

Natural wellness

Introducing agoraphilia



**ICELANDIC TOURISM
RESEARCH CENTRE**

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Basic premises



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The therapeutic effects of being removed from daily routine and stress and changing one's place and pace are intuitively logical. A vacation affords opportunities for rejuvenation and refreshment so that we can return to our lives equipped with the energy to deal with whatever comes our way.

Sönmez & Apostolopoulos, 2009: Vacation as preventative medicine, p. 37-38

... Tourism offers social science an opportunity to inquire about the mobile reality that configures western societies and the constitution of places, bodies, subjectivities and sensibilities

Obrador Pons, 2003: Being-on-holiday. *Tourist Studies* 3(1), p. 48

Environmentalism and interest in nature for Wellness tourism development

The driving forces of wellness



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Not only are many people increasingly concerned about their physical, social and psychological wellbeing in their everyday lives, but they are also prepared to travel long distances to experience different forms of health and wellness

Smith & Puczkó, 2009: *Health and Wellness Tourism*, p. 8

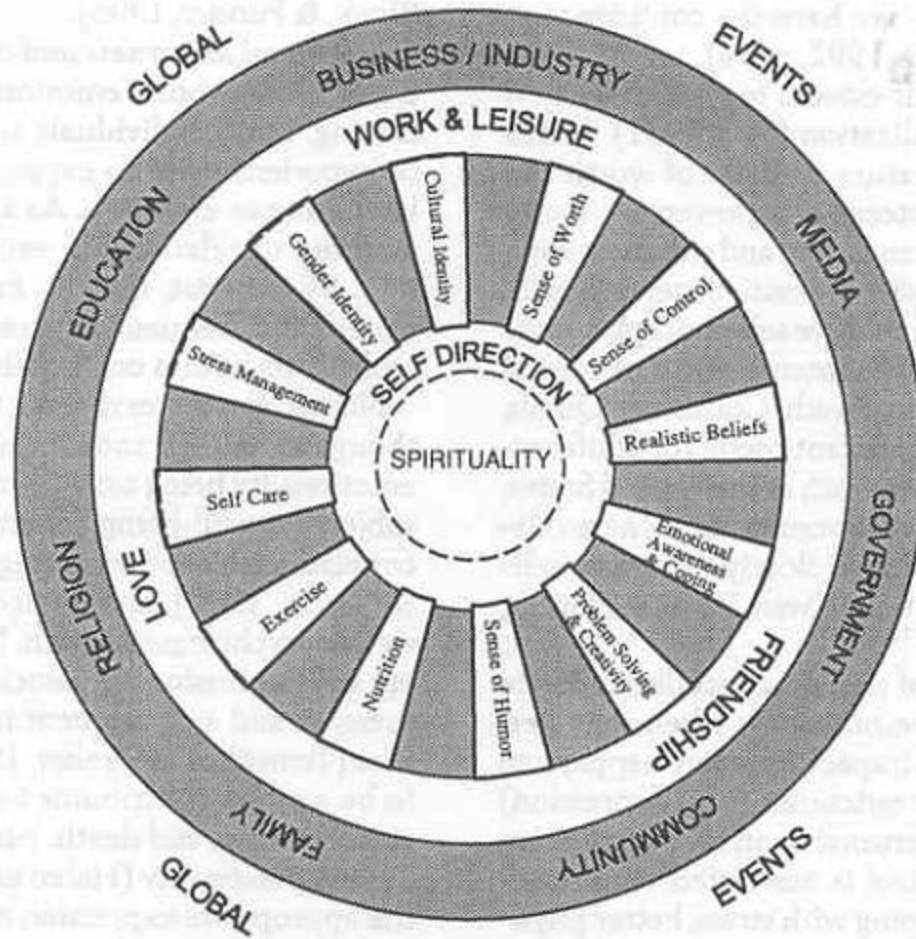
Travel can contribute to all aspects of health if we consider the physical and mental benefits of rest and relaxation, the social aspects of mixing with other tourists and local people, and the intellectual stimulations that can come from learning about new places

