

# **‘He came back a changed man’: The popularity and influence of policy tourism**

**Tom Baker**

University of Auckland, New Zealand

**Pauline M<sup>c</sup>Guirk**

University of Wollongong, Australia

**Pre-publication version**

**Forthcoming in *Area***

## **Abstract**

Why does policy tourism remain a popular and influential method of policy learning and mobility in an age of information abundance? Framed by a case study of homelessness policy tourism to New York City, this paper suggests that policy tourism remains popular because it allows for (i) thinking outside the everyday strictures of the bureaucratic workplace; (ii) the development of associational bonds between policy tourists, and between tourists and hosts; (iii) the verification of information; and (iv) the legitimation of decisions/positions. Noting the powerful influence that tourist encounters have on policy tourists, the paper then discusses the production of authenticity. The paper calls for greater attention to the active and affective production of authenticity as a means to better understand policy tourism and its significant impact on policy learning and mobility.

## **Keywords**

Learning; mobilities; governance; homelessness; Housing First; Walter Benjamin

## **Acknowledgements**

We thank our interviewees, *Area*'s peer reviewers, and audience members at several conferences, where versions of this paper were presented. Special thanks to Eugene McCann for the introduction to Jamison Miller's Masters thesis, and to Jamison for the introduction to Rickly-Boyd's scholarship.

\*\*\*

### **A fervour taking hold ...**

In August 2003, the Australian television program *Foreign Correspondent* broadcast a story about homelessness in the United States (U.S.) (ABC, 2003). With homelessness spiralling out of control, civic leaders across America were apparently at their wits end. Seeking a policy solution, they were turning to Rosanne Haggerty to apply the Housing First approach that her organisation, *Common Ground*, and other New York City non-profit organisations had helped pioneer and publicise (Baker and Evans, 2016). Housing First places homeless people directly into permanent supportive housing (i.e. permanent housing linked to comprehensive, non-compulsory support services), bypassing the orthodox ‘treatment first’ approach where individuals prove their housing-readiness through compulsory therapeutic interventions (Tsemberis, 2010). “The answer, it seems, lies in New York”, said the reporter (ABC, 2003: n.p.), standing in Midtown Manhattan, near *Common Ground*’s flagship 652-unit facility, called The Times Square. In case Australian viewers were wondering whether the experience of New York offered lessons applicable to their own quite distinct contexts, Haggerty put it plainly: “I absolutely believe this is a model that [...] has proven itself able to travel” (cited in ABC, 2003: n.p.).

Policy change has a way of gestating in unassuming moments. The episode of *Foreign Correspondent* informed the South Australian (S.A.) state government’s decision to appoint Haggerty as a ‘thinker in residence’ in 2005. This triggered a prolonged engagement with *Common Ground* and its Housing First model for Australian policy actors, including politicians, civil servants, non-profit managers, consultants. During Haggerty’s residency, public consultations were carried out, reports produced, and recommendations made for assertive outreach programs and permanent supportive housing facilities. Shortly after, the S.A. government committed itself to both. It established the Street to Home program and initiated three permanent supportive housing facilities to be run by a newly created organisation, *Common Ground Adelaide*. In the years following, five other state/territory jurisdictions constructed *Common Ground* facilities in their respective capital cities: Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne, and Sydney. Many Australian policy actors came to believe that part of the answer to homelessness did, indeed, lie in New York.

Despite its framing as a road-tested, made-to-travel model, the importation of *Common Ground* to Australia did not spontaneously result from Haggerty’s consultancy in S.A., nor from her authority as the model’s originator. Nor was it a desktop exercise in figuring out ‘what works’ from analysis of the volume of information on Housing First, readily available to

Australian policy actors (Parsell et al., 2014). Notwithstanding the plentiful, easily accessible consultant reports, evaluations, administrative cost studies, online videos, virtual seminars, and media coverage at their fingertips, Australian policy actors still placed a premium on seeing the *Common Ground* model for themselves as ‘policy tourists’. Describing the extent of policy tourism, Haggerty noted: “we’ve had a parade of people from different Australian cities coming to visit us in New York” (cited in Russell, 2007: 12)<sup>1</sup>. The apparent necessity for policy tourism translated directly into influence. Australian policy actors’ first-hand encounters with *Common Ground* left powerful impressions, with one consultant referring to a “fervour taking hold” among many people who had visited (Interview 5: consultant, Victoria). Even in the context of avowedly ‘evidence-based’ and ‘pragmatic’ policy-making, the inevitably staged, highly subjective practice of policy tourism exerted a sizeable influence.

