places are constructed or created by cultural practices, there is also a banality to the way in which places are created which means that their meanings are ever changing. Hubbard and Kitchin (2011, p. 7) suggest that places are ‘relational and contingent. . . they are multiple, contested, fluid and uncertain (rather than fixed territorial units)’. So that while it has been widely acknowledged that space

and/or place is socially and culturally constructed, these scholars suggest that places and their meanings are also, in a phenomenological sense, not static or objective but are individually experienced and understood. Therefore, places and their meanings, in addition to being socially and culturally constructed, are also both constructed and consumed through subjective embodied experiences at the point of visitation. The dynamism involved in the construction of place is more simply stated by Tilley:

The same place at the same moment will be experienced differently by different people; the same place, at different moments will be experienced differently by the same person; the same person may even, at a given moment, hold conflicting feelings about a place. (2006, p. 7)

In the context of tourism studies, where there has been limited discussion surrounding the construction and consumption of places and their meanings, McCabe and Marson (2006) seek to show how the social construction and experience of place and space is more long lasting than the 'fleeting' and 'momentary glimpse' originally suggested by Urry in the *Tourist Gaze* (1990). Rather, they argue that the social construction of space, place, and identity occurs '*a priori, in situ* and *a posteriori*' (McCabe & Marson, 2006, p. 105). In addition, other scholars such as Crang (2004), Meethan (2006) and Andrews (2006) have also briefly mentioned the twin processes of place construction and consumption in some of their publications. Crang for example notes that '... recent work [in cultural geography] has ... [been] examining tourism not simply as consuming places but also as a dynamic force creating them. . . .' (2004, p. 74), while Edensor (1998) had previously argued in his study of tourist performance at the Taj Mahal that tourists' 'passage through material space. . . requires the activation of particular embodied techniques, dispositions and epistemologies which are enacted *in situ*' (p. 105, emphasis in original). In this paper we continue these discussions of embodied consumption and construction or performance of places as we believe that there has not been sufficient exploration of the way in which both tourists and locals simultaneously consume and construct 'touristic' places and their meanings through their embodied experiences of that place.

Indeed, only a few in tourism studies have explored the phenomenon of construction of places and their meanings through embodied activities and experiences, and even fewer have mentioned the phenomenon of blurred boundaries between consumption and construction of places in the context of visitation or in the context of 'being-in-place' (Casey, 1997). Admittedly, Haldrup and Larsen (2010) had argued that

Tourist performances are not separated from the places where they happen; they are not taking place in inert and fixed places. Tourist places are produced places and tourists are co-producers of such places . . . thus, studies of tourist performances highlight how tourists not only consume experiences but also co-produce, co-design and co-

exhibit them, once they enact them and retell or publish them afterwards' (p. 5).

Therefore, what we have argued thus far is that tourists and locals consume a place and its meanings while simultaneously constructing or performing that place *in situ*. In addition, we argued that the boundaries between construction and consumption are blurred and cannot easily be distinguished. Central to our argument was also a deeper understanding of embodiment which goes further than in the extant tourism literature to incorporate not just corporeal and sensate understandings of embodiment, but also affective and cognitive experiences as espoused by scholars such as Csordas, 1990; Barrett et al., 2005; Bondi et al., 2007; Thelen et al., 2001 and Gibbs, 2006, the latter arguing that 'embodiment. . . is an essential part of the perceptual and cognitive processes by which we make sense of our experiences in the world' (p. 3). Against the background of this theoretical exploration we will now necessarily turn our attention to the empirical discussion and the role embodied activities and experiences of both tourists and locals were found to play in the consumption *and* construction of the Athenian Acropolis and its meanings at the point of visitation.

Study Methods

The following discussion concerning methodology draws upon relevant findings from a wider interdisciplinary study, which was informed by both cultural geography and visual anthropology and which explored the complex nature of the relationships between national identity, tourism and world heritage at the Athenian Acropolis (see Rakić, 2008). The Acropolis was a particularly interesting place for this research because in addition to being the most visited cultural heritage site in Greece (Kontrarou-Rassia, 2007), it was also considered to be the symbol of the world heritage idea (UNESCO., 2006) and the embodiment of the Greek nation (Yalouri, 2001). In this context it was clear that the meanings of the Acropolis were already multiple, complex and contested because it was seen simultaneously as a universal site (as implied by its world heritage accolade), as the main tourist attraction in Athens and a Greek national symbol. An important question with which this paper is concerned is therefore whether these pre-existing cultural constructions of the meanings of the Acropolis are reflected, reinforced and indeed perhaps re-constructed through the embodied performances of tourists and locals who visit the site.