Smith & Puczkó, 2009: *Health and Wellness Tourism*, p. 40, drawing on WHO, 1984

The wheel of wellness



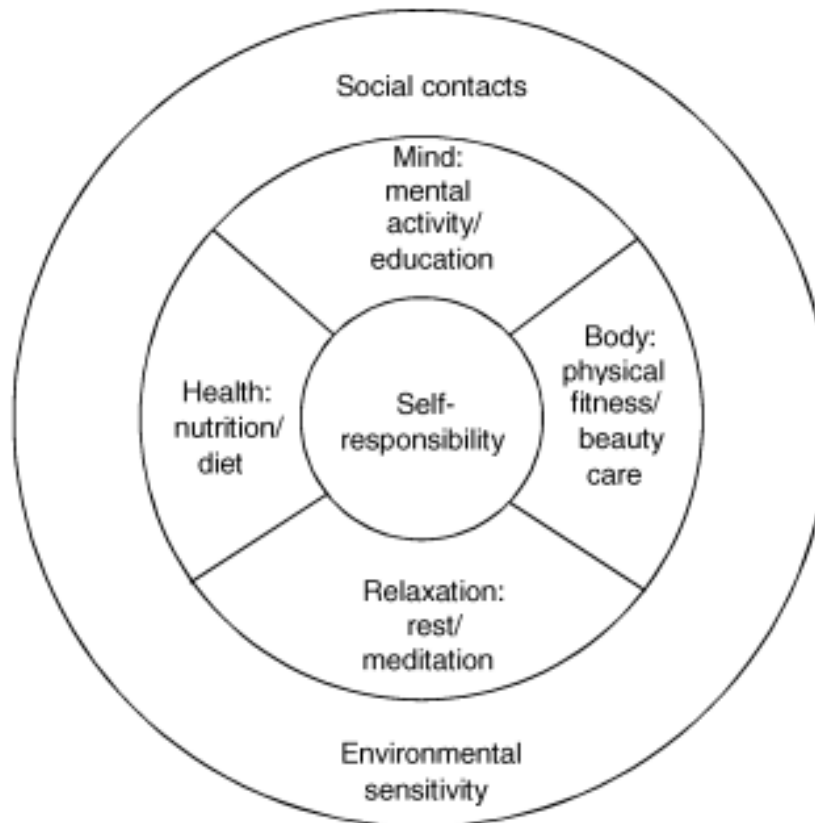
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The tourist wellness wheel



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Landscape based wellness



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[n]ature plays a significant role in health and wellness in many countries, especially those which have a sea coast and can offer products like thalassotherapy (common in Europe). Mountains are another feature which have always attracted health visitors, especially the Alps in Europe. Jungles and national parks (e.g. in Central and South America, Africa) make ideal locations for adventure and ecospas, which is a growing trend. To a lesser (but increasing extent) deserts (e.g. in the Middle East or North Africa) are being used as locations for yoga and meditation holidays ...

Smith & Puczko, 2009: *Health and Wellness Tourism*, p. 252

the therapeutic landscape concept provides a fitting framework into which this challenging research direction can move in order to better elucidate the relationship between spiritual practices/activities, landscapes/places and health, broadly defined

Williams, 2010: *Social Science and Medicine*, **70**: p. 1633).

Being on Earth



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Who are you really, Earthlings, to believe that you are the ones adding relations by the sheer symbolic order of your mind, by the projective power of your brain, by the sheer intensity of your social schemes, to a world entirely devoid of meaning, of relations, of connections?! Where have you lived until now? Oh I know, you have lived on this strange modernist utterly archaic globe; and suddenly (under crisis) you realize that all along you have been inhabiting the Earth

Latour, 2007: [A Plea for Earthly Sciences](#), p. 8.



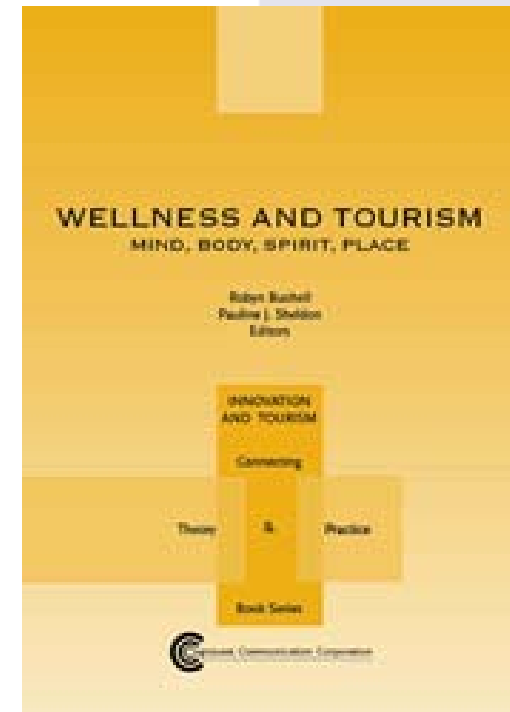
Sensing



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... the world of senses is alive. The plenitude of nature entrances him. He desires to do more than to contemplate God's work; he wishes to use them, to transform them for human welfare.