This paper poses the question of why, in an age of information abundance, does policy tourism persist as a popular and influential mode of policy learning and mobility? In the following sections, we review the small but growing literature on policy tourism to synthesise four overarching affordances that account for its persistence and influence. It allows for (i) thinking outside the everyday strictures of the bureaucratic workplace; (ii) the development of associational bonds between tourists, and between tourists and hosts; (iii) the verification of information; and (iv) the legitimisation of policy decisions/positions. The paper then discusses the production of authenticity to theorise how policy tourism’s influence is produced, via its personal nature and affective immediacy. This offers a generative way to understand how the production of authenticity is central to policy tourism and its impact policy learning and mobility. Throughout the paper, we use the case of Australian policy actors visiting Housing First programs in New York City to elaborate our conceptual claims and observations. The research is informed by analysis of secondary sources (including media coverage, websites, government documents, and reports by non-profit organisations) and interviews (conducted in 2010-11) with 26 politicians, civil servants, non-profit organisation managers and consultants in Australia and United States, all involved in advocacy, advisory, and implementation roles related to Australian *Common Ground*<sup>2</sup> facilities.

---

<sup>1</sup> The parade included managers from non-profit organisations such as *HomeGround Services* and *Mercy Foundation* in 2006-2007, a delegation from the Victorian state in 2008, followed by a visit from Federal Minister for Housing Tanya Plibersek and Thérèse Rein, wife of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

<sup>2</sup> In 2015, *Common Ground* (NYC) was renamed *Breaking Ground*. We use the name *Common Ground* because the events it describes took place before the name *Breaking Ground* was adopted.

## **The popularity of policy tourism**

Alongside the expansion of digital communications technologies and the proliferation of transnational policy networks and organisations, policy tourism is one of the key mechanisms enabling the intensification of inter-jurisdictional policy mobility (González, 2011; Ward 2011a). In definitional terms, policy tourism can be defined as “policy actors travel[ing] elsewhere to see, first-hand, the implementation and consequences of particular policies and to learn directly from those involved in their development and implementation” (Temenos and McCann, 2013: 34). Within this definition, Ward (2011a) distinguishes between event-led policy tourism, where tourists are drawn to a place for the purposes of sharing their own experiences, and visit-led policy tourism, where tourists are drawn to a place for the purposes of learning from experiences within that place. While policy actors have more opportunity than ever before to learn at a distance, a growing array of studies document the persistent appeal of being physically proximate to the ideas and programs that policy actors wish to understand and, potentially, emulate (Evans, 2009; Cook et al., 2015; Clifford and Morphet, 2014).

There are clear limitations associated with policy tourism as a method of policy learning, but existing studies highlight a range of reasons why it continues to be seen as a useful activity in the mobilisation of policy. Synthesising the insights of the emergent policy tourism literature, there are four main practical uses of policy tourism that help explain its continuing popularity. First, policy tourism offers an *escape* from the demands and constraints of regular work. Notwithstanding the public fall-out that sometimes results from perceptions of politicians and public servants embarking on frivolous, publicly-funded ‘jollies’ and ‘jaunts’ (Cook, 2008), policy tourism does offer some respite from the everyday strictures of regular work, particularly in churning, pressurised ‘fast policy’ environments (Peck and Theodore, 2015). Here, policy tourism can offer a “focused retreat-like context” (McCann, 2011) where policy actors are “taken out of the ordinary” (González, 2011: 1400) and “space for reflection” is possible (Hudson and Kim, 2014).

Second, policy tourism allows *associational bonds* to develop, most obviously between tourists and their hosts. Given hosts’ elevated status—insofar as they are gate-keepers to recognised policy innovations—they offer policy tourists valuable resources such as authoritative testimony and referrals to useful colleagues, which might prove consequential for implementation back home (Clifford and Morphet, 2014). Less obvious is the importance of bonds between members of the touring party. Official delegations often involve a diverse range of state and non-state policy actors, and so provide opportunities for *in situ* lobbying of decision-makers (Cook and Ward, 2011). Similarly, policy tours allow members of the touring

group to interact with one another away from ‘home turf’, where relations are determined by professional protocol and ingrained subject-positions. In an account of policy tourism related to Bus Rapid Transit, Wood (2014: 2661) notes how members of a sometimes conflictual South African touring party bonded through their shared experience of visiting Curitiba, Brazil and became “lifelong advocates of sustainable transport, collaborating in spite of strong opposition”.

