'Borderless travel visions': The global right to tour and the border work of being tourable

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Introduction

There is a sense that touring, as one way of crossing borders, provides the possibility for enacting freedom. This is the refrain heard from travel agencies, connoisseurs, and enthusiasts all over the world. There is also a sense, drawn from the experience of travelling or being travelled to, that this freedom that is not accessible to all is also related to enactments of power. Yet despite disdain often afforded ‘tourists’, by both travellers and non-travellers alike, the ability to tour remains highly valued, to the extent that it has been declared a global ‘right’ by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN WTO). What exactly this means and what it requires to be actualized is less clear, especially living as we do at a time when people’s movements are being restricted or facilitated in such complex and differentiated ways. Touring has increasingly become an activity that more people do each year, as travel that caters to more identities and tastes is marketed to more and more locations. Yet, an effect of this that may go unremarked in a focus on the increasing practice of touring is that more and more people are, as a result, being toured. The ‘been-seens’, as they have been called, are everywhere (Wood, 1998). Studies of the lives and livelihoods of the been-seens are nothing new and have helped elucidate their struggles to get by or their negotiations of how tourists have access to their space. But in a world where tourism is one of the few global industries to show continued growth since 2008, where facilitating tourism by reducing visa restrictions in a context where these restrictions are only being amplified for others on the move is a

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1 For example: resort-tourism, cruise-tourism, alternative tourism, eco-ethnic tourism, city-tourism, dark-tourism, food-tourism, voluntourism, diaspora-tourism, sport-tourism, rural-tourism, etc.
top priority, and where touring continues to be seen as the best way to achieve cultural understanding while being the actualization of freedom, I think it is worth asking what the relationship is between the lives and work of the toured and the movement of tourists. Put simply, what role do the 'been-seens' have in making possible the framing of touristic movement as a global right and in reimagining borders as traversable for tourists?

To answer these questions requires reframing tourability, those conditions, work, and performances that make it both possible and worth touring a given place, as part of a transnational rather than a local politics. I argue that the production of tourability is an often difficult encounter in specific contexts with the claims of touristic movement (claims to a right to tour, and also claims to a particular kind of development). It is through the process of this encounter that the very possibility (and sometimes the impossibility) of transnational touristic movement is made. Thus rather than see the touristic site as a locale in which transnational actors (tourists, tour companies) operate, I propose seeing them as sites through which the global claims of these actors (to freedom through a particular kind of movement, a borderless world for capital and tourists, or market-based development) are produced. The touristic site, and tourability, thus becomes central to transnational touristic mobility rather than the end point to which that mobility is extended. At the same time, the production of tourability can also be an encounter that makes touristic rights difficult as I will talk about more below.

Along with a framework for reading tourability as transnational politics, this paper looks more closely at the specific articulation of freedom found in claims to touristic movement.

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2 I use the term transnational because it encompasses processes and relations far beyond the largely state and institution based politics of ‘international’. Like ‘global’, transnational refers to multiple border crossings and contexts, but unlike ‘global’ it does so without making what connects these into all-encompassing or singular processes. The transnational is both mobile and situated. Unlike the term global, which can have spatial connotations, the term transnational specifically foregrounds movement, interaction, and exchange. Many scholars use the global in ways quite similar to the way I use transnational (including Anna Tsing (2005), Himadeep Muppidi (2004), Walter Mignolo (2000) and others). However, I find that the term transnational captures these features better while not carrying much of the baggage that comes with the term global.
Touring as freedom taps into particularly modern notions of freedom as mobility and the absence of restriction, yet is also related to neoliberalism as a specific form of government that governs through freedom (Rose, 1999). The central aim of this paper is to show how the freedom to cross borders, itself a claim that extends well beyond the arts of neoliberalism, is being specifically mobilized to govern both the conduct of those who access touring (or desire this access), and how touristic sites are produced to facilitate this freedom. In other words, the production of tourability and the claims of touristic right are a kind of bordering project, one that celebrates and seeks to facilitate the smooth movement of tourists along lines eerily familiar to those of global capital while also re-enacting hierarchies between those justified to be on the move and those whose movement needs to be problematized, criminalized, or made deportable or vulnerable for the benefit of capitalism.

Critical theorization of borders provides important insight into how various borders are constructed and the mechanisms used to regulate, manage, or securitize them (Johnson et al, 2011; Salter, 2008; Vaughan-Williams & Parker, 2012, Amoore, 2006). Scholarship on borders has also raised important questions about how subjectivities are formed through the process and experience of border crossing and the access to mobility (Coutin, 2010; Nyers and Rygiel, 2012; Squire, 2011; Johnson, 2013). These latter analyses, while not necessarily reflecting on tourism as such, provide valuable starting points to question what the freedom to travel means. In a paper that attempted to challenge some of the dominant statist contours of International Relations as a discipline and set groundwork for a growing critical scholarship of mobility in IR, Soguk and Whitehall suggested positioning migrants as central rather than as outliers to standard accounts of states-as-containers (1999). By their argument migrants, and others on the move, fragment and render sovereign territory “as a resource for transgression” (ibid., p. 685). Thus, rather than seeing borders as pre-constituting the sites of analysis (as states, or as citizens identified as stable subjectivities of
those states), it is the movement of people constituting and fragmenting borders that, in part, shapes the world we analyse.