The empirical research was conducted by the first author, a UK based researcher who had lived in Athens for a number of years, was fluent in Greek and who also had an excellent knowledge of Greek culture. This meant that during the fieldwork stage she was able to rely on this knowledge and was also perceived and treated as a cultural insider. This enabled greater interaction with locals who visited the site, but also informed the interpretation of the findings. The wider study involved several, often overlapping phases as well as a reliance on a wide range of methods. The various methods used in this research included:

a critical literature review surrounding the historical emergence of the Acropolis as a symbol of Greekness, a popular tourist attraction and a world heritage site; semiotic analyses of popular tourist materials such as postcards, promotional materials and guidebooks which explored the modes in which the meanings of the Acropolis were constructed and conveyed in these media (see Rakić, forthcoming; Rakić & Chambers, 2007; Rakić & Travlou, forthcoming); and year long visual ethnographic fieldwork (November 2006–October 2007) at the Acropolis (see Rakić, 2010). Importantly, ‘phenomenologically influenced ethnographies’, sometimes particularly because of their relevance in studying embodied experiences, are used across the social sciences (e.g. see Katz & Csordas, 2003).

As we seek to understand how tourists and locals consume and construct the place through embodied performances at the point of visitation, the discussions here draw only on the findings of the year long visual ethnographic fieldwork (involving visits to the site three or four days a week). As a qualitative research project, several methods were used namely audio-visually recorded and traditional participant observation, audio-visually recorded semi-structured interviews, mapping of movements and activities and the keeping of a multi-media fieldwork diary. The main focus of numerous sessions of participant observation at the Acropolis, detailed notes and multimedia files which were kept in the fieldwork diary, was on studying tourists’ and locals’ embodied experiences of the place as reflected in their movements throughout the site, the activities they engaged in, and their affective and cognitive processes. During the first six months of the fieldwork the most common activities were identified through numerous hours of non-structured observation. Informed by these findings, a table listing the most common activities was developed and used to, in a more structured style of observation, make notes about the popularity of both previously identified and any additional activities from a convenience sample of fifty anonymous individuals visiting the site.

In a similar manner, copies of a blank map of the archaeological site were used to map the movements of a convenience sample of fifty anonymous individuals visiting the site, from which major patterns of movements were later identified. In addition, twenty-two audio-visually recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of over forty locals and tourists individually and in groups. All of these interviews involved informed consent by the research participants who permitted the researcher to audio-visually record the interviews and identify participants within the representation of research findings. These interviews aimed at exploring their motivation to visit the Acropolis, what the visit meant to them, how they felt about being at the Acropolis, what aspects of the visit or areas of the archaeological site had most meaning to them, as well as what were some of the activities they engaged in while at the site. Importantly, as the research is underpinned by a phenomenological approach we do not claim that findings of the research represent the absolute ‘truth’ about the way in which the Acropolis is consumed and constructed by all the tourists and locals who visit the site. Instead, what we present

are accounts of embodied experiences of the site of some of the tourists, locals and, at times, the researcher herself.

At the Athenian Acropolis

The Athenian Acropolis is a fortress within a wider archaeological site. It is located in a relatively warm Mediterranean climate in the centre of the densely built city of Athens above which it rises to 153 meters above sea level. The fieldwork findings, obtained from participant observation and semi-structured interviews, revealed that embodied experiences of the archaeological site were central to the construction and consumption of the Acropolis as a meaningful place. The open-space nature of the archaeological site and the sheer physical exertion required to reach the fortress especially during the intense heat of the summer months, highlights the corporeal nature of the tourist experiences of place (see [Figure 1](#)). In particular, when asked about their visit, both tourists and locals regularly commented on the weather conditions and the fact that a visit to the site requires a climb up a steep hill. While some of these corporeal experiences were revealed through participant observation, these were also regularly mentioned during the interviews. For example, when asked how they felt about being at the Acropolis, Jess (in his mid-thirties from the USA) and Widya (his wife, also in mid-thirties from the USA) who as tourists were visiting the Acropolis during the summer of 2007 replied:

Jess: Well, it was very hot but it was worth it, you know.