Third, policy tourism allows for *verification* of information. All policy tourists have prior knowledge of the places they visit. In some instances, this will be minimal and superficial; in others it will be substantial and carefully researched from multiple codified sources<sup>3</sup>. In the contemporary context, the availability of codified information enables a refined understanding of ‘foreign’ policy innovations and the potential hurdles to emulating them. Beyond offering the opportunity to plug any codified knowledge gaps, policy tourism is seen as useful because of the importance placed on tacit knowledge (Cook and Ward, 2012), only acquirable by doing and seeing for one’s self. Analysing the conduct of U.S.-based study tours for British policy actors researching Business Improvement Districts, Cook (2008: 783) emphasises that “behind the various study tours was an implicit epistemological and methodological belief that by ‘seeing’ and ‘experiencing’ first-hand, [...] better-quality transferable lessons would be formulated”. Accounts of policy tourism describe this as the “visceral aspects of learning” (Hudson and Kim, 2014: 496) and as “learning through inhabiting” (Rapoport, 2015: 312), echoing wider claims in the emotional geographies literature on how learning and knowing are imbricated with bodily encounter and related emotion (Davidson and Milligan 2004).

Fourth, policy tourism allows for the *legitimation* of policy decisions/positions. Although the possibility for more-or-less open-minded learning through policy tourism exists, policy actors do not engage in policy tourism without “baggage”: ideological and professional predispositions as well as various constituencies to appease when they return home. This is likely to determine the places, policy ideas and experts that are incorporated into a policy tourist’s itinerary and, as such, policy tourism reinforces a set of pre-filtered policy options (Hudson and Kim, 2014). Indeed tourism can legitimise pre-existing decisions rather than test the suitability of possible options. González (2011: 1411) adds that policy tourism can be important in providing “reassurance, comfort and legitimacy for the kind of [policies] that

---

<sup>3</sup> For example, research papers, consultant reports, documentaries, web-based seminars, trade publications, and conversations with local experts

policy-makers and politicians already employ or are likely to implement”, while also reassuring them that they are consistent with recognised, international understandings of best practice.

Returning to the Australian case study, interviewees particularly emphasised two of the four practical uses of policy tourism just discussed. First, their comments demonstrated the importance of associational bonds in the organisation and conduct of policy tours. Several Australian policy actors commented on Haggerty’s (Chief Executive Officer, *Common Ground*) willingness to arrange introductions with her colleagues in the U.S. for members of prospective touring parties. These introductions allowed the Australian policy tourists to forge new bonds with a range of Housing First experts who became important resources for them as domestic implementation efforts progressed. Two non-profit social service managers who toured *Common Ground* facilities explain:

the generosity that [Haggerty] has shown has really been an important part of how things have grown here. To be given access to all of the key players [...] was just an incredible opportunity that Rosanne offered. (Interview 7: manager, non-profit organisation, Victoria)

[Haggerty] was just perfect in putting me in touch with the right people. Like saying “when you come to New York, don’t just visit *Common Ground*, you gotta go meet up with Sam Tsemberis at *Pathways to Housing*, he’s the father of Housing First”, etcetera etcetera. And she put me in contact with some of the [policy professionals] in Washington DC and they’ve since been fantastic resources (Interview 1: manager, non-profit organisation, New South Wales).

With Haggerty’s assistance, Australian policy actors arranged several study tours—sometimes as official delegations and other times individually—to visit key people and organisations associated with U.S. Housing First programs. Beyond forging connections between tourists and hosts, the study tours enabled the development of stronger bonds between members of the touring party. Australian policy actors advocating for the implementation of the *Common Ground* model used site visits as part of wider lobbying efforts. Like Cook and Ward’s (2011) study of mega-event policy tourism, site visits to *Common Ground*’s facilities were occasions for learning *and* for selling the model to Australian policy actors. The extent to which site visits supported wider lobbying efforts was also made apparent by the manager of a Melbourne-based non-profit organisation. He told of a senior state government public servant who had taken part

in the aforementioned Victorian government delegation but did not attend the site visit to *Common Ground*. The non-profit manager claimed that his organisation had subsequent difficulties lobbying the public servant, citing ‘problems with messaging’:

He [the senior public servant] didn’t come to New York, unfortunately, because part of the problem with messaging after that was ‘Melbourne’s not New York’ still. And had he come to New York, I believe it would have made a huge difference because he would have seen environments just like these in Melbourne that people have been able to articulate. (Interview 7: manager, non-profit organisation, Victoria)