As in many of the analyses that take movement as a constituting practice, however, Soguk and Whitehead only make passing reference to what they call the 'globetrotters', a generic category used to capture those whose movement is made unproblematic by, and is often seen as mutually reinforcing to, the territorial claims of states. The movement of globetrotters is thus less interesting to an analysis trying to challenge the stranglehold of sovereignty. Yet while the movement of globetrotters may be more constituting than it is fragmenting, it warrants analysis for being neither that simple nor that politically unimportant. As Nyers and Rygiel state, “individuals and populations are constituted as certain types of subjects through the regulation of their movement and through their access to mobility as a resource, as well as their ability to make claims to rights to movement” (2012, p. 3). As a way of approaching the experience of increasingly restricted and irregularized movement in the constitution of political relations and agency, their argument opens a framework for seeing how ‘non-citizens’ can make use of their movement and claims to rights to become political subjects of different societies, or, as they and others put it ‘enact citizenship’ (ibid., see also Isin, 2008)). If we take sovereignty and its work of bordering as a problem of violence that is contested in part by these ‘acts of citizenship’, my aim in this paper is to redirect this proposition to ask how other claims to rights to movement are made possible, through such things as the work of tourability, and how this constitutes borders and hierarchies in who has access to mobility in potentially less appealing or less progressive ways.

On the one hand, this shift is helpful for making distinctions between different forms of movement and rights claims that have very different effects and foundations in order to shape more specific political judgements about the right to move. On the other hand, it also means looking at borders as multiply constituted in various transits. As Kalra and Purewal argue in their study of
touring at the Indian-Pakistan border, different kinds of crossings (such as those of refugees or migrants as compared to predominantly Western tourists) shape the border as involving very different spatial and political relations (1999). This is hardly surprising, any perusal of global visa regulations clearly shows how mobility is differentiated in terms of race, nationality, gender, ability, etc. (see Mau, 2010). It does, however, suggest how claims for free movement, or access, even at the same border, can have vastly different consequences depending on how the border has been constituted for those making the claim. To put the question differently, the calls for reimagining a world without the violence of borders prompts me to ask if the borderless world imagined by the UN WTO is the same as the one imagined and evoked by those mobilizing around No Borders Movements and other iterations of migrant and mobility justice (e.g. Walia, 2012). I argue not. The border is not actually the same at all, and while the claim to freedom to move as a tourist might merit support (and I certainly do think that travel has an importance for us far beyond the neoliberal articulations of the UN WTO), how the claim to touristic mobility is being made and the borderless world it imagines, are not politically in alignment with the re-imaginings of citizenship and transgressions of sovereignty sought by these other political movements or enactments. The borderless world of the UN WTO operates as a border project of contemporary sovereignty, and as an extension of the kind of borders needed for contemporary capitalism. While this may seem obvious, I think the distinction has not been foregrounded sufficiently in analysis to explain and develop a clear position on why the ‘freedom’ to move as a tourist does not provide a response to

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3 Movements such as ‘No One Is Illegal’ in Canada and the U.S., along with other migrant justice movements such as the Sans Papiers in France and anti-detention mobilizations in Australia make challenging and powerful claims to a ‘right to move, right to stay, and right to return’. The vision put forward by groups such as NOII is one where movement without borders is possible and built on relationships with place and land rather than the prerogatives of nation-states to determine who belongs and who does not. While many who champion touring as an expansion of free movement for people to learn from and explore other places and people, this movement is produced through a re-enactment of sovereign powers of exclusion as well as the production of people and places as marketable and profitable within capitalism -- processes that these migrant justice movements challenge as structurally producing the conditions of contemporary migration and precarious work and status.
the crisis of border violence in our contemporary world. This foregrounding is what I hope to contribute through this paper.

At the same time, taking the production of tourability seriously also means looking at how those who are toured, the 'been-seens', can also perform and enact their own kinds of border work (as those living within, contesting, transgressing, and re-imaginging borders). I came across this analysis through field-work I conducted for my doctoral dissertation in touristic sites where a different kind of border-work was under way. My research looked at tourism development in both Mexico and Colombia; however, the insights and examples I draw on here are all taken from my field-work at the Colombian tri-border region with Brazil and Peru in the heart of the Amazon Basin. Here, where tourism has been booming led by state promotions and private development, I encountered a different kind of border work: the refusal to be toured. In 2011 stories circulated about a community in the region, Nazaret, whose members had set up a blockade to deny tourists and local tour guides entry to their community. In a context where tourism is 'opening the Amazon to everyone' in former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's words, this act, though small, controversial, and unclear, speaks to the importance of what those who are toured can do in particular moments to complicate or deny the claims of touristic right. Although in this paper for reasons of space I focus on an analysis of the form of freedom and the designs of the borderless world proposed through the right to tour, I also explore some of the insights into the contentious politics of producing tourability and use this to suggest, briefly, some of the ways other kinds of border-work, as border projects otherwise, happen.

In the following section I situate my argument theoretically in discussions of freedom, tourability, governance, and development. Through analysis of specific aspects of global tourism governance, especially the UN WTO, I illustrate the embedding of touristic movement and tourability in market rationality and neoliberal visions of borders and movement. The aim of this
analysis is to show how freedom and touristic mobility are being defined through a particular
political-economic framework, one based on expansion and exploitation, but also on the
engagement of subjects (at least certain subjects) in their own government. In the following
section I shift to looking at the neoliberal visions of borders and movement exemplified in the
‘borderless travel vision’ created and promoted by the UN WTO. In the final section I use this to
begin looking at the messy encounters of producing tourability by revealing some not so smooth
ways the UN WTO mandates translate in a place like the Colombian Amazon, as well as some of
the developing uncertainties about touristic movement.

**Market Rationality and Tourism Development**

As a pervasive and expansive industry, tourism has been critiqued for its neo-colonial
endeavours to occupy and control spaces scripted as ‘traditional’ or ‘other’ and for tapping into and
redeploying our desires to explore, discover, and escape regardless of material consequences. Yet
tourism has also been noted for its profound impacts on particularly modern forms of mobility
(from the material developments of mobility, to the particularly modern sense of autonomy derived
from travel, to novel experience of place, space, and time).\(^4\) Indeed the global right to tour,
officially articulated by the UN WTO but manifested repeatedly in popular discourse, emphasizes
the right to free and unobstructed (touristic) movement and the tourist as empowered to choose
from an array of destinations those that best fit with her/his self-actualization – what I shorthand as
a neoliberal mobility of touring. This particular freedom to discover oneself through a plethora of
choices is both highly deceptive and crucial to how power operates through tourism practices.