Glacken, 1967: *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 508, quoting Leibniz



A sense of wholeness



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When I came to Askja I entered an independent world, Askja world, one clearly demarcated whole spanning all and filling the mind to the extent one feels like having sensed all that is real in both past, present and future. Beyond the horizon is the unknown eternal, the great, silent void. When you know such a world one has reached the end of the road. Having touched reality itself. The mind opens to perfect beauty and one sees finally what life is about. - Sometimes I play with a rock I received from the lake at Askja. It reminds me of this connection with reality, this touch, this whole that is Askja itself, spanning all that is, was, and can be. Or almost.

Páll Skúlason, 2005: *Mediation at the Edge of Askja— man's relation to nature*, p. 5-7, my translation from Icelandic.

Askja - caldera



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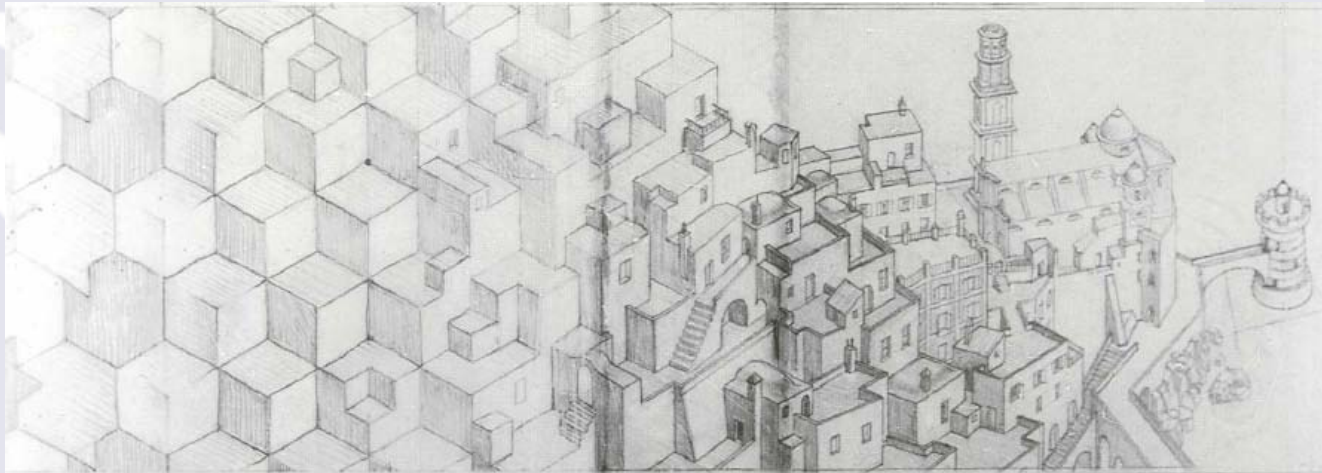
Moment of being



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The habitus then is constantly being made and re-made within the temporal flow of life that may be punctuated by particular occurrences that cause it to be reaffirmed, protected or developed in some way... In turn this takes us outside the strictures of experience as performance and representation to that of an "existential immediacy" (Csordas, 1994: 10) as a moment of 'being-in-the world'.

Andrews, 2009: Tourism as a 'moment of being', p. 18, quoting Bourdieu (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production* and Csordas *Embodiment and Experience*.



Tracing places



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Places always open up to disclose other places within them (within the place that is a garden or a house, a town or a countryside, there are places for different activities, for different things, for different moods, for different people), while from within any particular place one can always look outwards to find oneself within some much larger expanse (as one can look from the room in which one sits to the house in which one lives).