Second, Australian policy actors emphasised the importance of policy tourism in legitimating their efforts to implement the *Common Ground* model in Australia. Many stated that they were, by and large, convinced of the model prior to visiting. As the federal Housing Minister said of her site visit to *Common Ground* NYC:

I had a first-hand look at what they were doing, but by that time I was already pretty convinced that it was a good model to be part of the range of accommodation solutions that we would offer in Australia. (Interview 24: housing minister, Australian Government)

Those who visited *Common Ground*’s facilities often alluded to the importance of experiential evidence—or tacit knowledge—in providing them with the reassurance that the *Common Ground* model could be successfully implemented in Australia. Melbourne newspaper *The Age* recounted the impact of Victorian Housing Minister Richard Wynne’s visit to a *Common Ground* NYC facility, stating: “Wynne had been worded-up about *Common Ground* [...] by Melbourne public housing advocates. But it was October’s trip to New York that cemented the idea that it could work in Melbourne” (Rood, 2008: 12). Rather than usurping the role of ‘hard facts’, experiential evidence was often seen by policy actors as a necessary complement, an affective affirmation of the model’s success. Alluding to this, Haggerty notes that what ‘ultimately convinces’ people is not facts and figures, but personal encounters with clients who have been assisted by *Common Ground* facilities and programs:

I think oftentimes, especially policy leaders [...] what does ultimately convince people who then have to go convince other people that this is a good direction is meeting with tenants here [...] and hearing about how their lives have changed. (Interview 10: manager, non-profit organisation, USA)

Haggerty then offered an anecdote related to the visit of federal Housing Minister Tanya Plibersek, stressing the importance of the experiential evidence she gained through an encounter with one of *Common Ground*'s clients:

When Tanya Plibersek was here, I remember [she met] a man who we had first met in our street outreach program. He had lived under a bridge in Queens for 27 years. He was telling his story and he's a very successful tenant, has friends, has started working again, and you could see that this was the thing that really convinced her that this is a solution. [...] It's those kinds of stories that are very, very powerful for policy makers. (Interview 10: manager, non-profit organisation, USA)

As with Cook's (2008) account, these responses point to the privileged epistemological status afforded to first-hand exposure, highlighting the potency of "real-life, in-your-face evidence" (Ward 2011b: 80) and suggesting how the experience of place is embodied as policy tourists encounter places multi-sensually and multi-dimensionally (Scarles, 2009; Edensor and Falconer, 2012). Seeing *Common Ground* in-person was crucial for gaining the interest and support of key policy actors and, in this way, fundamental to the mobility of the model itself.

The literature and case discussed so far identify what policy actors claim to be the practical uses of policy tourism in an age of information abundance. Here, policy tourism is useful not because it provides more accurate evidence than reports, studies and expert testimony, but because it accomplishes a different set of tasks, such as relationship-building, ground-truthing and reassurance.

### **The influence of policy tourism**

The influence that policy tourism exerts over tourists themselves—signified by the extent to which tourist encounters spur action—is produced by a range of dynamics. Potential influence begins to be manufactured 'off-site'. Narratives and accolades related to best practice ideas and places strongly influence would-be tourists' mental maps, creating imagined spaces of

innovation from which positive lessons might be drawn (Temenos and McCann, 2013). The abundance of digitally-mediated information—and attendant increase in policy ‘chatter’—appears to heighten, rather than nullify, demand for first-hand encounters as various places, ideas and experts are mythologised and, oftentimes, fetishised in the eyes of prospective tourists (González, 2011). The production of influence continues once the touring begins, partly because of the pre-filtered itineraries that tourists absorb prior to departure, thereby priming them for certain experiences, and partly because of the practices of the hosts, who generally desire to create an edifying experience for their visitors (Rapoport, 2015; McCann, 2011). Notwithstanding off-site preparations and imaginaries, these ‘on-site’ dynamics play a key role in determining whether or not encounters inspire action.

