

# CONCLUSION: AN EMERGENT PERFORMANCE PARADIGM IN GUIDING STUDIES

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In an age of medialization of tourist guiding, in which some declare that “the robot will replace the current human guide” (Al-Wazzan et al. 2016), it is refreshing to come across a collection of papers in which the impending high-tech medialization of tourist guiding is not even mentioned. While much of the contemporary literature deals with the various electronic substitutes for human guides, the authors of the different case studies in this issue do not even raise the exigency that the guides they studied might be relieved by intelligent machines. In fact, none of the papers relate to the impact on guiding of the process of medialization, which is currently playing havoc with established forms of tourism (e.g. Cohen 2017). I suggest, however, that this disregard is not so much an oversight or a consequence of wishful thinking, but is rather due to the particular perspective on guiding taken by most of the authors of this collection.

In approaching such a rich and interesting collection of papers, two principal questions come to mind: on the one hand, what are their commonalities, or what endows the collection with an identity of its own; and on the other hand, what innovative message does it bring to the community of researchers and students? In these concluding comments, I shall briefly relate to those questions.

Most, though not all, of the contributions share similarities in the kind of guiding context they are investigating, in their methodologies, and in their choice of empirical topics and theoretical approaches. Rather than examining the guide’s role as a “pathfinder” (Cohen 1985) in leading tourists

through uncharted territory, or on special-interest excursions, the authors focus primarily on routine, frequently repeated tours, in a variety of relatively well-established destinations or attractions of contemporary mainstream tourism (with the exception of Simoni’s article).

The authors use qualitative, basically anthropological observation methods; in the instances in which authors had themselves been guides (e.g. Feldman, Skinner and Ron), these are interspersed with auto-ethnography. The choice of mainstream group tourism leads the authors to focus on the role of the guide as cultural mediator in the “contact zone” between the world of the tourists and of the (alleged or apparent) native people and cultures (Feldman, Ron and Lurie, Picard), or between the present and the people or lifeways of the past (Dekel, Skinner). Importantly, the authors study guides who are citizens of the destination countries, and often members of the visited ethnicities, rather than guides from the tourists’ country of origin, who might play a very different role in guiding their groups, as Feldman notices.

These commonalities have influenced the choice of the theoretical orientation shared by most articles in this collection (with the exception of Ypeij, Krah and van der Hout’s article): they focus explicitly or implicitly on the guide’s artful “performance” (especially Feldman, Picard, Dekel, Skinner), in the sense of a conscious display of identity, appearance and actions before an audience, as in Goffman’s dramaturgic approach (in contrast to “performance” as a competent or satisfactory ex-

ecution of the guiding role, as in Weiler & Black 2015: 92–96).

In terms of Goffman's dramaturgic model, the guide can be seen as an actor on a stage, performing in front of an audience of tourists or visitors. The audience consequently appreciates or judges the guide's performance in terms of its persuasiveness, rather than its veracity. Hence, the success of the guide's performance will depend on the extent to which he or she is able to create a rapport with the audience and make his or her story credible.

Though the contributors to this collection are not the first who approached guiding from the performance perspective (see e.g. Henning 2008; Hansen & Mossberg 2017), the authors offer the fullest and most many-sided treatment of performance in guiding I am aware of. They thereby initiate or promote a "paradigm shift" away from Cohen's (1985) early model of the role of the tourist guide, and announce an innovative "performative turn" in guiding studies: they conceive the guide as a performer, whose human rapport with the audience plays a crucial role in the success of the guided tour. It is the embodied character of the guide's performance which makes the significant difference from mere dissemination of information, and even of interpretation, on which recent studies of the mediating role of the guide tended to focus (e.g. Reisinger & Steiner 2006; Weiler & Black 2015: 45–70), and it is the anthropological methodology deployed by the authors which enabled them to bring this difference out. It should be noted that this performative aspect of the guide's role is not directly threatened by the medialization of guiding: though the provision of information and interpretation by electronic devices could be personalized (e.g. Kenteris, Gavalas & Economou 2009; Lee 2017; Smirnov, Kashevnik, Balandin & Laizane 2013), such substitutes cannot fully replace the fleeting human bond between the guide and his or her audience created by a successful guide/performer. The incisive use of the performative approach to guiding is, to my mind, the principal innovative contribution of this collection.

In the role of the professional guides on routine guiding tours of historical or cultural sites, dis-

cussed in most articles in this collection, performance is central. Their routes are conventional, and hence they do not have to engage in "pathfinding" (except in the case of excursions in the Peruvian Andes, discussed in Ypeij, Krah and van der Hout's article), and the visited sites are sometimes of little intrinsic interest, if not brought to life by the guide's performance. Thus Jonathan Skinner describes the guides in Strawberry Hill House, an ostensibly empty historical house, using virtually empty rooms as a template to take their audience to an imagined past (the 1750s), when those rooms had been full of valuable objects. The guide's performance is here crucial in inspiring life into object-less rooms, by telling the story of the construction of the House and the fashioning of the rooms; a successful performance thus creates an imaginary bond between the visitors and a "hyperreal" past, recreated by the guide.

While the bulk of the papers deal with the normative performance of officially licensed or otherwise recognized tourist guides, Simoni's paper shows how the credible performances of unofficial street-guides, the Cuban *jinteros*, serve to mis-guide clueless tourists, for their gain, while Ypeij, Krah and van der Hout are primarily concerned with how excursion guides in Peru stealthily deploy the power of their role to take advantage of the local vendors of tourist wares, rather than with their own performance in guiding tourists.

