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The Vital Call for Soft Science Schooling Today: The Emerging and Dynamic Research Design 'Diet'

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Title: The Vital Call for Soft Science Schooling Today: The Emerging and Dynamic Research Design ‘Diet’

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Abstract:

The Short Course Requirement: The Foundational (but Protean) Material in Soft Science, Today

The presenters of this second of the pair of sessions (here in Mallorca) on the need for a regular (annual or biennial) short course in emergent interpretive and qualitative practices will argue that such an embedded *international short course in soft science*—as was aired in the first session (see Hollinshead & Suleman, this abstract book)—should thus inspect what the fresh turn-of-the-century ventilations in research design and paradigmatic thought possibly mean for Tourism Studies (and Related Fields).

They will make the case that such a short course should be oriented principally to the interests of advanced researchers (particularly to in-the-van doctoral students), and that it should trace the new permissibilities (but also the new strictures!!) of Critical Theory, Constructivism / Constructionism, Advanced Qualitative Research, and Advanced Interpretive Critique, today. The presenters of the two Mallorca sessions will argue that while the short course ought not be built around instruction in singular methods, per se—for decent schooling in each individual method amongst the teeming profusion of available methods would conceivably take the whole three or four target days!—participants on such a short course should expect to emerge from it with an enhanced understanding of the following:

- the new scepticisms which are nowadays held about the received mid-to-late 20th century monologics of so called ‘orthodox social science research’
- the new intellectual openness of many 21st century *soft science* (human inquiry) research designs
- the fresh possibilities which are newly apparent in ‘intimate’ / ‘emic’ / ‘locally engaged’ styles of inquiry
- the character of recent shifts towards activist and politically committed inquiry praxis
- the late liberalisations for enhanced forms of ‘relationship research’ and ‘solidarity research’
- the strong questioning of axiomatic ‘expert-driven’ research processes, today, as ‘dialogic’ forms of inquiry are increasingly cultivated
- the equally strong questioning that has been witnessed in recent decades against those conventional styles of ‘a priori driven’ and ‘intensely criteriological’ regimes in social science research which had formerly dominated the received regulatory ideal of so called ‘proper fieldwork’

Hence, attendance on the proposed short course should give registrants an added sensitivity to the increasingly ‘open’ and ‘diverse spectrum of social science research approaches today. It should also equip them with a deeper sensibility towards ways of giving recognition and critique to the different human identities, the diverse social differences, and the differential cultural aspirations encountered through tourism and travel (and through related industries and fields) during our contemporary moment.

The Immediate Need: A Pilot Short Course in Emergent 'Soft-Science' Approaches in 2019

The target short-course in 2019—as outlined in the first session here in Mallorca—should do the following:

- cover unfolding / state-of-the-art approaches in social science methods
- focus upon cutting-edge advances in qualitative research / interpretive approaches / critical 'soft science' avenues to understanding
- serve as a pilot short course for the subsequent staging of an annual (or biennial?) short course to be staged in 2020 and thereafter, duly promoted on an first-come, first-served international basis
- be global in focus ... paying particular respect in its subject matter to the postcolonial / transdisciplinary / postdisciplinary sensitivities which arise in and around globalising / glocalising tourism (related industries and fields) today
- be short in length, constituting six or seven distinct sessions held over a concentrated 3 or 4 day period ... all staged at a single location which has fine international transport connections
- be advanced (i.e., state-of-the-art) in coverage ... pitched at doctoral (and advanced Masters) level
- target the conceptual principles behind the recent advances in 'soft science approaches'—and will thereby signpost the richness of choice available to qualitative / interpretive / phenomenological researchers today ... rather than covering the detail on any single 'method' in each session (for the latter would not be an effective or propitious use of time).

Caveat: A Centre of Tutelage in Advanced Qualitative Sensibilities Only

Neither the proposed pilot short course on 'soft science' approaches in 2019, nor the subsequent annual / biennial versions of the short course proper, are expected to be of interest to researchers who wish to deploy orthodox positivist or neo-positivist approaches which are principally based upon the exercise of 'quantitative' / 'highly-linear' / 'highly calibrative' methods. Moreover, it should be clarified that the presenters of these two Mallorca sessions will argue that the proposed soft science short course can readily privilege understandings and interpretations which are wrought from what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) call "the use of the human instrument" (in their 2005 *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*) and would thus be very low in their dependence upon statistical programmes and computer-aided pre-packages.