

2017

The Dawning of Land in Tourism: Deep History and Profound Futures

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Recommended Citation

Picken, Felicity E. (2017) "The Dawning of Land in Tourism: Deep History and Profound Futures," *Critical Tourism Studies Proceedings*: Vol. 2017 , Article 35.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.library.tru.ca/cts-proceedings/vol2017/iss1/35>

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Title: The Dawning of Land in Tourism: Deep History and Profound Futures

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Session Type: Presentation

Abstract:

This paper will advance the idea that oceanic spaces have remained under-utilised reserves in tourism research because they have not been mined for the clues they house to both the deep history of tourism and its futures. As humans engage with oceans in ever elaborate, intense, and diverse ways, there is a growing awareness not only of oceanic spaces as playgrounds for human activity, but also of the added value they have as experimental places that allow greater insights into ourselves, our relationship to the planet, and, within this, our special attachment to land. The dawning of land becomes possible when the method of defining the social world includes, rather than excludes, those relations that occur *without* it.

The deep history of tourism is tied to the material realities of land. Land is a vital yet largely forgotten element of all social life. It describes the conditions for being human and is complicit with a widespread *human-centric* ontology or relationship with the world. As greater attention is given to Earth as a blue planet, that is, as an *oceanic* world, so greater awareness is built around how *diminished* land is and how it is that without land, as in oceanic environments, humans are also diminished or transformed. One of the main reasons for this is that oceans are among those places that are described by Latour (2005, p. 244) as the “least measured, formatted and socialised on Earth.” It is in this sense, in testing the limits of earthy social reality, that our interactions with oceans have so much to teach. Tourism and leisure are vital points of contact in the reshaping of these broader, foundational relations and lessons because it is through the tourism and leisure industries that so many of our encounters with oceanic worlds are produced and experienced. In this way, tourism is not a side or residual industry that becomes important when others have failed, but a key industry in reinterpreting our land-lubber past and moving forward into futuristic, whole-of-planet scenarios.

Drawing upon recent examples of undersea leisure and tourism, the paper will explore how business-as-usual approaches to tourism can miss the opportunities for rethinking the transformative potential of engaging in oceanic environments, including the very real possibilities for undersea to recast our understandings of past and future. Taking the very active properties of oceanic spaces into account, in the same way that divers and sailors must, enables tourism practices to speak not only *from* the margins and *of* the margins, but to one of the biggest dilemmas of our time: how to live *with*, not against, the blue planet.

References:

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.