The embedding of choice and self-discovery in the production of very specific subjectivities is

present in a wide variety of contemporary touring. As Wanda Vrasti has noted, new modes of touring such as voluntourism\(^5\) can be read as strategies that intervene to produce tourists as entrepreneurial selves (selves better able to live in ways appropriate to market logic) (2012). Here potential tourists are offered freedom to ‘work’ on themselves by working through their vacations in a way that obscures the governmental logic of producing the new subjects of neoliberal capitalism (socially conscious CEOs, voluntourists, among the others she highlights). At the same time, as Cornelissen argues, although tourists today are able to travel to farther and more remote places, what the ‘other’ looks like and how tourable places are presented for visitors has become increasingly standardized (2005). Similarly, Ioannides and Debbage have argued that a “premium on flexible” forms of organization, labour, and consumption in the context of the tourism industries has helped resolved some of the tensions between increasing interest in individually catered (non-touristy) forms of travel and the necessarily mass forms of production still involved (1997). The travel enterprise GAP Adventures (along with a plethora of other travel companies and promotions) presents a telling example here in their organization of flexible, individually stylized tours all neatly identified by style, service level, and physical difficulty, and their self-promotion as a ‘travel lifestyle experience and concept store’ rather than a travel/tourism agency. On this understanding, the contemporary tourist does not go out to visit the empire in a fit of patriotic fervour as in at least some forms of mass travel of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Enloe, 1989), but rather searches to fulfill the self (as spiritual being, as entrepreneur, as socially conscious consumer), flexible to the ever changing needs of that self or to the ever changing fashions of new, more

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\(^5\) An amalgamation of the words volunteer and tourism, voluntourism developed as a popular alternative form of tourism in the first decade of this century. It emphasizes combining volunteer work, usually in small communities, in the Global South with travelling to the region. Briefly, its popularity grew as a means to allow tourists to ‘give back’ to the places they were travelling to; yet, as Vrasti (2012) notes, a key development in voluntourism is its use by participants on cv’s to make them more hireable. Although vountourism is most often run by specific companies as a ‘package’ that tourists purchase, newer editions of travel guides, like Lonely Planet, have begun including suggestions for places people can volunteer as a way to ‘engage more’ and ‘give back’. 
self-fulfilling, or less travelled alternatives. Freedom and choice are foundational to the contemporary logic of touring.

As has been shown, contemporary articulations of freedom through choice, consumption, and the market are not about freeing ourselves from the bounds of government, but are historically situated in specific contemporary forms of governing that make use of a particular type of free subjectivity (Rose, 1999; Foucault, 1991 [1978]). Using Foucault's study of governmentality, Nikolas Rose outlines a particular kind of free subject “compatible with the liberal arts of rule” which, in contemporary neoliberal governance (and in contrast to other forms of liberalism) is founded on autonomy and choice (1999, p. 63). Techniques of government, he argues, operate at a more subtle register than forms of domination by providing the tools for subjects to regulate themselves and providing the skills to self-actualize in appropriate ways through choice (especially through choices about consumption, but also through choices about self-discovery) (ibid.). Operating in spheres of life far removed from official ‘power’ (in the form of the state), government as ‘the conduct of conduct’ creates individuals who both value freedom as choice and are “obliged to be free” by being obliged to choose and have those choices seen as “realizations of the attributes of the choosing person” (ibid., p. 87, emphasis in original).\(^6\) Importantly, Rose distinguishes this freedom “as a formula of power” from the freedom enacted in resistance to power which, as he rightly points out, provides a powerful basis for saying ‘no’ to forms of rule (1999., p. 65). Crucial to contemporary government is thus how it attempts to capture and deploy an articulation of freedom in the very governing process that often subordinates or obscures other statements of freedom. I suggest this subordination is crucial to understanding how freedom and choice are

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\(^6\) The emphasis on the creation of subjects or subjectivities that are suited to and able to enact this government upon themselves is a crucial distinction in Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism from earlier forms of liberalism as laissez-faire (Magnusson, 2011, p. 95). While the latter focused on making the market free, and created a 'mass society' by extension, the former focuses on the "enterprise society" as one in which each individual is the free subject of their own actualization through the market (ibid.).
deployed within contemporary tourism both as means of conducting movement and as signals of ‘development’. While other freedoms are manifested through touristic movement, such as claims to political solidarity that have been made possible in particular moments, the freedom expressed through dominant forms of touring is deeply embedded in these neoliberal arts of government.

Thus while I do not think that claims to touristic mobility can all be captured by neoliberalism (as the rationalization of conduct to the principles of market economics), I do agree with scholars like Rose that neoliberalism’s design of freedom is both powerful and pervasive in contemporary government. Beyond the freedom to choose as consumers, a particular style of freedom has come, I argue, to designate how movement itself is an expression of freedom and how those who move in these ways can be actualized. I refer to this as neoliberal touristic mobility. The conduct of our movement, as autonomous individuals whose freedom of mobility is defined negatively as the absence of restriction, is the positive content of its government. As Rose argues, government is deliberate action upon actions; “to govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed. To govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and to utilize it for one’s own objectives” (1999, p. 4). The very freedom that is presupposed, the freedom to move, is what is acted upon in order to enable that movement to participate in the contemporary market-economy and the socially conscious and culturally tolerant skills it has incorporated. The claim to travel is transformed into the individual capacity to choose the style of movement and difference that can actualize this consumptive freedom so characteristic of market society. Although Rose and others who follow his framework have tended to focus attention on advanced liberal states as a geographically bounded region (i.e. the ‘West’, or North America and Western Europe), Rose himself only refers to this form of government as ‘advanced liberal’ (ibid., p. 84) which does not automatically imply its territorialisation. This is important as I have looked at elsewhere similar techniques of governing touristic freedom are prominent features of ‘domestic’ tourism policies in
places like Mexico and Colombia, linking these tourists to the same global processes of governing mobility through the conduct of touring. This is done especially along the lines of linking development to freedom, and specifically freedom to the freedom to move (as a tourist).