...

Tijana And how long did you stay?

Jess: Hmm, I do not know.

Widya: We had to rest because of the heat and everything.

Jess: Yeah going up hill.



Figure 1. A group of tourists ‘hiding’ from the sun

Widya: I'd say a half an hour, just looking around, the rest of the time we were resting.

From this conversation it was evident that while there was a visual aspect to their experience of the site ('just looking around') the corporeal nature of the visit seemed to predominate as evident in the references to the heat, going up hill and resting. So that weather conditions and the location of the site affected their experiences of the place and highlights the embodied nature of these experiences. Interestingly, Jess's comment about the visit being 'worth it' despite the physical exertion required demonstrates a construction of the place as one of value. This was no doubt influenced by its cultural construction as archaeologically and historically significant and as a central place for any tourist visit while in Athens.

It is clear also that bodily 'being-in-place' (Casey, 1997) is central to the way in which the Acropolis and some of its meanings are simultaneously constructed and consumed at the point of visitation. So that in the context of a visit to the Acropolis, the body is not just an inanimate object but rather engages with the place in a dialogic relationship such that both body and place become inseparable (Duffy et al., 2010). Importantly, based on the comments of both locals and tourists, it was evident that the presence of other bodies (other tourists and locals visiting the site) influenced embodied constructions and consumption of the Acropolis as a meaningful place. For example, when asked how he felt coming up towards the Acropolis, Yorgos (in his late thirties, lives in Athens, conversation translated from Greek) to whom the first author spoke on a sunny day in January 2007 said:

Yorgos: It was nice but it was very [long pause] touristic. . . . From one point onwards people disturb you. I guess if we came here at the time the site opened, and were the first to be here, the place would be completely different. From one point onwards the crowd does not allow you to take what you are here for, to absorb the meanings of the place, and this is also valid for castles or paintings and museums. People disturb your experience of it.

In this excerpt Yorgos makes a direct reference to the fact that the way in which he was able to consume the place was influenced by the presence of other bodies and this led to his construction of the meaning of the place as one which is very 'touristic'. Specifically, Yorgos' experience of the place was corporeal and multisensory in terms of the physical contact with other bodies, emotional in terms of his expression of feeling 'disturbed' by the presence of other bodies but it was also cognitive (mental) in terms of his imaginings of the place without bodies present. Further, in keeping with the notion of the fluid nature of place which suggests that places might be experienced differently by the same person at different times (Tilley, 2006), Yorgos also suggested that had the tourists been absent from the site 'the place would be completely different'. Thus, in his view not only do the other bodies influence his consumption of the place, but they also change the ways in which he constructs the meanings of the place. Towards the end of the interview he reinforced this point by saying:

Yorgos: . . . But even if you take the birth of this place [the Acropolis], the rulers of ancient Athens, didn't they want to convey something to their "voters"? That they built this temple. Simply then it was a place of adoration, and now it is a place of the guided tour. It is completely different [now], [it is] a place of the guided tour full of ruins from an older civilisation.

In this statement, Yorgos cognitively constructs and consumes two distinct meanings of the Acropolis which are historically contingent. The first meaning is related to the place during the classical period when he indicates that it was consumed as a 'place of adoration', or in other words, as a place which represented the then local identity and pride. The second meaning is related to the contemporary era or the present day where the Acropolis is consumed as a 'place of the guided tour' which, he implies, has resulted in the dilution of its earlier meanings. Importantly, in both historical periods he cognitively constructs the meanings of the place through the ways by which it is consumed. This theme is continued in the statements made by Deanna (a tourist in her early twenties from the USA) to whom the first author spoke on a very hot day in July 2007:

Tijana: tell me, the Acropolis, have you been up?

Deanna: I just came down.

Tijana: All right.

Deanna: It's very hot!

Ha, ha, ha (both)

Tijana: And how long did you stay up there?

Deanna: Hmm about half an hour, 40 minutes, I wandered around partly because it was so hot.

Tijana: How did you feel being at the Acropolis?

Deanna: Hmm it felt like you were back in time, but the reconstruction going on made it present day because you could see the people working and the scaffolding up around. Hmm. I'd be interested to see what it's like when it's finished, when you take away all of the modern, hmm steel that's surrounding the marble.