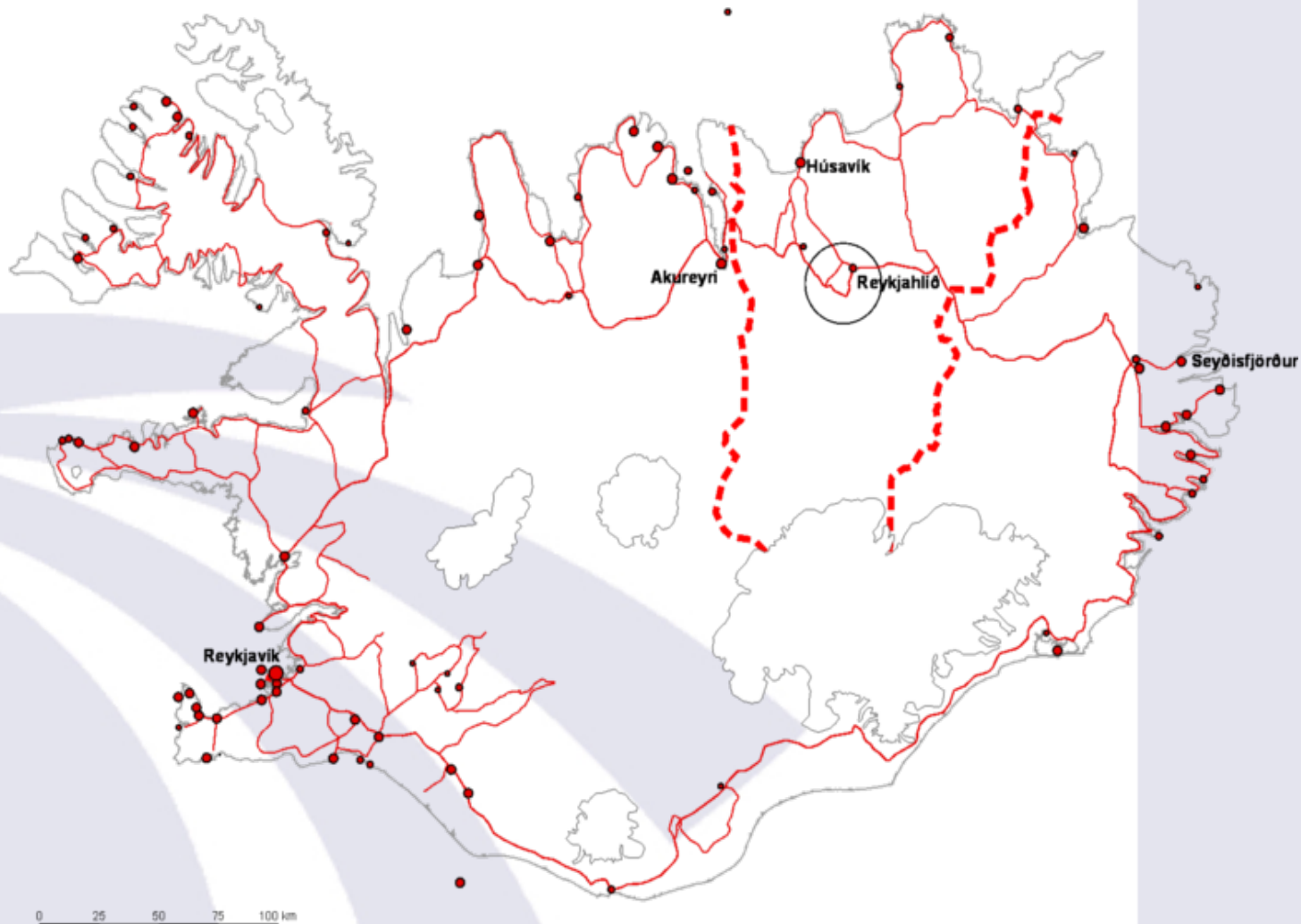
Malpas, 1999: *Place and Experience*, p. 170-171



