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Imagining the Alpha Male of the Tourist Tribe

Richard Ek

Lund University, richard.ek@ism.lu.se

Mia Larson

Lund University, mia.larson@ism.lu.se

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Title: Imagining the Alpha Male of the Tourist Tribe

Author: Richard Ek & Mia Larson

Affiliation: Lund University, Campus Helsingborg

Contact: richard.ek@ism.lu.se

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Abstract:

In this presentation, we analyse and discuss how the “alpha male” of the tourist academy tribe is described and imagined in celebratory contexts (portraits and profiles of outstanding scholars within tourism studies). The tradition of highlighting individuals is a solid one in the academy, as the university is part of the institution of higher education and research that traditionally celebrates the individual endeavour. There is certainly an established critique and discussion on whether scientific progress is made by individuals or is something that is rather the result of the work of networks of scholars, a collective effort above all; but nevertheless, the apprehension and celebration of single individuals is a practice that is still alive and kicking today. From a gender perspective, this tradition is interesting, since the absolute majority of the celebratory portraits are of male scholars. Regardless of whether this is regarded as a coincidence, an outcome of a historic path-dependent societal trajectory, or the efficiency of a glass ceiling, it becomes interesting to further investigate how these “alpha males” and their academic lifework are described, characterized, and presented within the tourist tribe.

We have chosen to do a reading of the “portraits of pioneers in tourism research and education” series in the journal *Anatolia*. Our mapping and analysis of these portraits and profiles is done in two steps. First, in the quantitative part, we lay out a map of the portraits and profiles (the distribution of male and female portraits, the distribution of nationalities, etc.). The qualitative part is a close reading of the portraits *per se*, with particular focus on the use of metaphors in these texts. In particular, we apply the philosopher Stephen Pepper’s root metaphors: similarity, the machine, the complex integrated organic process, and the historic event. A root metaphor is like a basic analogy that is able to explain all aspects of experience; thus, they are the basis for world hypotheses: formism, mechanism, organicism, and contextualism. By applying Pepper’s root metaphors and world hypotheses, we cannot only say something about how individuals are described and reproduced through celebratory portraits but also hint how the touristic work in the world is imagined in an ontological sense.