Tijana: And how did you feel walking about the site?

Deanna: Hmm it made me wonder what it looked like when hmm it was in use, everyday, there were a lot of people around taking pictures and wearing baseball caps and I wonder what it was like when people were actually conducting business everyday. So it made me more curious than anything else. It's hard to picture when you are up there but I wish I could see the pictures of it before.

. . . it [the Acropolis] felt Greek, but also international because there are so many tourists from all over the world that were there, you hear very many languages, and so you got a feel that this was a place that people from all over the world knew about and came to see.

From these statements it is evident that at the point of visitation, Deanna too, similar to Yorgos, attempted to cognitively construct and consume the place as it was during the heights of classical Athens so that for her some of the meanings of the Acropolis were linked to those aspects of Greekness which are rooted within the deep past of the classical period of ancient Athens and Greece. These cognitive processes were clearly influenced by her previously held cultural understanding

of the way in which the place had been used in the classical period. However, the reconstruction work and the presence of other bodies meant that for her the contemporary meanings of the place were largely 'touristic'. Interestingly, Deanna also consumed the place aurally ('you hear very many languages') and this strengthened her construction of the meaning of the place as one which was 'touristic' and therefore also of universal significance.

In the context of present day visitation it was evident that the Acropolis was also constructed and consumed as a symbol of Greek national identity, by both locals and tourists who visited the site. This seemed to contrast with the previously discussed meanings related to the Acropolis as a 'touristic' place and a place of universal importance. In the construction and consumption of the place as a symbol of Greek national identity both cognitive and emotional aspects of embodiment were evident. In some cases high levels of international visitation on its own provoked an emotional feeling of national pride (see also Urry's, 2007a discussion on emotions and places and his 2007b discussion on places and national identities), particularly for some of the locals, and this further served to construct and reinforce the meanings of the Acropolis as a site of Greekness. In other words, high levels of visitation to the archaeological site do not only represent its consumption but also its construction as a place of 'global fame' (Yalouri, 2001) of archaeological and historical significance, and as such, simultaneously also a place of great national symbolism and pride. On numerous occasions, during participant observation, conversations which were a direct reference to this phenomenon were heard and recorded in the fieldwork diary. One conversation in particular, is exemplary of this:

As I was sitting in the shadow beneath the Acropolis hill, very near the entrance, four people sat next to me in the shade – two were Greek ladies in their mid thirties and in their company their friend from abroad, an English speaking mother also in her mid thirties with her daughter who was approximately 11-12 years old. With the temperature that day reaching over 40C both the mother and the daughter seemed to have felt rather ill from the heat and, since this was the case, both the mother and the daughter attempted to persuade their Greek hosts that it was too hot for them to climb up the Acropolis where it was even warmer than down here. The two Greek ladies however were not easily persuaded and after, what to my ears sounded as a rather lengthy and tiring explanation to their guests of just how important it was for them to visit the Acropolis, they eventually reached a compromise whereby the mother went up with one of the Greek ladies [despite the fact that she repeatedly told them she didn't want to go in this heat] and her daughter remained in the shade with the other Greek lady. (Rakić, diary entry, 1st September 2007)

What this story conveys is just how important both collective and individual international visitation to the Acropolis is for the construction and reinforcement of Greek national pride. The fact that over a million tourists from all over the world visit the Acropolis every year constructs the meanings of the place as one of universal and 'touristic'

significance while this seems also to, somewhat paradoxically, reinforce and partly construct the sense of national importance manifested in emotional feelings of pride by locals who visit the site. This reinforces the argument of Niedenthal et al. (2005) that emotions can also mediate cognition (which in this case are linked to the national pride of locals) as well as the argument of Hubbard and Kitchin (2011) that places are experienced and understood in multiple and often contested ways. Another example of the construction of the place as a symbol of national identity and the role of emotion in mediating cognition is provided by Maria (in early thirties, from Athens), who was visiting the Acropolis with friends from abroad and who said she felt:

Maria: . . . Proud. Especially when I could compare, it was one of the characteristic Greek things, of *our* country, which represents it. Like other countries, like the Statue of Liberty, which is characteristic for America, or the Eiffel Tower, and that this [Acropolis] goes even further back in time and that . . . comparatively it probably is more valuable. I felt my heart skip. (conversation translated from Greek, emphasis added)

