



# SO WHAT!

## Notes on the creativity, usefulness and implications of applying Actor-Network Theory in Tourism Research

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# Content

- ANT and route into tourism studies
- Creativity and limitations
- Steps forward



# Moves into Tourism – risks and promises

- 1980's: STS
- 1990's: Human geography
  - Cultural turn, relational view
- From ca. 2002-2005: tourism studies
  - Mobility paradigm, performance turn



## Field of tourism

- Tourism as “multidisciplinary endeavour” (Tribe, 2010).
- *The business of tourism and Tourism social science*
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# Benefits and risks of importing

- More diverse and flexible groundings for tourism research
- Is something lost in translation?
  - Not the whole story?
  - Particular version taken as the only and standardized/stabilized version
  - Reproducing ‘old’ debates



# Characteristics of ANT

- Accomplishment of societal order
- Socio-material methodology
  - How orders emerge through relational practices (work in nets)
- Follow the actors!
- Translation – making connections





# Only precarious accomplishments





# What do we get?

- ANT is able to describe “the heterogeneity of tourism through the interweaving of multiple levels, narratives, character and discourses into a single text” (Ren, 2010, p. 202)



# Limitations and steps forward

- Critical points...
  - Flat ontology
  - Not dealing with power and politics
  - Everything fluid
  - Not dealing with imaginations and memories
- Deconstructs solid orders but fades away
  - Everything is connected – SO WHAT?!



# Steps forward – Post ANT

- Within STS...
  - Modes of ordering (Law, 1994)
  - Social topologies (Law & Mol 2001)
  - Earthly sciences (Latour, 2007)
- Based on multiplicity
  - Reality is *done* and *enacted* rather than observed (Mol, 1999).



# Post-ANT

- Multiple versions of reality
- No position outside or a view from nowhere
- “Analysis and description cannot be separated from political convictions and normative hopes” (Gad & Jensen, 2010, p. 67).



# Final remarks

- Do we need classic ANT studies in tourism?
- Is the “so what” question valid?
- Every study has a political and normative component
- ANT is not a standard/package solution but open ended actor-network