Making use of techniques of neoliberal governance, contemporary tourism development is written through the political-economic language of market rationality that evokes a borderless world for capital (and tourists). As studies of governmentality show, market rationality is a mode of governing political questions in terms of management and administration based on market-driven standards such as efficiency, productivity, and flexibility. It is a way of governing human life, “a governmentality that relies on market knowledge and calculations for a politics of subjection and subject-making that continually places in question the political existence of modern human beings” (Ong, 2006, p. 13). This rationality is historical and is the effect of strategies “to intervene, whether in thought, or in reality, upon a set of messy, local, regional, practical, political and other struggles in order to rationalize them according to a certain principle” (Rose, 1999). In the case of tourism, this means the principles of the free market and the autonomous individual who is a free subject of that market. The right to tour deploys such strategies in its attempt to capture desires for free movement around the world (a political claim that is much more profound than its neoliberal articulation would have it). At the same time, as with any technique of government, the right to tour is itself mobile – it exists in the time and space of its particular articulations and thus we can use the ‘right to tour’ as another way into the contentious politics that defy the smooth fluidity of neoliberal desires.

Touristic mobility is situated within a specifically liberalizing international governance structure made up of institutions such as the UN WTO, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), and the various priorities and agreements made about tourism as one of the key concerns of the General Agreement on the Trade of Services (GATS). Both the UN WTO and the WTTC
(the former of which has both state and private members, the latter only private/corporate members by invitation) adhere strictly to policies of liberalization such as private partnerships and reduction in tariffs (Hall, 2007). The UN WTO, by making most of its money off consultancies and project management rather than membership fees, also has a distinct interest in the promotion and expansion of tourism development (ibid.) that makes it much more an interested party rather than a governing or regulatory organization. In this context, market rationality filters into international mandates around tourism, such as UNESCO's World Heritage designation that is increasingly seen as a 'brand' whose integrity and efficacy can be 'managed' through highly selective assessment processes (see Ryan & Silvantro, 2009).

The declarations of the UN WTO hold some of the best examples for how economic rationality governs the political aims of tourism development. In a UN WTO commissioned policy paper on tourism and the goals of the G20\(^7\), Ian Goldin notes that beyond its positive impact on infrastructure and business, tourism “is also an increasing element in tax policy with visitors and domestic travellers representing important revenue sources and because visitors are not voters it represents a potential revenue source with a less obvious political downside” (2010, p. 17). Here it is not just important that tourists are capitalized on for tax revenue (how would that not be the case), but that the underlying feature of touristic movement is asserted as an economic effect, and an economic rationality for increasing access, that denies and also seeks to actively exclude any other motivations or rationalities for this movement (or possibilities for denying it). Governed by the principles of the market, tourism also becomes governed by its utility to the market which gives it its value and renders it a technical problem of management.

\(^7\) The UN WTO and the WTTC are increasingly putting pressure on the G20 to make tourism a priority for development goals. In this vein, the group launched the T.20 initiative which “is a Members driven Initiative born on the sidelines of the UN WTO General Assembly of 2009. It aims to promote the value of tourism as a driver of job creation, economic growth and development within the G20 process and advocate for policies which are supportive of tourism growth” (http://t20.UN WTO.org/en).
However, market rationality does not ‘step out’ of social and political tensions; as an art of government it attempts to rationalize and remedy these through the logics of market-based relations and strategies to ‘improve’ the ability of autonomous subjects of neoliberal governance to exercise their freedom to choose. In this vein, Goldin also suggests that given the current economic crisis in the Global North, graduates in the North who are unable to find work can go to work in ‘poorer countries’ in the South for a year in the tourism sector to then return to guaranteed positions (internships) in the North – a so-called ‘gap-and-trade’ program (2010). As he suggests of these graduates who are unable to find work (and thus present a political problem in developed countries), “their knowledge, enthusiasm, eco-consciousness, vitality and skills…would be a massive boon to the nascent tourism sectors in the world’s poorest countries” (ibid., p. 32). Displacing other forms of knowledge or relationships to nature, we have a clear sense of the appropriate skills and sensibilities of making tourable spaces that also entrenches the mobility rights of those in the Global North to alleviate political-economic tension (an ironic twist on labour mobility under contemporary capitalism). So, for example, eco-consciousness here operates as technical knowledge that can be disseminated through a skill-sharing program, rather than one manifestation of a way of relating human subjectivity to nature (based on a human/nature dichotomy), that might conflict with other cosmologies. It is worth highlighting this particular proposal to show how the crisis in neoliberalism following the 2008 financial crisis, while engendering concern for the economic effects of these policies, has not been met with explicit challenges to neoliberalism as a form of political governance. That these techniques can be adapted to try and resolve their own negative impacts in technocratic ways is evidence of the effectiveness of market rationality (both in its flexibility, and in its elevation beyond political debate).

Likewise, the tourable subjectivities of this development are evaluated through similar market-based criteria. More specifically, the market-logic of tourism development works to
obscure the differentiated conditions of work and possibilities opened for those working in toured spaces. Goldin’s report goes on to say “once trained to tourism’s quality service level, people will be capable of filling many jobs as they become available across the entire economy. The extension and broadening of curriculum and the provision of on-line and language skills will be vital elements and will also help provide the quality service that tourists are increasingly expecting” (2010, p. 32). This operates on an assumption that tourism development will inevitably lead to a broader economic development in the region or country in question – an assertion that is often not borne out as communities becomes reliant on a particular tourist sector and suffer economic hardship when that site is no longer a viable destination.

