

ATMOSPHERIC TURN IN CULTURE AND TOURISM

ADVANCES IN CULTURE, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH

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ADVANCES IN CULTURE, TOURISM AND
HOSPITALITY RESEARCH VOLUME 16

ATMOSPHERIC TURN IN CULTURE AND TOURISM: PLACE, DESIGN AND PROCESS IMPACTS ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR, MARKETING AND BRANDING

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FOREWORD TO INSIGHTFUL READING OF THE *'ATMOSPHERIC TURN IN CULTURE AND TOURISM'*

Arch G. Woodside

The two editors, Michael Volgger and Dieter Pfister, of this 16th volume in the *Advances in Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* (ACTHR) series provide a broad and deep vision of the meaning, processes and outcomes flowing from embracing the atmospheric turn in culture and tourism. In the lead chapter, Volgger and Pfister masterfully unite contributions from multiple disciplines to provide a foundation for developing the atmospheric turn in culture; in the same chapter they go on to do the same for developing the atmospheric turn in tourism as well. The entire volume is divided into two parts.

Part 1 presents a deep and broad coverage of the atmospheric turn in culture in eight chapters. Part 1 surprises and delights in creating a configurational treatise by blending philosophy, aesthetics, art, architecture, history, sociology, cognitive psychology and additional disciplines into a complex whole – a claim made in Chapter 1 that the eight chapters fulfil. 'That is a remarkable achievement', is the thought that came to mind in reading Chapter 1 that Chapters 2–9 demonstrates convincingly. Viewing J. M. W. Turner's painting in Fig. 1 is to glimpse the promise. Connecting Turner's painting to the contributions of Latka, Lewin, Polanyi and additional cross-discipline leaders in Chapter 1 positions the reader well for what lies ahead in reading the next nine chapters.

Part 2 is a deep and broad coverage of the atmospheric turn in tourism that the next 13 chapters deliver. These chapters include narrative case studies, empirical experimental designs and findings, as well as marketing, branding, tourism destination, architectural and geographic interpretations and insights into the atmospheric turn in tourism.

The resulting volume's coverage of multiple disciplines' contributions to tourism science will surprise and delight readers. This conclusion is a guarantee. I have written forewords to prior volumes in the ACTHR series. This guarantee is the first one that I ever made. The volume on the atmospheric turn in culture and tourism is a foundational interdisciplinary contribution to hospitality and tourism research. In closing, as the ACTHR Series Editor, I send congratulations and thanks to Michael Volgger and Dieter Pfister and the volume's chapter authors for their valuable contribution in the series.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Michael Volgger and Dieter Pfister

ABSTRACT

This introduction to the volume Atmospheric Turn in Culture and Tourism: Place, Design and Process Impacts on Customer Behaviour, Marketing and Branding (Emerald) positions the atmospheric turn in the context of recent paradigmatic turns such as the linguistic turn, iconic turn, cultural turn, spatial turn, mobility turn and design turn. The specific contribution of the atmospheric turn is its profoundly holistic interest in overarching connections which are perceived with all senses and include both matter and idea. With its 22 chapters, this volume sets out to sharpen the atmospheric gaze and perception in research and beyond.

Keywords: Atmosphere; atmospherics; culture; hospitality; paradigm; tourism; turn

From the Copernican Revolution to Thomas Kuhn (1962), who coined the term ‘paradigm shift’ for scientific revolutions, the awareness has raised that science evolves in phases which each are based on respective sets of assumptions and rules (‘paradigms’) that however can become subject to crises and consequently change. These changes in paradigm are often called ‘turns’ and imply different starting points, altered accents in the understanding of concepts and terminology, distinctive sets of scientific questions, models and methods. However, as in the history of art and styles there are no simple single-file marches or clear successions of turns.

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From the linguistic turn (Rorty, 1967; de Saussure, 1916) beginning earlier in the twentieth century to the iconic turn (Böhm, 1995; Mitchell, 1994) at the end of that century, a cultural turn (Jeffrey, 1988) was promoted in humanities and social sciences in Western countries. Characterised by a worldview with a strong focus on constructivist and idealistic model ideas it took a clear position in the old debate between idealism and materialism (see Marx and Hegel). Later, the spatial or topological turn (Harvey, 1973; Latka, 2003; Warf & Arias, 2008) combined interpretivist orientation and cultural lenses with spatial contexts and built environments. While the spatial turn can be conceived as a predecessor of the here-suggested atmospheric turn the latter suggests a corrective re-turn to a more holistically conceived living space which is perceived with all senses and sits at the interface between matter and idea to rebalance idealistic and materialistic worldviews.