Previous studies allude to the revelatory experiences that policy actors have while on tour. For example, in Wood’s (2014: 2662) account of policy tourism related to Bus Rapid Transit one of her interviewees refers to “an almost spiritual” experience. Likewise, Australian policy actors visiting U.S. *Common Ground* facilities used religious terminology, commenting on the ‘conversion’ that returned policy tourists appeared to have undergone:

everyone was going to the States and Canada and checking things out, coming back almost evangelical about [*Common Ground*]. There was this guy [from the Department of Human Services who had] come back from the States almost like a changed man. He had this sparkle in his eye just talking about it. It was really like this conversion thing. (Interview 5: consultant, Victoria)

Aware of the convert’s proselytising zeal, a leader of a social services sector peak body in the state of Victoria noted that she had been “cautioned by several wise sector leaders not to return [...] overly evangelical about international policy responses or believing that the elusive answer to homelessness had been found” (Tsorbaris, 2008: 15). Yet, for all such warnings, the Australian policy actors’ experiences on tour had a significant influence, evidenced in action. Describing his decision to build a Melbourne *Common Ground* facility, the Victorian housing minister returned inspired:

I came back from the U.S. and said ‘we’re going to do this, we’re going to give this a run and we’ll see how it goes’. I literally found the site myself and we went out and bought it. Then I basically went out and talked to people and said ‘here’s

what this thing [the *Common Ground* model] is about'. (Interview 21: housing minister, Victoria)

Rather than view the influence of policy tourism as a product of the intrinsic virtues of particular policy ideas, places and experts, current analyses highlight ways in which influence is explicitly cultivated. González (2011) highlights the conscious transformation of 'sites' (i.e. locations, facilities, etc) into tourist 'sights' with reputational power; Rapoport (2015) suggests that the 'curated' nature of policy tourist experiences are integral to their influence; and Pow (2014: 296) claims that policy tourists "receive highly customised lessons based on a highly partial version of policy success stories".

While these accounts identify practices and processes that enable the popularity of policy tourism to be parlayed into influence, they stop short of providing a heuristic framework to analyse how that influence is produced. Here, it is productive to turn to insights from tourism studies, where analysts have grappled with frameworks to explain the compelling nature of tourist experiences. Writing on tourism more broadly, Rickly-Boyd (2012a, 2012b, 2013), adapts Walter Benjamin's thinking on the 'aura of authenticity' for its potential to offer some clues on the production of influence. Benjamin seeks to account for the compelling experience of being physically proximate to original works of art, which, in the case of policy tourism, might be substituted by esteemed and venerated places and sites of policy innovation<sup>4</sup>.

Benjamin suggests that an aura of authenticity is produced around art objects through relations between viewer and object, rather than residing intrinsically within the object (Rickly-Boyd, 2012a). Returning to the Australian case, long before policy actors began to embark upon visits to New York *Common Ground* facilities, they had come to know it as an innovative and effective policy model, and Haggerty as a pioneering, internationally recognised expert, thereby establishing a relation of esteem and veneration. These relations positioned *Common Ground* and Haggerty herself as authentic solutions to homelessness and this understanding was reinforced discursively in media coverage and public comments of key policy actors. One Victoria-based non-profit organisation pointed out that the "*Common Ground* model is now recognised internationally and has won numerous international awards in the field of homelessness" (HomeGround Services, 2008: n.p.). References to international recognition

---

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin's focus on art and authenticity reflects his writing from Europe in the era of the emergence of mass photographic reproduction. His arguments offer an analogue for the purchase of authenticity forged through direct engagements with place, notwithstanding digitally-mediated opportunities to encounter place from a distance.

highlight the educative role played by media reports and marketing, which helped to reify Haggerty's apparent success. As one non-profit manager told, Haggerty's expertise was made apparent in part by conducting an internet search that revealed her acclaim:

when you talk about supportive housing and when you research this type of thing you find that *Common Ground* is one of the key players. Not the only one, but it has had a big impact. And then if you do research on Rosanne as a social planner and things like that you get [...] and see the accolades that she's received (Interview 17: manager, non-profit organisation, South Australia).

Policy actors had ready access to a range of stories that scripted Haggerty and *Common Ground* as exemplary. Haggerty herself received a number of awards and honours, such as prestigious MacArthur and Ashoka Fellowships, and was profiled, for instance, by *60 Minutes*, *The Oprah Magazine* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Public narratives related to *Common Ground's* establishment highlighted how the model had been forged in Manhattan's harsh conditions. The story of an organisation offering high quality accommodation and support to the homeless in the symbolic and material centre of American financial capitalism had the effect of reinforcing the authenticity of the *Common Ground* model in the minds of Australian policy actors. As one non-profit manager implied, the apparent success of *Common Ground* under the testing conditions of Manhattan created a sense of admiration and respect among Australian policy actors, hinting at the affective work of these emotions (see Probyn 2005) in enabling policy travel:

you're in one of the biggest cities in the world, capitalism gone rampant, a welfare state that doesn't exist, where poor people die regularly. [...] To have looked at this giant Times Square building in 1989 [and to] redevelop it and offer it to low income people in the middle of Manhattan, clearly she's [Roseanne Haggerty] got some skills [...] I can't even begin to imagine how I would even have done that. (Interview 1: manager, non-profit organisation, New South Wales)