In the case of the Athenian Acropolis, tourists' and locals' previous knowledge and exposure to existing socially and culturally constructed meanings of the Acropolis, along with the presence of other bodies, the local climate and the scaffolding affected the way in which the place and its meanings were consumed and constructed at the point of visitation. As discussed earlier, many of the tourists and locals with whom the first author spoke during her fieldwork constructed the Acropolis not solely as a classical site, and a site of Greekness, but also as a contemporary 'touristic' place. Some also attempted to spiritually engage with the place and its glorious past despite the obvious reminders of the present day and in so doing seemed to have been greatly disturbed not only by the presence of other bodies, but also by scaffolding, the fenced-off areas and the fact that activities such as touching the marbles were prohibited (see Figure 2). In fact, it seems that 'seeing' the monuments and photographing for many was not enough to fully experience it. Another excerpt from the interview with Jess and Widya, depicts the importance of physical engagement with the place, the tactile sense and emotions in their construction and consumption of the place and its meanings:

Tijana: Did you take any photos at the site?

Jess: Oh yeah. . . . I got some photos of us next to the temples; I got some photos of her you know with the skyline of Athens and the background. I got a few pictures of the Caryatids, I really like those.

Widya: He got kicked off the temples for taking this picture.

Jess: Yeah, purely, apparently you are not supposed to climb up on that and I didn't know there weren't any signs there. There is a little rope there but I mean anybody could step over that, so how's that supposed to keep me out.

Widya: He doesn't like the confinement of a lot of tourist attractions when they tell you you can't take pictures.

. . . .

Widya: It is spiritual, you know, if you get closer.



Figure 2. Do not touch the marble

Jess: Yes, up close underneath and personal, get intimate with the monuments.

Tijana: So you would like to have been able to touch the marbles and things like that?

Jess: Well, actually, I did touch it really quickly before they booted me off.

For both Jess and Widya, while the visual was important (i.e. taking photographs) it was clear that closer engagement with the place was necessary in order for them to have a richer and more meaningful experience. This closer engagement involved the tactile sense (touching the marbles) as well as an emotional need to ‘get intimate with the monuments’. Similar points were made during a number of other interviews with tourists, including those with Laima (in mid-forties, from Lithuania) who, as indicated below, expressed the importance of a more emotional rather than visual consumption of the Acropolis and Maggy (in late forties, from England) who expressed a certain nostalgia for the days when she had been able to walk more closely around the ruins and who mentions the restricted areas which although understandable in a contemporary context, we suggest, somewhat lessened her experience of the place:

Maggy: We have been to the Acropolis before but not for 30 years. Long time (smiles). So it is quite different, when we came before we could walk around the ruins but now there is a lot of reconstruction work so you are not able to walk around. Hmm so there are big changes but it is very nice to see again.

Tijana: And did you mind not being able to go?

Maggy: Well, it was nice being able to do that, years ago, but I can understand why now it is very difficult, because it gets worn away and it is more difficult. You can’t have everyone walking in this as otherwise there would be nothing left.

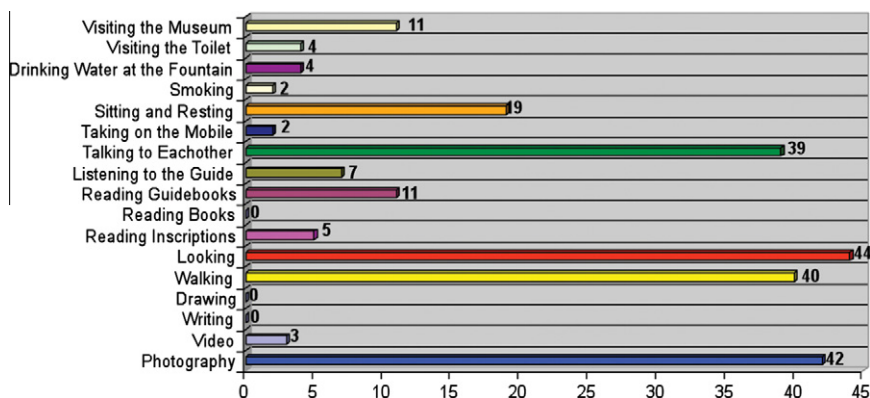


Figure 3. Activities

Tijana: And tell me did you take photos when you were up [at the Acropolis]?