Specifically, tourism research has been affected by a mobility turn (Urry, 2000) (which is an extension of the spatial turn) and a more recent design turn (Fesenmaier & Xiang, 2017; Stickdorn, Schneider, Andrews, & Lawrence, 2011). Both relate to the atmospheric turn in the same way as the spatial and iconic turns do; both, however, tend to result in lists and imbalances either by underrating elements of stability and dwelling (mobility turn) or by disregarding productive and supply considerations (design turn). The atmospheric turn is again best conceived as a re-turn to a more holistic perspective, which is both demand/reception and supply/production oriented as well as positioned at the interface between ephemeral social situations and more stable qualities.

An established stream of theorising exists on atmospheres, which includes distinctive national traditions, and, against this background, authors have recently started suggesting an atmospheric turn. Sobecka (2018, p. 43), for example, picked up on the notion of an atmospheric turn and pointed out: 'As Peter Sloterdijk has suggested, the present context of atmospheric disruption, and the corresponding collective alertness, call for a methodological turn in design, environmental aesthetics, and cultural theory'. In Sobecka's understanding, the atmospheric turn will help to refocus on the ubiquitous but invisible substrate penetrating all things. Although it is everywhere, this substrate is difficult to grasp and requires a particular atmospheric gaze.

In art history, Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851) could legitimately be called a pioneer of the atmospheric gaze, that is, a more holistic and penetrating perception of nature later refined by Impressionism into the counter pole to the photographic gaze. Turner is a master of interweaving object representations with situational meteorological conditions. Influenced by the often rainy and foggy weather of England, he is sensitive to the intermingling of shapes and colours, and is capable of creating intensively atmospheric pictures. Writer, artist and philosopher John Ruskin (1819–1900) noted Turner's statement in his diary: 'I alluded to the peculiar atmosphere of his recent drawings. "Yes", he said, "atmosphere is my style". It was gratifying to know what he himself considered his chief' (Ruskin, 1956, p. 273). The many changes in the Swiss Alps' weather fascinated him and inspired him to numerous watercolours, the ideal technique when it comes to representing the flowing character of the atmospheric (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851) – Fluelen [Switzerland]: *Morning (Looking Towards the Lake)* (1845), Watercolour, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut). B1977.14.4715 (<http://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1669763>).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many people have once again become sensitised for the meteorological, as due to climate change the interest for the processes and changes in the Earth's atmosphere has grown enormously. Moreover, the socio-political idea of sustainable development has spread the sense for overarching relationships and generated appetite for more holistic models in theory and for corresponding ideas in practice. The idea of embeddedness – that goes back to Polanyi's (1944) rejection of attempts to separate the economic sphere from socio-cultural spheres – has returned to be in vogue even beyond mere circles of social scientists. If the atmospheric gaze perceives everything to be connected with everything, then one may still analytically separate body and mind (and soul) and describe sensual perceptions individually; but at the same time there is a clear appreciation of the need to reassemble parts and retain the consciousness that they belong to larger whole.

Prompted by the spatial turn, researchers began to differentiate physical, social, legal, economic and cultural spaces as well as home spaces and tourism spaces. Through the aforementioned sensitisation for climatic aspects, different climates were also identified for each space. Researchers analysed the economic climate in the economic space, the social climate in the social space, etc. However, to maintain the holistic understanding of space, researchers had to move from the 'where' of the local boundary to the 'wherein', to that which permeates and connects everything that exists in a specific place. In this way, the concept of the atmosphere came back into the focus of scientific endeavour. In practice, atmospheres had always remained relevant: In practical contexts, there was and is still talk about a quiet, cheerful atmosphere such as a cosy family or class reunion.

In doing so, one builds on concepts that meteorology uses. *Space* and *atmosphere* are the whole in which people live, work and spend leisure time – and so the circle is complete.

