

Title: Touching the Strangers Within: Querying the Affective in Tourism Encounter and Exchange

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Abstract:

“The unique welding of scholarship and affect... means allowing oneself to be touched and induced to think and imagine by what touches us” (Isabelle Stengers, 2017). In this paper we mobilize thoughts and theories on “touching” in tourism contexts, specifically querying on-going discussions on how we may achieve a real/deep level of exchange and dialogue in tourism studies, practices and education. We are inspired by everyday expressions such as “It is touching” “I am touched by...” “a touch of...” “touching upon..”, something needs “touching up” and “getting/staying in touch with...”, and we pursue the *affective* associations of “touch” and “touching”.

In particular, we explore, as Stengers suggests, what it means to allow oneself as a scholar, and indeed as an educator, to be “touched”, and to *think* and *imagine* through what touches us. What we hope to achieve is to illuminate, through thinking about “touching”, the ambiguity, undecidability and indeterminacy of oneself and the Other. This sense of troubling, we hope, will open a discussion on how we can be in touch with, be responsible and responsive, and be open both to the world’s aliveness and to the strangers within. After all, “Touch moves and affects what it effects” (Barad, 2012, p. 208).