Laima: I myself I didn't. For me it is not so very important to have myself in this place. I collected feelings. Feelings and later I get memories. I was in many countries and later you do not look at this. You do not look at these photos.

With regard to the major patterns of movements and popular activities, which were discerned through the mapping of movements and the observation of activities, it was particularly interesting to find that, at the Acropolis, both tourists and locals took similar routes in their embodied exploration of the place and engaged in similar 'performances' of activities many of which reflected the construction and consumption of the Acropolis as a 'touristic' place. The most common 'touristic' activities identified seem to have involved the visual sense such as photography and video. However, cognitive forms of embodiment were also evident (see Figure 3) such as reading guidebooks. Other sensate, corporeal and what might be considered as mundane activities such as talking and listening to each other, sitting and resting were almost as popular as taking photographs, while many also engaged in additional activities including silent reflection and particularly children in playing with each other. This adds further complexity to the way in which the place was experienced and reinforces the lack of fixity and the multiple ways in which places and their meanings are constructed and consumed at the point of visitation.

CONCLUSION

... place is not just a thing in the world but a way of understanding the world. ... When we look at the world as a world of places we see different things. We see attachments and connections between people and place. We see a world of meaning and experience. (Cresswell, 2004, p. 11)

In this paper we undertook a theoretical explication of phenomenology and particularly the concept of embodiment in order to demonstrate the complex nature of the consumption of place. We also explored theories surrounding the construction of place. This theoretical exploration was supplemented by a brief empirical demonstration of tourists and locals experiences at the Athenian Acropolis. Through these theoretical and empirical journeys we have furthered the rethinking of place consumption in two primary respects. The first is that this paper furthers discussions already inaugurated in tourism studies, largely through the ‘performance turn’ and the ‘mobilities paradigm’ of the role of embodiment in tourists’ experiences of place. By embodiment we include a range of performances which are multi-sensory, corporeal and, importantly also emotional and cognitive. This thus places the *thinking, emotional* and active body at the centre of both tourists’ and locals’ experiences of a place through which they both construct and consume that place.

Specifically, we demonstrated that both emotion and cognition are an important aspect of embodiment which has largely been ignored in extant understandings of this concept within the tourism literature and particularly in the literature on performance which has so effectively disrupted traditional occularcentric understandings of place consumption. Indeed, Thelen et al. (2001) speak of an ‘embodied cognition’ and Gibbs (2006) suggests that ‘cognition occurs when the body engages with the physical, cultural world’ (p.9). In this sense and especially considering that emotion can also mediate cognition (Niedenthal et al., 2005) one cannot then speak of embodiment without including emotion and cognition. In the case of visitation at the Acropolis, we demonstrated that although undoubtedly the visual sense played a significant role, both tourists’ and locals’ also constructed and consumed the Acropolis and its meanings through numerous embodied performances, many of which were mundane, such as the physical movements through its open space, attempting to touch the marbles, sunbathing, and playing. In engaging in these embodied and active experiences, both tourists and locals did not only consume but they also partly constructed the place and its meanings against the background of their previously established social and cultural understandings. What occurred was therefore a dialogic relationship between the thinking, emotional and active bodies of both tourists and locals and the place they visited.

The second respect in which we furthered the understanding of the consumption of places relates to the way in which places are not only *consumed* but are also simultaneously *constructed* through embodied performances at the very point of visitation. Namely, although places are undoubtedly socially and culturally constructed they are also subjectively constructed and consumed through bodily ‘being-in-place’ (Casey, 1997). Indeed, a consideration of the role subjective embodied experiences of a place play in both the construction and consumption of its meanings add a dynamism to our thinking about place consumption as it reveals that in the context of visitation different people experience a place and its meanings in different ways as well as that these experiences are contingent not only on their active embodied

performances but also on their previous knowledge and exposure to existing socially and culturally constructed meanings of that place. Given the largely theoretical and necessarily brief empirical discussion presented in this paper, future research could provide further empirical exploration of the simultaneous processes of construction and consumption of other ‘touristic’ places by paying particular attention to the cognitive and affective processes involved in both tourists’ and locals’ embodied experiences of these places. **A**

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