Secondly, much like tourism development projects themselves, these particular skills such as language or on-line training are not evenly distributed and are usually reserved for guides, certain hotel service workers, or tour agency operators. This is important because guides are often in unique and interesting positions to challenge or refract touring narratives in their daily work (Valkonen, 2010). Yet while guiding is presented as a space for self-expression and development that mobilizes concepts of professionalism and entrepreneurialism through codes of conduct and certification programs (see Ap & Wong, 2001; Echtner, 1995; Wearing & McDonald, 2002), it is also a heavily managed and controlled form of labour that relies on personal traits and bodily performances to create the ‘authentic’ human interactions desired by, and produced for, visiting tourists. The skill-set required to do this valorizes a market subject that can be almost like a conscientious tourist (an entrepreneurial capitalist self), but not quite (still different enough to be recognized as part of the tourable landscape). At the same time, other jobs, in cleaning, food preparation, and transportation remain, but are not necessarily designed through the same appeals to self-betterment. They are the promise of mass employment in contexts where earning a living can be hard and precarious.
In this context carefully designed paths of participation are also useful to creating those who are toured as subjects governing themselves. At the same time, this is only one part of more complicated reconfiguration of landscapes involving various relations of power and strategies of rule. This reconfiguration also has deep roots in colonial histories, as seen in strategies of displacement of indigenous lands, but also in different strategies to produce workers. Similarly, the embedding of tourism development in the market rationality of neoliberal governance is only one part of this conceptualization of development. The rationality of this governance is also based, as I have said, on the articulation of free, autonomous individuals who are able to cross borders as part of choosing how they become self-actualized. Yet the question remains how touristic right links this freedom to the free market and how this shapes the contours of touristic mobility. I expand on this relationship in the following section by looking at the borderless world envisioned by the UN WTO before turning to the messy politics of producing tourability.

'BORDERLESS TRAVEL VISIONS': CONSTRUCTING FREEDOM AS THE RIGHT TO TOUR

This section turns to the question of what kinds of mobile subjects are intended by the right to tour and its claim to freedom, and on what premises the ‘borderless world’ imagined by touristic right is based. This involves a somewhat lengthy analysis of the UN WTO’s declaration of the right to tour. However my aim, in the final section of this paper is to use my presentation of the neoliberal design of touristic mobility to shift my analysis to the messy contexts of how this mobility is actualized in the production of tourability.

To understand the freedom and the borderless world being celebrated in the right to tour requires first looking at how it is linked to the ‘freedom’ of global capital. The same liberal conceptualization of freedom (the absence of restriction) that has been used to design the flows of capital across borders is used to talk about how tourists should move around the world, as if and
because touristic movement is another vehicle for capital’s circulation. In fact it is not; just as
capital mobility is not solely an economic project, neither is touristic mobility. But by using the
same language, the freedom to tour becomes inextricably linked to the freedom of capital circulation
(and accumulation). This makes it possible for Ian Goldin to argue on behalf of the G20 and the
UN WTO for “a concerted effort to reduce, simplify and modernize visa processes – the more so
given rising security and immigration concerns which threaten to greatly increase the friction
associated with border control and adversely impact tourism” (p.33). These frictions disrupt the
‘borderless travel vision’ he goes on to advocate, one that can smooth over the restrictive practices
that securitize other forms of mobility. In this way, touristic movement also becomes the ‘free’
movement that is outside government regulation in a way that allows conceptualizing touristic
movement as outside the political sphere. This is the same logic that places the movement of
capital as the actualization of its freedom rather than a calculated project that is designed and
secured through various practices. Touristic movement here becomes the epitome of appropriate
transnational mobility, designed in the image of capital and aimed at fostering market subjects.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, produced in 1999 by the UN WTO and adopted by
the General Assembly in 2001, puts it more starkly. In discussion of the role of multinational
enterprises in tourism development it states “in exchange for their freedom to invest and trade
which should be fully recognized, they should involve themselves in local development, avoiding, by
the excessive repatriation of their profits of their induced imports, a reduction of their contribution

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8 Bianchi (2014) makes a similar argument, contending that what has happened with the UNWTO and WTTC’s market
based approach is the transformation of the right to travel (or to cross borders) into the ‘right to be a tourist’,
circumscribing the meaning of this right to an act of consumption.

9 A major priority of the UN WTO and the WTTC since 2010 has been to push for reductions in visa requirements for
travel within the G20 countries in order to boost economic growth in this sector (see 2012 “The Impact of Visa
Facilitation on Job Creation in the G20 Economies” which focuses exclusively on visa regulations for tourists).
According to current data collected by these organizations, tourism has grown steadily in the years since the recession of
2008 with $1.3 trillion USD in export earnings in 2012, and growing another 5% in arrivals (as measured by the UN
WTO) in the first half of 2013 (http://www2.UN WTO.org/).
to the economies in which they are established” (UN WTO 2000, Article 9). Those ‘waiting’ for development are again asked to have faith that these artificial persons can be bound to a code of conduct (as the hardly equitable ‘exchange’ they make for their freedom). This article also explicitly shows their corporate freedom as fundamental to the touristic freedom we want to enjoy. Article 8 of the Code argues that “administrative procedures relating to border crossings…should be adapted, so far as possible, so as to facilitate to the maximum freedom of travel and widespread access to international tourism” only to continue by saying “specific taxes and levies penalizing the tourism industry and undermining its competitiveness should be gradually phased out or corrected” (UN WTO, 2000).

