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Telling and Thinking with Tourism: Matters of Care in Research

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Title: Telling and Thinking with Tourism: Matters of Care in Research

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Abstract:

This presentation wishes to discuss the politics and practices of knowledge of tourism research through the notion of ‘matter of care’ by Puig de la Bellacasa (2011, 2012). Recently, this constructivist, feminist thinker in science and technology studies has deployed the notion in a plea for a speculative commitment to neglected things, to the labor of care—often dismissed as too mundane, too unimportant, too out of place—and to how things could be different. As a relational and non-moralistic approach, the notion of matters of care differs from the hegemonic ethics colonized in corporate and political discourses. Neither is care “an accusatory moral stance—if only you would care!—nor can its knowledge politics become a moralism in epistemological guise—show that you care and your knowledge would be better” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011, p. 95). Care is understood as “everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair ‘our world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all that we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web” (Tronto, 1993, quoted in Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011, p. 93). As a relational endeavour, it does not (only) offer ‘solutions’ or critique, but proceeds through research efforts which “are ongoing, adaptive, tinkering and open ended” (Heuts & Mol, 2013).

Inspired by this move, this paper explores how tending to tourism with care can add further to how we *tell* tourism and how we *think with* tourism. For tourism researchers, tending to tourism concerns with care entails firstly an understanding of tourism not as a well-defined activity but entangled with a multitude of other practices. Second, it adds an intention not only to represent or tell tourism in a responsible way, but also to engage with its (possible) becoming, to engage in ontological politics (Mol, 2001). Lastly, studying carefully entails that the one who studies is implicated in this becoming. In terms of knowledge politics, how we study and represent tourism things and agencies, how we tell and think with tourism, has ‘worldmaking effects’.

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