Where



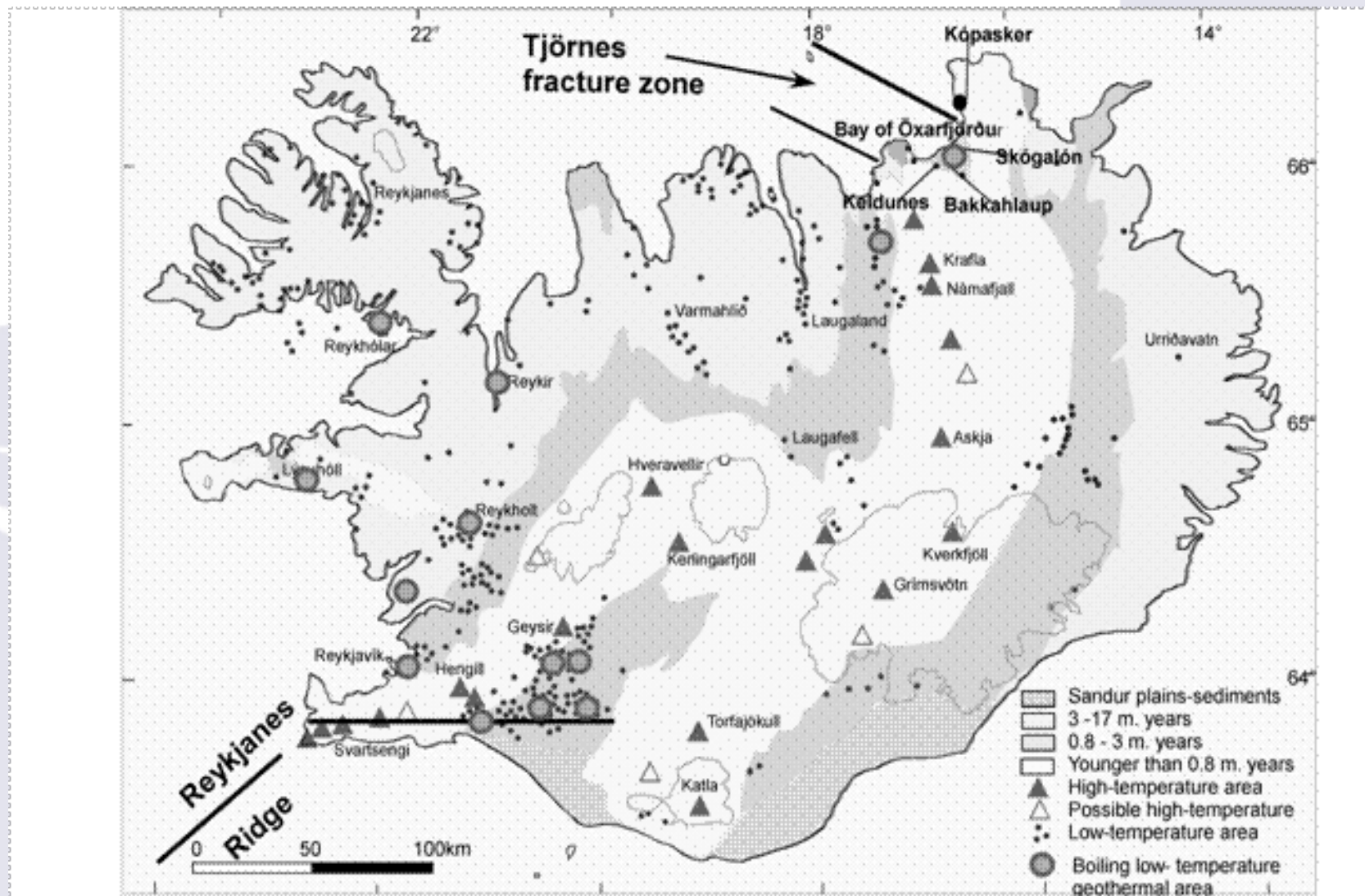
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What



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A touch of nature



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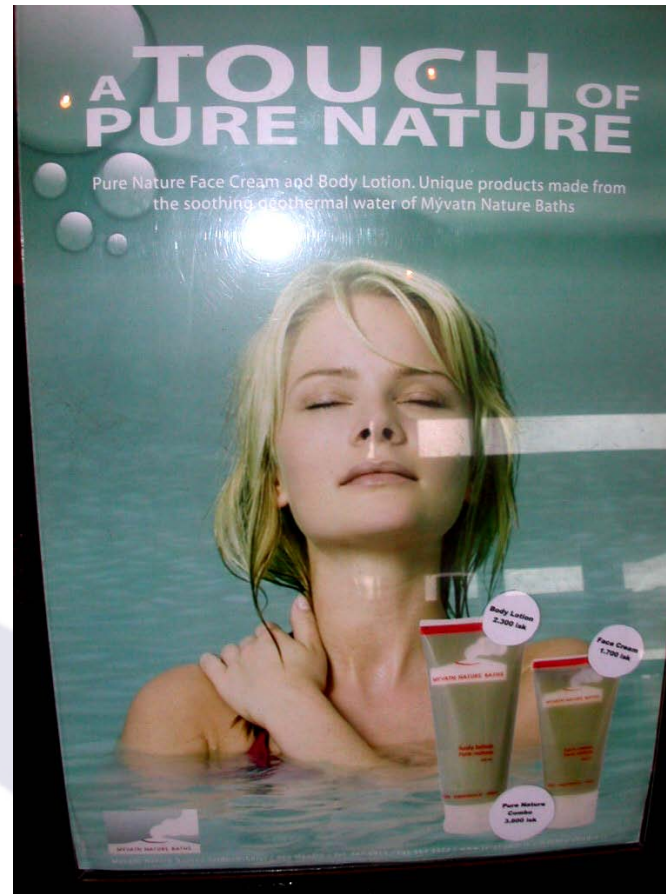
Huijbens, E. 2009: Mývatn Nature Baths