Beyond the concern for tax restrictions on capital, the UN WTO has also worked to define freedom as the ability to tour (and it corollary, to send tourists), a freedom founded, I argue, on the responsibility to be tourable. In the preamble to the Code of Ethics, the UN WTO states the benefits of global travel as “contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion”. The first part of this is not exceptionally new; travel has long been incorporated into international relations through practices of becoming more ‘cultured’ through culture (see Reeves, 2004). The second aspect of this statement, the linkage between touristic movement and human rights (particularly as fundamental human freedom), is where I think the particular governing logic of this freedom can be seen. In addition to linking freedom with market liberalism, the linkage to this array of human rights connects travel with the potential dissemination of these ‘appropriate’ forms of liberty and movement to those ‘other’ parts of the world where they are perceived to be lacking. The freedom to move about, as one of these fundamental liberties that so many lack is here disembedded from the global inequality and privilege that makes movement for some possible. In other words, those
who cannot travel are lacking in this freedom which can only be remedied through making the tourism of some universal for all. Thus there is an obligation built into this statement not only that, individually, tourists express a more just form of being in the world by being able to travel, but also that touring as a socio-political, collective practice becomes universal(izing) evidence of the appropriate cultural instilling of liberal human rights. In effect, the privilege to move is more than just desirable, or a symbol of status, it is a form of movement that marks progress and development.\footnote{Importantly, accessing the freedom to tour is promoted as much in the Global South as elsewhere, as I show elsewhere in certain campaigns around 'domestic' tourism in Mexico and Colombia that seek to foster touristic subjectivities amongst the growing middle-class.}

The freedom to tour also produces an axis along which difference itself can be ordered. To examine this, we need to look at where the ‘right to tour’ locates its heritage. Article 7 of the Code of Ethics states “the universal right to tourism must be regarded as the corollary of the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, guaranteed by Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7.d. of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” (UN WTO, 2000). In situating itself here, in a right that is historically situated in the labour movement and struggles against capitalist exploitation, the right to tour is disengaged from its own exploitative practices and expressed in terms of the ‘freedom’ that capitalist systems of production give workers (particularly by regulating a distinction between work and leisure and the privatization of free expression through leisure consumption). Although historically and in much of contemporary touring this distinction between leisure and work is fundamental, there are also ways that touring interacts with working life whether in the form of voluntourism, teaching English overseas, foreign language immersion, or other, more subtle ways that ‘being travelled’ provides a leg up in certain jobs or fields (see Lisle, 2008; Vrasti, 2012). Regardless, unlike others on the move (the migrant and the refugee are only
the most obvious examples), whose mobility is taken as more contingent and less certain in its
effects, touring is a mobility that seems always to promise the possibility of development ‘there’
(whether of the self, or of others) and return to ‘productive’ lives ‘here’, and, so the promise goes,
even more productive lives *because* we have travelled.

As a particular kind of movement, touring thus produces particular demands on tourable
places and subjects. The UN WTO Declaration affirms a ‘right’ to transportation, a ‘right’ against
undue formalities and discriminations, and a ‘right’ to protection of tourists’ special and particular
vulnerability as *foreigners*. These rights facilitate the form of movement as tourists. For some, this
involves strategies to produce disembedded presence for tourists on the move and always on the
path to leaving (such as the rapid day-tour, the guide-facilitated encounter). Other strategies
include the securing and aestheticizing of space through the practices of tourism police who clear
away ‘unwanted elements’ and restrict local access.

My contention is that this combination of rights claims made by touristic movement operates
to construct a *hosting* responsibility that becomes embedded in the right to leisure. In order to
make the right to leisure into a right to tourism, the right to leisure cannot just be a negative right to
time away from work. Because tourism is a particular kind of movement, it requires a particular
facilitation of that movement and particular kinds of sites to visit (or communities to do volunteer
work in). To make the right to tourism a right through the right to leisure, leisure has to be
understood positively – that is, as demanding an affirmative responsibility to provide the means for
its actualization. Put bluntly, if there were no places to tour, we would not be able to exercise our
right to tour. This is very simple. But if touring is not just any kind of movement, then it is not
just any kind of subject or landscape that can be toured and this opens up an entire set of governing
techniques for making what is tourable appropriate to the aims of the kind of movement that some
claim as ‘right’ – as the exercise of freedom. The tourist on the move and searching for free
passage across all borders enacts a very specific form of mobility that can be actualized in some places, but not others. And if this freedom is part of what it means to be developed, then it is not just being a tourist but also being tourable that is part of the contemporary stratifications of who or what counts as developed. The problems are deeper than just the forms of development tourism often takes. Ultimately, the freedom championed in the right to tour rests on the entrenching of hierarchies (and the production of some new ones) that do not foster the kind of world imagined by radical anti-border movements.

**Developing Uncertainties about Touristic Mobility**

Producing what is appropriately tourable, what actualizes this freedom and helps imagine this borderless world is, however, not the smooth process these declarations might imply. Importantly, it runs up against other kinds of border-work in the form of asserting borders that deny access to tourists in a context where resource extraction and violence have been rampant, or even in the form of re-imagining the borders between economic benefits and risks or between the needs to be tourable and the needs of local sustainability. This border work is important for the ways it reflects on the violence of state bordering or neoliberal borderlessness, and insists on the needs to reconceptualize movement and the rights/privileges of mobility differently. In this section I aim to show, briefly, some of these ‘frictions’ through examples from my research in Colombia as a way to highlight the politics of encounter in which the right to tour is circulated.

