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The Urgent Call for Soft Science Schooling Today: The Worldwide Need for Advanced Interpretive/Qualitative Tutelage

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Title: The Urgent Call for Soft Science Schooling Today: The Worldwide Need for Advanced Interpretive/Qualitative Tutelage

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Session Type: Presentation

Abstract:

Introduction: The Need for Advanced Schooling in ‘Soft Science’ in Tourism Studies

This presentation is one of a bedfellow pair of presentations which argues the case for the provision of an annual or perhaps biennial short course somewhere in the world where those interest in critical issues in International Tourism Studies can gain state-of-the-art schooling in advanced interpretive cum qualitative forms of inquiry. It is argued by the presenters that the Critical Tourism Studies Network should work with (perhaps) the Research Committee for International Tourism of the International Sociological Association (known as Research Committee 50 = RC50) to find a host institution able to regularly stage this advanced short course ... or otherwise to find a mix of institutions (in perhaps Europe, North America, Asia, Australasia ???) that could stage such an offering on a rolling basis. While this first presentation makes the main case for a short course, the companion presentation (see Suleman & Hollinshead, this abstract book) provides some further details and insights as to how such a short course ought be established.

Background: The Call for a Pilot Short Course on ‘Soft Science’

In recent decades, social science research methodologies have changed considerably, in some senses in small but important ways in which received ‘orthodox science’ / ‘conventional scientific approaches’ are tickled or nuanced to bring favoured methods into alignment with the freshened outlooks of so called ‘postmodern’, ‘postcolonial’, or ‘postdisciplinary’ conceptual climates of today. Sometimes, however, the changes of late decades (since the 1980s) have constituted tall and / or strident breaks with the old ‘proper’ and ‘designated’ laws of neutral / detached / universalised scientific inquiry, and some of the emergent tenets of social science research have witnessed large and substantive shifts in practice in homage to the aerated invigorations of the critical turn, the interpretive turn, the discursive turn, and to a number of other conceivable change-of-the-century ‘turns’. Thus, what many soft scientists now espouse often involves the adoption of stances or the engagement in processes which are diametrically opposed to the received investigative wisdoms and the ‘research religiosities’ of the mid- and early-late 20th century.

In this light, it is important to inspect how the new endorsements in social science are affecting—even liberating!—Tourism Studies and Related Fields today. This presentation thereby calls for the staging of a *pilot short course* at a bona fide institution or university NHTV which has proven connectivities with Critical Tourism Studies, where needful postgraduate students (graduate students in North American parlance) and advanced researchers can attend an intensive three-day / four-day rampage through the new legitimations of the 1990s and on through the opening two decades of the 21st century. Such a short course should inspect the new thoughtlines and the freshened principles which comprise the unfolding *soft science* approaches of our time—that is, those oxygenated concerns of ontology and epistemology which have

broadened the possibilities of what is deemed to be ‘appropriate’ or ‘acceptable’ in advanced interpretive and qualitative styles of inquiry today.

The Aim: The Regular Staging of a Cutting-Edge Short Course

Hopefully, the pilot event would then be assessed and adjusted as necessary to then become a regular (annual or biennial) short course in *soft science approaches* ... whether it be staged at that same host body or otherwise offered at different locations / different campuses around the world. Perhaps such a pilot short course could first be staged in 2019 after (1) delegates here in Mallorca in 2017 at this CTS International Conference, and (2) delegates at the 2017 ‘International Tourism Studies’ sessions of the World Congress of Sociology (as convened by RC50 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in mid-2018) have had chance to have input on its conceivable content and contours.