Focus on nature

Huijbens, E. 2009: Mývatn Nature Baths



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Breathtaking and beautiful the vivid tongues of blue-green light traversed the night sky, their numinous presence a manifestation of the mysterious and mystical. In those icebound places I felt the absolute essence of nature laid bare.

Woodford, 2009: Objects from the multiverse, p. 23, describing her travel to N. Norway

From the Earth



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Experiencing landscapes



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Huijbens, E. 2010: Mývatn Nature Baths

Experiencing landscapes



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Huijbens, E. 2010: Dimmuborgir

Experiencing landscapes



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Huijbens, E. 2010: Mývatn Nature Baths

Nordic stakeholders' views



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Nordic wellbeing concept will be based on nature resources of the Nordic countries:

Totally disagree 1 – 11 Totally agree:
Avg: 9,3, Median: 9,5

Tourism sector	1 st Round	2 nd Round
Developers	3	2
Marketers	6	3
Researchers	5	2
Business	5	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>10</i>

Quotes:

- ... The nature is the most important USP for the Nordic countries
- ... I do need the “mother nature”
- ... The pure nature is a strong source of wellbeing and health, also mentally
- ... [competitive advantage] nature, nature & nature
- ... [landscapes] connected to the feeling of purity, cleanness and stillness

**Nordic wellbeing represents Nordic values such as:
Respect for nature**

Totally disagree 1 – 11 Totally agree
Avg: 9,6, Median: 10

Local stakeholders' views

My translations from Icelandic



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... at the heart we are naturalists, BUT in order to survive and live where we live then we need to develop like others despite of nature – and this can all work together...

Municipal spokesperson

... I just receive some energy here, from the cliffs above the water and something ...

Local tourism entrepreneur, talking about the nature bath Grjótagjá

... one receives some kind of energy being there either in winter or summer, you get a certain energy from nature – it is so spectacular...

Tourism marketing agent in Reykjavík, about the Mývatn region

... the great synergy of nature, the energy all-round, the land and man's wellbeing ...

Tourism consultant from the Friends of Water in Reykjavík

Local stakeholders' views

My translations from Icelandic



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<i>The area's tourism resources</i>	Clean air, environment, footpaths and solitude	Solitude, nature, all basic service infrastructure, baths, massage and physical pampering	The area itself, its energy, peace, clean air, aurora borealis, stars, shimmering clouds and the light	Opportunities for nature bath development – treatment – natural diversity, aurora, stars and clean air	Geothermal energy and water, steam and clay, amazing natural phenomena, energy, peace and winter beauty	The central role of hot water, few people, the darkness, remote, aurora	Beautiful surroundings, relaxed in winter, calm weather, walking in frost, birds and power plants as attractions
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<i>The area's tourism resources</i>	The Nature and the readily apparent forces of nature – birds and vegetation	The potential of the greater region to be a centre for health – a net of opportunities. The beauty, peace and variety – nothing to distract	The countryside nature – the Nature Baths and the Bird Museum	Geothermal energy, water and steam – heat therapy, sulphur and clean air	Unique Nature, the hot water, aurora. You do not need to be told once you are there.	Wonders of nature the regions uniqueness in nature.	Varied nature, lava, lake and birdlife, footpaths Water Clean air The beauty.
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And on it goes like this ...