This shift from ‘where’ to ‘wherein’ shall be called and described as an atmospheric turn. Thinking in atmospheres means recognising that individuals are always wrapped in and permeated by a specific environment with which they interact with their senses. In that sense, the atmosphere is the omnipresent ether which connects people with the environment or milieu (Kazig, 2007). As McCormack (2008, p. 413) notes, atmospheres are ‘something distributed yet palpable, a quality of environmental immersion that registers in and through sensing bodies while also remaining diffuse, in the air, ethereal’. Places are not empty and never really perceived as such but always experienced as filled with a specific mood, that is, the atmosphere (Böhme, 2016). Consciously or unconsciously, people will perceive the atmosphere with their senses while being on-site. A specific atmosphere will elicit people’s emotional responses to ‘sensory pleasures’ (Kao, Huang, & Wu, 2008) by experiencing fun, excitement, happiness or enjoyment, and will influence their behaviour.

Therefore, this book’s purpose is to contribute to a deeper, more penetrating and truly holistic understanding of space and atmosphere as well as their relationship to human behaviour than available previously. The book sharpens the atmospheric gaze and perception in research and beyond. The book divides into two major parts: Part 1, ‘Atmosphere and Culture’, and Part 2, ‘Atmosphere in Tourism, Hospitality and Events’. Since turns are always connected with profound changes in terminologies and fundamental relationships, this book first explores foundational considerations of the atmospheric turn in philosophy, humanities and social sciences. It is no coincidence that tourism, hospitality and events constitute the focus of the book’s Part 2. For many people, leisure and tourism are areas in which they do not only find their own selves, but where they can experience the surrounding world in which they are embedded as a whole with all their senses. Tourists usually tend to create a counter-world to the fragmented and function-oriented every day and professional life worlds (Graburn, 1989[1978]; Knebel, 1960). Thus, the aforementioned atmospheric gaze of William Turner has certainly extensive overlaps with the much-described tourist gaze and its emphasis on the contrast between the ordinary and the extraordinary and is similarly sensitive for manipulations diverting from the essence (the real, the authentic) (Urry, 1990) – and so the circle is complete. At the same time, an atmospheric gaze goes further than a merely visual tourist gaze and would require immersion rather than passive observation to juxtapose experiential with functional as well as holistic with fragmented.

The fact that many young scientists from all over the world wrote articles for the present volume shows that the atmospheric turn has already spread widely and that a second generation of atmospheric researchers has emerged, picking up the ideas of the pioneers of the second half of the twentieth century and developing them further. A key contribution of this book is that it helps spreading atmospheric theorising which was pioneered to a notable degree in non-English speaking language contexts – such as the German tradition (Schmitz, 1969) or the

French tradition (Augoyard, 1998) – to English speaking audiences. It helps fusing these traditions with the Anglophone approach to atmospheres which is characterised by phenomenologically anchored writings and a strong participation of the marketing discipline (starting with Kotler, 1973; and subsequent research on servicescapes inspired by Bitner, 1992). This book also adopts an explicit multidisciplinary and partially interdisciplinary perspective and thus facilitates cross-pollination between the disciplines of philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, marketing, architecture and design, psychology (such as Lewin's field theory, 1936, and Gestalt psychology in general) as well as tourism, hospitality and events. These areas and disciplines all have started to develop ideas, models and applications around atmospheres and have started scrutinising the role of atmospheres for understanding human behaviour. An objective of this book is to bring parts of this thinking together to foster fruitful dialogues and unleash further interdisciplinary potentials of atmospheric endeavours.

PART 1: ATMOSPHERE AND CULTURE

In Chapter 2, Thomas Latka undertakes an ontological examination of the atmospheric turn. In doing so, he distinguishes the thing, event and situation ontologies within an ontological triangle. He emphasises that a neutral observing subject has no access to atmospheric qualities. Thus, an atmospheric turn becomes only possible by overcoming object and event ontologies as well as objectivist realism and subjectivist constructivism. In Latka's view, the atmospheric turn links closely to a situational ontology and an explicationist epistemology. Latka sees the atmospheric turn as a chance to overcome the fragmented world of Western thought by taking the phenomenal unity of atmospheric experience seriously. He dissociates himself from the strict dis-subjection of feelings and points to the importance of situational dispositions.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Dieter Pfister deals with the development of the concept of atmosphere in the second half of the twentieth century. He illustrates how the pioneers, from Hermann Schmitz to Philip Kotler, sharpened the concept without trivialising the complexity of the phenomenon. It is important to keep in mind that the atmosphere of a place affects all senses and appeals to people physically, emotionally, culturally and socially – positively or negatively, depending on their mood and expectation. With such a variety of contexts, it is not surprising that more and more disciplines have started dealing with atmospheric topics, including philosophy, business administration (particularly marketing) and architectural theory. Pfister argues that it is hardly surprising that marketing with its commercial view has been very strong in early stages of research on atmospheres, since the sales atmosphere is an important prerequisite for commercial success, especially in the retail sector. This practically driven interest scrutinises the elements (the so-called *atmospherics*) that help to create a sales-promoting atmosphere. That the answer to this question is not as straightforward and simple as many practitioners desire is due to the many factors influencing atmospheres (weather, time of the day, mood and appearance of employees, temperature, colours, shapes, etc.)