"Performance" is a broad concept, comprising several distinct components, which are brought up in the articles in this collection; these can be divided into three groups:

1. The guide's presentation of self, expressed primarily in his or her self-representation, projected identity (mostly as a member of the visited society) and attire.
2. The guide's conduct, expressed primarily in his or her bodily postures and rhetoric.
3. The props, primarily the choice of the site for addressing the audience, and the display and use of various auxiliary objects to support a presentation or to involve the audience.

For example, the articles on Israeli Jewish guides, guiding Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, differ in the description of the guides' performances. Feldman combines elements from all three categories (identity, choice of site, attire, and auxiliary props, such as bread, wine and salt), thus intentionally bringing his performative style closest to a theatrical performance; while Ron and Lurie refer primarily to the various mediating rhetorical techniques, by which the guides carefully maneuver between sharing the pilgrims' feelings of exhilaration and safeguarding of their own separate Jewish identity. In the home museums studied by Dekel, the guides' performance consists primarily in taking up the bodily postures and imitating the voices of the historical personages who have lived in those homes in the past, while the guides in the Strawberry Hill House (Skinner) and those on La Réunion (Picard) use both attire and rhetoric in their performances. The informal guides in Cuba use their identity and rhetoric devices to convince tourists of their credibility. The diverse configurations of these components might help to distinguish analytically between diverse guiding performance styles.

Guiding performances are rarely neutral; inherent in most of them are particular messages. However, in contrast to some recent studies (Brin & Noy 2010; Dahles 2002; Obrador & Carter 2010) highlighting the political message inherent in guiding presentations, the intended messages of the guides' performances are little discussed in this collection. It is also difficult to gauge the relative effectiveness of the various performative styles deployed by the guides, since the articles say little about the audiences' reactions to the guide's performances. Here some of the drawbacks of the anthropological approach to guiding can be noticed: the absence of quantitative instruments to gauge the reactions and opinions of the audiences regarding the guides' performances.

Related to the performance approach to the guide's role, are some specific themes to which the articles in this collection make an innovative contribution: the temporal dimension in site presentation and the impact of guiding on the guide's personal identity. I will briefly discuss these two themes.

*The temporal dimension of site presentation.* Guides frequently invoke the past when they explain the present state of a site. This is obviously the case in heritage tourism, where remnants of the past are interpreted to imaginatively recreate a historical time, often with an implicit religious or political message. But the phenomenological modalities of the effort to connect the past to the present have been less thoroughly examined in the guiding literature. Dekel's paper offers an excellent example of the manner in which the guides construct the temporal distance between the present time and the time in which the protagonists, to whom the home museums are devoted, lived: they use rhetoric devices to condense or to expand the temporal distance (in terms of high vs. low temporal displacement) between "now" and "then", irrespective of the physical temporal distance between those points.

Some authors show how guides construct the past-present connection in other ways: Picard dwells upon the rhetorical devices by which the guide constructs his role as a messenger between "a lost... magical world of the past... and [the] contemporary world," while some other articles, such as Feldman's and Skinner's, similarly dwell upon the temporal dimension in the guides' presentations of the visited sites, by endowing them with a mythological, historical or cultural depth, and bringing them imaginatively to a life, that they might lack in the actual present.

*Person-role relationship.* There is a rich literature on the "emotional labor" involved in guiding, framed in terms of the person-role distance or gap (Hillman 2006; Mackenzie & Kerr 2013; Sharpe 2005), which is also common in some other service occupations. The person-role gap is implicit in Feldman's characterization of the guide as a "commodified persona" (a term taken from Bunten 2008). This gap is particularly pronounced, and difficult to handle, in the rather unique situation of Jewish guides guiding Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, discussed by Ron and Lurie and Feldman. Ron and Lurie make an important innovation by raising the epistemological and ethical issues involved in breaching the gap in terms of Wittgenstein's concept of "language games".

Feldman brings up an interesting innovative per-

spective on the person-role relationship in guiding: the guiding role as shaping the guide's personality – in his case, becoming an Israeli native through guiding Christian pilgrims. This turn of perspective might well have been facilitated by the fact that the author had himself worked as a guide prior to turning to the study of guiding, indicating the importance of an auto-ethnographic perspective for gaining insight into the complexities of the person-role relationship in guiding.

The examination of the complexities of cultural mediation by tourist guides was the editors' principal aim in preparing this special issue. The articles demonstrate the different ways and means by which the guides' performances seek to make their presentations and explanations credible. But this raises some broader questions regarding the role of guides in the touristic process: are they merely serving as confirmers of the (historical or cultural) "authenticity" of the visited sites, or do they play a more active or creative role, namely, as authenticators of sites, customs or beliefs? In other words, how do the guides participate in the ongoing process of authentication of sites, customs or events? Interestingly, it could be argued that the common view of the guide as dispensing information and interpretation can be seen as an instance of the mode of "cool" authentication (Cohen & Cohen 2012) of well-established sites, customs or events, while the performance approach to guiding might reveal the guides' "performativity" in the process of creation of new "authentic" sites, customs or events, by the deployment of rhetoric devices, which "hotly" authenticate (ibid.) them.

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