Leticia, the main city on the Colombian tri-border, is a place of incongruences and ambivalences. It is a place of transit and flows and yet one that, at least for some, is “destined to be a small place” (Personal Interview, June 28 & 29, 2012). It is a place where people and things flow across borders, yet where the specificity of where you come from, how you get there, and which side of the border you arrive on matter greatly for how you access the borderzone. It is also
a place where an ambivalence about its place in the national (all three national imaginations, though I focus on Colombia) and the global plays out. For Zárate Botía and del Pilar Trujillo it is indeed at the border where state presence makes some of its most obvious claims that the absence of coordination and overlapping authorities facilitate illicit trade (2010). Thus images and material organization of the space without laws are re-enforced alongside the increasing presence of ‘the state’ in its most obvious forms (the presence of a military base, an airforce base, a heavy police presence, and institutions like the Universidad Nacional de Colombia) – that is, practices of sovereignty at the border. ‘The nation’ also becomes troubled in this case with the cross-border connections that facilitate businesses operated in multiple locations and languages as well as the movement of labour from one country to another where informality becomes everyday practice (ibid.). The triple frontier is transnational by some accounts for the simple presence of three states, yet it can also be seen as transnational in the sense that it is a site of global interest, or a place whose being is not in relation to three bounded states, but to a series of transnational processes. As Ladino and Rey describe it “the tri-national frontier zone of Colombia-Brazil-Peru is part of a strategic zone for humanity and biodiversity, for tourism, for the connection between the oceans, for the presence of resources and minerals to the presence of indigenous communities that survive despite globalization, themes that are of interest to the developed world” (2010, p. 36, my translation). The triple frontier in this sense is not multilateral but global; interest in it extends beyond the bounds of any given state or government and claims can be made to it by anyone as part of our shared ‘global’ patrimony.

When people give a history of Leticia, they talk about cycles of booms and busts. Rubber, wood, fish, drugs, and tourism. All of these have been devastating in their own ways (though many might disagree with me about tourism here). The violences of the rubber industry were some of the worst, with mass enslavement and killing affecting thousands of Ticuna, Huitoto, Yagua, and
others in the tri-border region (Micarelli, 2009). People also talk about the busts as a kind of reprieve and yet another kind of devastation. For example, Feijoo argues that with the decline of rubber, communities were faced with the challenges of re-establishing social relations that had been destroyed, a process that became fractured and difficult because of the various displacements and violences that had occurred (1994). These kinds of implications have also been felt in the drug trade and in what for some is a bonanza in NGOs (Personal Interview, August 3, 2012).

Importantly, these booms have all been about transnational processes of extraction and circulation. Additionally, the indigenous people affected were not uniquely ‘Colombian’, ‘Peruvian’, or ‘Brazilian’, but people inhabiting this region of Amazon across which, and across whose lives borders have cut in efforts to define and appropriate pieces. Another way to put it is to see regional history during and since the earliest colonizations as requiring indigenous peoples to live with and on mobile borders – between languages, administrations, racial and resource projects – and in the unstable borders between Spanish and Portuguese colonizers (Zárate Botía, 2003). The presence or absence of the state in Leticia, or the presence or absence of Leticia in various states, has largely set the terms, though, of how these mobile borders have shaped life in the Trapecio.

The Global Code of Ethics has played a fairly significant role in the Colombian tri-border region in terms of how people undertake tourism development. In fact, the UN WTO sent a team of volunteers to the department of Amazonas in 2009 to produce a report on the touristic possibilities in the region which was then presented to the municipal government, enterprises and ‘indigenous communities’ (though the extent of this last is unclear). The investigation of tourism, which lasted around three weeks, focused on the standardized visits to communities, interactions between tourists and animals (usually held in captivity for precisely this purpose), and the sale of artisan goods. This visit was part of a larger volunteer programme that the UN WTO runs sending volunteers from all over the world to touristic destinations in the Global South to explore
and investigate the touristic possibilities of that site with the ultimate aim of “provid[ing] young professionals with the practical training in tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation and development” (UN WTO Volunteer Voices, 2011). These reports are delivered to so-called stakeholders in these touristic sites, but information about the trips and findings are also circulated through the UN WTO and its affiliate members, which include travel companies, airlines, major advertising groups, consultancies firms, etc.

The UN WTO’s claims to be invested in sustainability and poverty alleviation also come up against how this is literally fitted into market conceptualizations of the product and productivity of ‘tourability’. In an interview with Mariana, one of the women involved in a local sustainable tourism project in Puerto Nariño (a municipality in the region), she talked about meeting with the UN WTO representatives and volunteers. She noted that at this meeting the UN WTO representative has looked at what they had been doing in Puerto Nariño and declared the site to be a ‘gold-mine’ for tourism, encouraging the project team to do everything they could to encourage people to develop and work in tourism. Her shocked response was to insist “no, no it is not like that”, that thinking in that way would leave people with nothing when tourists stopped coming and did not take into account the other things needed like food and security (Personal Interview, July 12, 2012). Reflecting on the histories of booms and busts in the Amazon region, she decried the notion that people should continue to be encouraged to put everything into the development of a single ‘product’ (for outside consumption), since they know and have experienced how unstable that is.

In addition, the idea that someone from the UN WTO could come and say something like that and not understand the effect that would have on the sustainability of the communities (their ability to grow food, fish and hunt, sustain the educational practices that preserve cultural knowledge) was shocking to her. In a place where exploitation of resources by outsiders has such a long
history and where its impacts continue to be felt in very real and very devastating ways, to refer to tourism as a gold-mine clearly reveals the political economy in which the Code of Ethics is entrenched but also the limits of its possibility to effectively articulate the meaning of tourism for this woman and others she works with. In contrast, her commitment to conceptualizing touring in relation to the other necessary forms of work that sustain life in this place reveal a different appreciation for these continuities and, I think, an important contestation of what these rights claims articulated through the UN WTO look like as they are enacted. That much of the work in Puerto Nariño continues to struggle against this interpretation (for example in valuing the maintenance of chagras for the production of food and knowledge rather than as part of a touristic ‘product’) is testament to some of the limits of the UN WTO to capture the entire imaginative space of tourability.