and their constant evolution. Nevertheless, Pfister indicates practical models that allow dealing with atmospheres, without overlooking the wholeness and complexity of the topic. One of Pfister's examples presents the potential of the atmospheric design code.

In Chapter 5, Michael Volgger, Harald Pechlaner, Anna Scuttari and Elisa Innerhofer highlight the importance of regional building culture and, more generically, context-sensitive design, for place-based atmospheres and territorial identities. The chapter explores how regional building cultures are shaped through formal and informal, public and private coordination mechanisms – an entity which Volgger et al. call 'architectural governance'. The comparative analysis of five Alpine regions in Italy, Austria and Switzerland indicates substantial differences in Alpine architectural governance in terms of what type of change is deemed acceptable (e.g. change in aesthetics vs change in functions); but it also highlights convergent developments, especially with regard to soft instruments (e.g. dedicated associations, awards, architectural advisory boards, etc.). The commonly adopted formula seems to be: Increasing awareness among laymen (i.e. the building owners) and promoting meritocracy (i.e. competition) among professionals.

In Chapter 6, Thomas Herdin broadens the view and leaves the delimitations of the European and North American-influenced Western scientific tradition for a truly global perspective. He first points out that symbols, knowledge and behaviour may differ notably across cultures, which can hamper mutual understanding, especially in tourism. Herdin refers to the work of Paul Watzlawick, who sharpened the view on meta-communication, that is, communication about communication. For instance, to increase mutual understanding and build conceptual bridges between Western and Chinese life worlds, the term 'atmosphere' (and its Chinese correspondence 'qifen') helps a lot. This is because within the term 'atmosphere' the content and relationship fields are interwoven, which meets the Chinese understanding of communication. Similar parallels can be identified between the Western holistic concept of sustainability and the Chinese idea of harmony.

In Chapter 7, Andreas Rauh explores the question of how the atmosphere of a place, for example, the German city of Würzburg, can be differentiated in spatial (precincts) and in temporal elements (seasons). He points out that the perception of an atmosphere differs between residents and tourists. For Rauh atmosphere is not an 'emotion lotion', but something pre-reflective that connects the perceiver and the perceived. He then raises the question of how to delimit spaces to determine atmospheres, despite ongoing situational changes. Rauh distinguishes normal spaces with a certain permanence in character, which can be typified as transit atmospheres, dangerous atmospheres, etc. Rauh also introduces so-called astonishing atmospheres, which are highly relevant for tourism and depend on the patina of the place, the people as well as on a narration about the relationship between the two. A method suitable for the clarification and articulation of astonishing atmospheres is the Atmospheric Portfolio, which allows for continuous reflection on atmospheres.

In Chapter 8, Rainer Kazig first takes a look at the French research tradition on the subject of atmosphere, there usually referred to as ‘ambiance’, and mentions the pioneer Jean François Augoyard, who founded the research group Cresson. Kazig deals with three dimensions of atmospheric effects, namely emotions and affective tonalities, attention and gesture. He argues that the mood of a person is not necessarily influenced by the atmosphere of a place. When it comes to tourism, in contrast to salesrooms, the focus is on generating a relaxed attention. As far as gesture is concerned, which is of great importance in French research on atmospheres, Kazig calls for atmosphere to be considered in relation to activities. In the field of leisure and tourism, activities have an important functional role. But in places with too much activity, this abundance can lead to a loss of quality, both among tourists and the local population. Finally, Kazig points to the possibilities and limitations of deliberately influencing and creating atmospheres and suggests it as an important field for future empirical research.

