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Accidentally tourism: Symmetry and object lessons from an urban design laboratory

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Sociology and Social Work
University of Tasmania

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Abstract

Tourism, like most social phenomena has tended to be studied and measured in terms of the intentions, meanings and actions of people. 'Humanist tourism theory' (Franklin 2003) is the norm and not until recently has there been any inclination to question this. This research begins by asking what tourism is when it is not assumed to be 'a purely human accomplishment' (after Haldrup and Larsen 2006) but when emphasis is given instead to the hybrid nature of social phenomena that is 'teeming with things' (Franklin 2003: 98). Using a 'symmetrical' (Serres 1991/1997) approach, it is claimed that tourism is a performance that includes humans and non-humans and this means some of the actors, according to human design, intention or understanding, are variously 'indifferent' to what they are supposed or meant to be (after Latour 1997a). This indifference retains a potential to 'misbehave' and then profoundly challenge humanist tourism theory so that when they intervene there is no longer 'reliable tourism theory'. Instead with a more inclusive list of actors 'tourism as an ordering' (Franklin 2004) begins to emerge and this research presents an ethnographic study of how this happens in a well-visited place called *Sullivans Cove* in Hobart, Australia.

The Urban Design Framework is one of the most intentional statements about the rebuilding and design of *Sullivans Cove* and in consolidating things like people, buildings, mountains and law it acts as an 'urban design laboratory'. A series of 'object-laden' lessons are taken from this laboratory by following two successive developments or 'experiments'. First, hotel accommodation *Zero Davey* carried tourism through the design laboratory where it was enrolled with various orderings only some of which 'care' about tourism. Here the laboratory acted as a largely indifferent 'means' to a tourism-related 'end'. However, in next staging an *International Design Competition* these 'means' and 'ends' became transferable when to achieve a 'winning design entry' and 'designer label' for *Sullivans Cove* the laboratory adopted many of established 'means' of the tourism industry. These experiments show *Sullivans Cove* is 'accidentally tourism' and that as an ordering tourism behaves in complex and sometimes opposing ways. When tourism research includes 'things' as conspirators, assumptions like 'tourism places are planned that way' are found inadequate for recognising or explaining the more transformative abilities of tourism because these are a virtue of heterogeneous compositions and the multiple competencies they allow. By viewing tourism as an ordering it is possible to see how developments such as those in *Sullivans Cove* result not from within a separable and coherent realm of tourism on the social margin, but from more distributed and post humanist agency.

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