In contrast to thinking of tourism as a ‘gold mine’ and the infinite accessibility to places to tour captured within the discourse of the ‘right to tour’, feelings about tourism in the Colombian Amazon were expressed to me as a mixture of attraction and mistrust. Unlike these claims to the borderless world of smooth flows of (appropriate) people and capital imagined in the UN WTO’s demands of tourability, those who are toured continue to create and manage their own borders based in lived realities of place and sense of unease at the costs of this borderless vision. Importantly this means that communities neither fully embrace tourism and its potential nor, by and large, reject it outright, but negotiate feelings of desire and doubt about what tourism brings. When I spoke about the situation in Nazaret, whose blockade was seen to have little practical effect on tourism development, it was through these kinds of mixed feelings that people situated, critiqued, or celebrated that community’s decision to reject tourism.

Ambiguous feelings about tourists and tourism abound. This tension is described, for example, through the rumors of the corta cabezas (the head cutter) who travels in large boats with lights by
night cutting the heads off fishermen or stealing their organs. The *corta cabeza*, a story that stretches through various parts of the Amazon region, or appears in other forms such as the ‘face eater’ in parts of Peru, has become most commonly associated with tourists or others ‘from elsewhere’ such as researchers or NGO workers. This story or rumour has circulated, mostly within Ticuna communities, since about the 1970s and is associated with the rise and expansion of tourism. This circulation reached the extent that in 2005 the President of ACITAM\textsuperscript{11} wrote a letter to President Uribe asking him to address the human rights abuses being suffered by indigenous people at the hands of the *corta cabeza* (Cure Valdivieso, 2007). This story reflects the play of feelings people have and have to negotiate when it comes to tourists: that they are both good and dangerous, good usually during the day when they want to buy artisan products, but dangerous at night or when they want other things. Cure Valdivieso provides an insightful analysis of the contours of this rumour, especially the complex connection between ‘gringos’ and *corta cabezas*; however, what I find interesting here is how this everyday rumour circulates in a way that provides a moment to make decisions about what kind of movement should be allowable and how people make claims about the type of risks they face as a result of this movement (ibid.). Mobility appears in the kinds of responses she got from people interviewed about the *corta cabeza* in interesting ways – on the one hand there were people whose mistrust of ‘gringos’ could be expressed as “an errant being, a stranger who is not from here but who travels all over” while others claimed these people with bad intentions came from far away specifically to take things (indeed the stories of the *corta cabeza* taking blood and organs parallels experiences of medical and biological research in the region where people have historically come to take blood and tissue samples) (ibid., p. 112, my translation).

In particular these stories have circulated around the idea that the Ticuna body is healthy and the *corta cabeza* needs to come and take things from it because, despite all their technology, their bodies

\textsuperscript{11} Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Trapecio Amazónica, Association of Indigenous Cabildos of the Amazon Trapecio.
and spirits are not healthy and need remedies made from Ticuna. I would argue that this cuts very deep into mythologies of touring practice and, especially, the neoliberal discourses of self-fulfillment and authenticity on which contemporary voyages to the ‘hearts of darkness’ are founded. Thus rather than take these responses as only stories or myths, I think we can read them as narratives of the violences and mixed emotions produced in touristic movement that play out in the complex politics of attraction and mistrust.

In other words, a framework for understanding the governmental logics of the right to tour is important because its rationality only comes into being in the very messy production of tourability. While powerful, its form is also shaped through the frictions of encounter. The responses discussed here are not grand ones, and my point is not that it can be a building block for a different politics of tourism – far from it. The point is that the Code of Ethics looks like all kinds of things and tries to do all kinds of work, but in the end is at the mercy of everyday life and the knowledges and histories of spaces that can be mobilized to refuse particular visions of how that space should be governed and for what purpose. A blockade to refuse access to tourists, to create a border that cannot be crossed (and to refuse to do the work of tourability), as in the case of Nazaret is only one example of this. Others, like the stories of the corta cabeza, do other things. As Anna Tsing notes, circulating concepts or “schemes” that present as universals, such as the ‘freedom’ of touristic mobility and the ‘economic rationality’ of tourability, can only be “enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters” (2005, p. 1), where other claims, desires, or rationalities come into play.

**Conclusion**

This paper has set out an analysis of the concept of freedom articulated through touristic mobility as part of neoliberal governance. In doing so, I have also suggested how rethinking tourability as bound up in transnational processes and as a condition of possibility for touristic
movement allows for an analysis of the frictions and contested politics of making places tourable as central features of mobility. Through analysis of the UN WTO and governance of tourism development I argue that touristic freedom is being mobilized in the techniques of government that characterize contemporary neoliberal rule. Importantly, I think it is worth emphasizing again that this is not to say all manifestations or claims to freedom through touristic movement are merely enactments of this government; rather, my aim in highlighting the very specific form of freedom, and the very specific image of a ‘borderless world’ used by the UN WTO and others, is to distinguish, as Rose does, freedom as a “formula of power” and freedom as resistance (1999, p. 65).

A key motivation for this analysis is to engage with the insights of researchers looking at the changing circumstances of transnational mobility, the politics of irregular movement, and the political challenges of crossing borders and claiming rights (see Soguk & Whitehall, 1999; Nyers, 2006; Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; Moulin, 2007; Squire, 2011; McNevin, 2007; Coutin 2010). I have argued that a fuller understanding of privileged mobility is necessary to the critical projects of reconceptualising actors and structures of global politics, and that understanding how tourism mobilizes its borderless vision is useful to defining the no-borders world we really want to see. This opens broader questions into how the construction of a touristic mobility interacts with or affects irregular mobility. How do multiple iterations of borders, ones that confine and permit simultaneously, develop? Are there instances where the vision of freedom espoused in the right to tour overwhelms other calls for freedom to move, freedom to return, or freedom to stay, and how do people respond? What can we resist about touristic movement that will make mobility otherwise more possible, and what kind of claims to freedom need to be defended? These questions, and others, I think help situate tourability and touristic movement in the work of thinking about political alternatives, as neither an afterthought nor a panacea, but as a sticky, messy, and significant part of contemporary global political life.
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