In Chapter 9, Dieter Pfister looks at the atmosphere of a place from the perspective of the owner, their personality and brand. On the theoretical level, he attempts a spatialisation of mostly two-dimensional brand theory. Branding is characterised by professions such as graphic designers and brand specialists, for whom space-marking is central, including logo design, corporate design and website design. Pfister extends this approach to ‘marked’ brand spaces that stand out from normal spaces and create an authentic identification atmosphere through their shape, objects, subspaces and, in particular, through people as identifiers. Brand spaces indicate the personality of the space owner, for example, an entrepreneur or hotelier, and help to attract similar people. Pfister finally lists implications for the management of design and construction processes and pleads for more self-awareness and quality awareness of building owners. Pfister presents theoretical models and provides hints for their practical implementation in terms of sustainable process management and strategy controlling.

PART 2: ATMOSPHERE IN TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND EVENTS

In Chapter 10, Michael Volgger first points out that research on atmospheres and atmospherics have a longer tradition in hospitality (including accommodation provisioning) than with regard to tourism destinations. To promote atmospheric approaches to destinations, Volgger combines the term *genius loci* with that of atmosphere and considers their joint significance for tourism product development. He points out that the tourism product concept rests on a peculiar combination of symbolic and physical features of space and depends on host and user co-production of spatial experiences. Scenography can inspire deliberate atmospheric interventions and with the consideration of *genius loci*, cultural and spiritual dimensions of a place as well as themes and stories become the focus of spatial development. Tourism product development translates into deciphering and amplifying the voice of a place and offering a framework of ordered

cues to tourists to ensure emergence of contextualised logic and meaning. Thus, Volgger concludes by proposing a three-step approach: 'Listening', 're-arranging and amplifying' and 'scripting answers'.

In Chapter 11, Ksenia Kirillova and Philipp Wassler discuss the role of the visual dimension in tourism experiences and call for a closer relationship with aesthetics, the philosophical branch concerned with the appreciation of beauty. They set out to introduce an understanding of tourism aesthetics based on phenomenology and fused with experience design. Specifically, they promote Muñoz, Wood and Solomon's three level framework for theming places: The three levels include the physical structure (landscape and architecture), which is perceived visually; the supporting tactile, auditory, gustatory and olfactory features on level two; and the behaviour of residents on the third level. The authors conclude with an emphasis on residents who are considered both co-creators and consumers of beautiful tourism atmospheres.

In Chapter 12, Kemal Gurkan Kucukergin and Bekir Bora Dedeoglu expand on the role of people and their emotional interaction in creating particular atmospheres. Specifically, they argue that tourists can be subject to emotional contagion, that is, the displayed emotions of other people can affect tourists' behaviour. This social component of a tourism destination's atmosphere can depend on automatic and non-conscious mimicking of emotions (such as facial expressions); or it can happen as a conscious catching of emotional states (linked to empathy). Kucukergin and Dedeoglu consider tourism destinations as social spaces within which tourists are affected by displayed emotions of family and friends, of local people, of employees and of other tourists. Emotional solidarity, emotional labour and emotional intimacy may be concepts worthy of further exploration in this regard as is the interplay between the type of tourism (sea-sand-sun tourism vs volunteer tourism) and emotional contagion.

In Chapter 13, Christian Laesser, Dieter Pfister and Pietro Beritelli base their reflections on the St. Gallen model of destination management with its emphasis on visitor flows. In places with a concentration of flows, one can recognise tourist spaces that are either of functional importance (train stations, airports, etc.), that play a role as ordinary 'normal spaces' or that represent identification spaces which characterise a destination as a brand space. The authors point out that the so-called brand-space atmosphere is important for tourism destinations as it offers an opportunity to overcome and spatialise one-sided destination brand practice focussed on branding logos, corporate design and websites. Using the example of the city and destination Kloten (Switzerland), Laesser et al. illustrate the process and explore opportunities offered by digitalisation (3D-city and building models). Such an expanded understanding of destination brand management requires close cooperation between tourism partners and spatial planning actors, a professional dialogue between building owners and architects as well as between interior and landscape architects.

In Chapter 14, Pietro Beritelli points out that the management of spatial development of tourism destinations is difficult because of the fragmented responsibilities, which has led to new approaches to destination governance and a new understanding of destinations that places visitor flows at the centre. The example