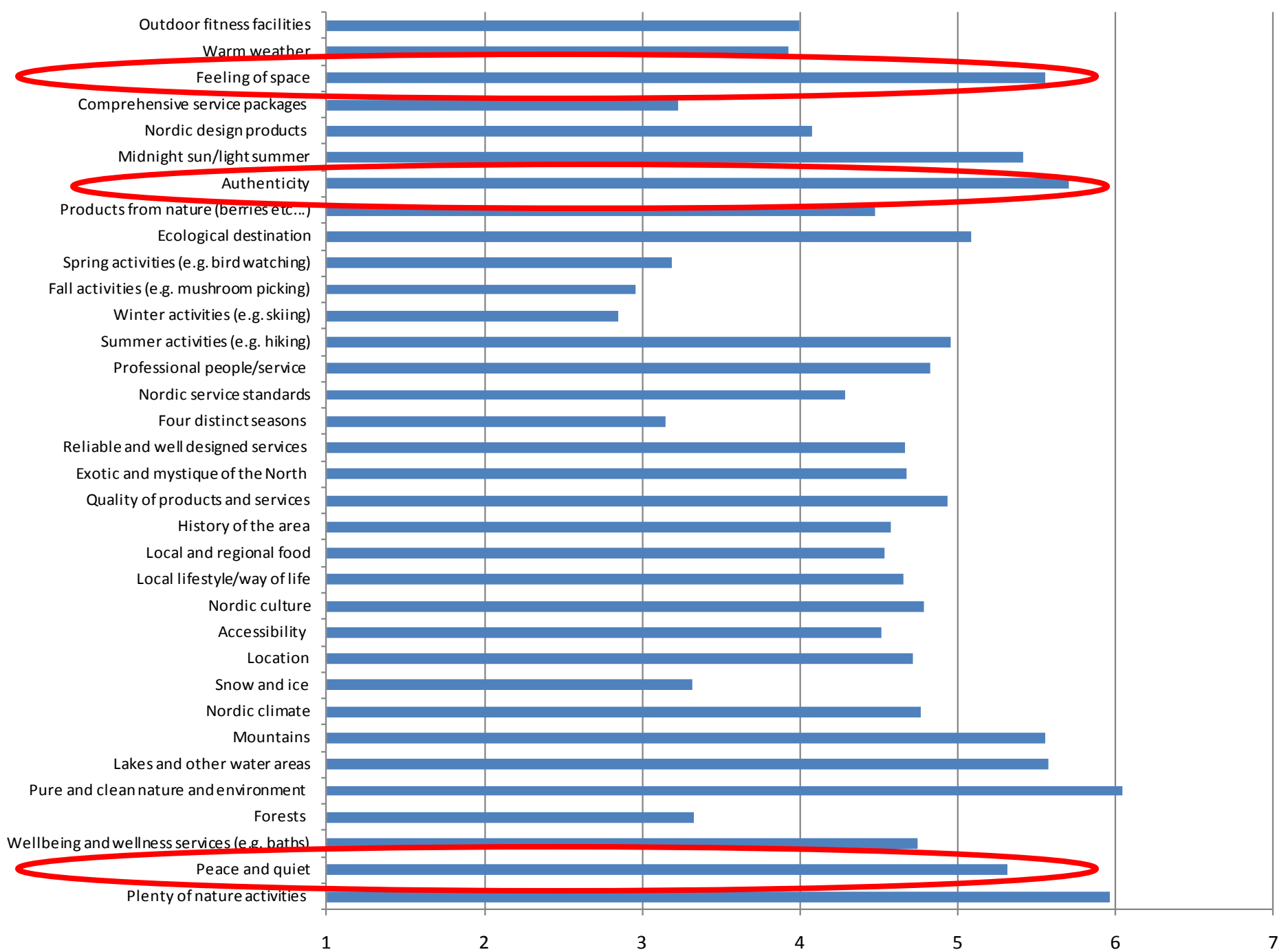
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**A survey to made in
the summer of 2010
in collaboration
with;
Mývatn Nature
Baths,
Visit Mývatn,
The local
municipality**

**Q 11: Rate the importance of
the following points when
choosing this area as a
destination.**

Please tick suitable answer for
each attribute
(1= insignificant
7=very important).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Plenty of nature activities							
Peace and quiet							
Wellbeing and wellness services (e.g. baths)							
Forests							
Pure and clean nature and environment							
Lakes and other water areas							
Mountains							
Nordic climate							
Snow and ice							
Location							
Accessibility							
Nordic culture							
Local lifestyle/way of life							
Local and regional food							
History of the area							
Quality of product and services							
Exotic and mystique of the north							
Reliable and well designed services							
Four distinct seasons							
Nordic service standards							
Professional people/service							
Summer activities (e.g. hiking)							
Winter activities (e.g. skiing)							
Fall activities (e.g. mushroom picking)							
Spring activities (e.g. bird watching)							
Ecological destination							
Products from nature (berries etc.)							
Authenticity							
Midnight sun/night summer							
Nordic design products							
Comprehensive service packages							
Feeling of space							
Warm weather							
Outdoor fitness facilities							



Survey points



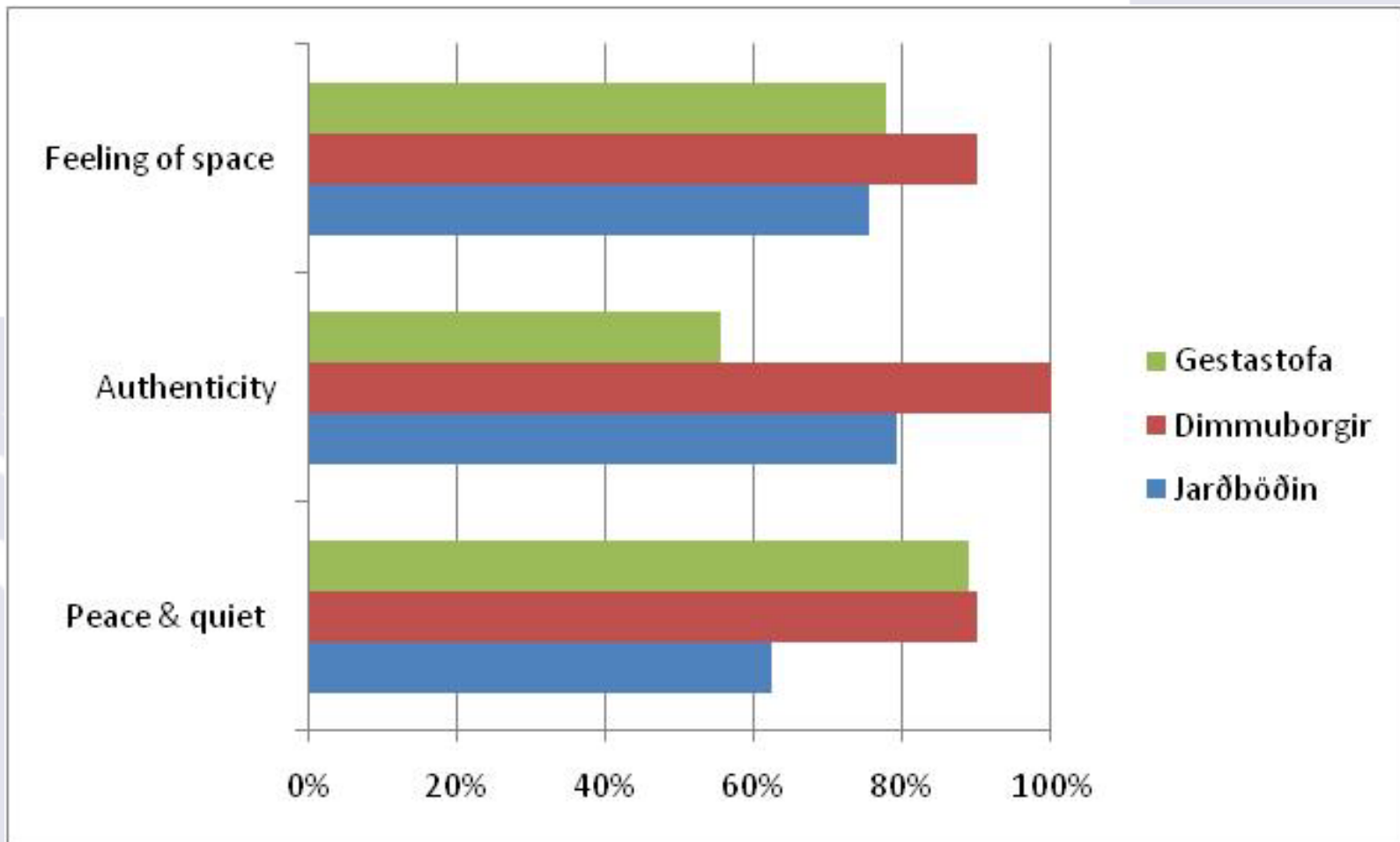
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Emphasis



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Agoraphilia



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- Allowing for a sense of wholeness through moments of being
- Making Earth's powers visible and to be experienced – laying nature bare
- Providing space for reflecting, but enjoying services at the same time
 - horizon pools
 - Quiet view rooms

... a geographical gaze can explore the central issues of the spaces and places in which wellbeing is produced, and the nature of the different scales, processes and interactions involved.

Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007, *Zealand Geographer*, **63**: p. 115