The persuasiveness of *Common Ground's* New York origin story was not lost on Haggerty, who noted:

I think that it does provide credibility [...] the fact that we've made this work in a big, complex, fast environment, I think there's [a perception of] 'alright, if it works there, it's standing up to some real pressures'. (Interview 10: manager, non-profit organisation, USA)

Together, these mediated stories' success—whether referring to the origins or subsequent successes of *Common Ground* and Haggerty—assisted in framing *Common Ground's* authenticity as an authentic source of wisdom on approaches to homelessness that Australian policy actors would do well to learn from through policy tourism.

Benjamin's aura of authenticity also positions *rituals* as important contributors to the authenticity, and therefore influence, of first-hand encounters (Rickly-Boyd, 2012a). Equally, policy tourism is a ritualised practice. Like tourism in general, it involves "rituals of preparation for departure [...] rituals of the return and rites of re-entry" (Rickly-Boyd, 2012a: 276-7) that embed tourists in traditions and communities. Among Australian homelessness policy actors, interviewees remarked often on how commonplace it was for their colleagues to be visiting famed Housing First facilities. Visiting these facilities had, in other words, become a rite of passage that built the mystique and authenticity of organisations like *Common Ground* off-site. Rituals continued on-site, insofar as waves of Australian policy tourists experienced a relatively similar itinerary. Due to the burden of tourist demand, *Common Ground* had developed well-honed tours of their facilities. Referring to this, a U.S.-based non-profit manager noted the particular skills of *Common Ground* staff in presenting their work 'to the outside':

Because they've got so many visitors they've learnt, I think, more than other places about what the questions are, what people need to know. They've had the demands on them. In some ways they are the most famous provider [of supportive housing using a Housing First approach], so they've had to accommodate that interest and I think they're better at presenting that to the outside. (Interview 11: manager, non-profit organisation, USA)

Responding to its emergent status as a policy tourist 'mecca' (Cook and Ward, 2011), *Common Ground* staff developed procedures allowing them to effectively showcase their work and nurture the relations between visitor and site. In reflecting on site visits' influence, Australian policy actors specifically commented, for instance, on the significance of hospitality and

generosity, again highlighting the multi-dimensionality of encounter with place and its embodied registering through affect and emotions (Scarles, 2009). As a not-for-profit manager with a visiting Victorian government delegation recounted, the treatment of their delegation was an important contributor to the delegation's perception of the *Common Ground* model:

part of the [success of the] tour was people being very generous over there in New York [...] not just in *Common Ground* but in some of the other organisations that we established tours to ... they lay it on, they have the car, they have the lunch prepared, the people running their buildings used to be homeless and they're engaging. The generosity over there from people is extraordinary. (Interview 7: manager, non-profit organisation, Victoria)

These on-site dynamics play an important and complementary role alongside the previously discussed off-site engagements, together constructing *Common Ground* as an authentic site of policy innovation and buoying its aura as a prospective site for emulation.

## **Conclusion**

This paper seeks to explain the counter-intuitive popularity and production of influence of policy tourism on policy learning and circulation. In an age when being physically proximate appears less and less essential, due to the abundance of information about best practices and new policy developments, policy tourism has retained significant appeal among a broad range of policy actors. Through a case study of Australian homelessness policy tourism in New York City—and by engaging with emerging literature on policy tourism—we suggest that the popularity of policy tourism resides in its function as a temporally specific arena within which respite is had, connections are forged, and minds are reassured. This involves encounter with place, and with people in place, that registers both intellectually and affectively. Further, we suggest that the influence of policy tourist encounters is not a naturally occurring effect stemming from the intrinsic virtues of particular innovative policy ideas. Rather it is actively and affectively cultivated before and during policy tourists' encounters, through appeals to apparent authenticity. The production of authenticity is, therefore, central to the impact of policy tourism on policy learning and mobility. Given as much, we see much scope for critical policy research to engage with geographical scholarship on the relations between authenticity, emotional work (Probyn, 2005; Davidson et al., 2005) and the multi-sensual nature of encounter with place. Such work could tease out how 'being there' creates affordances for

policy travel by rendering the authentic not merely via ‘seeing for yourself’ but via embodied experiences (e.g. the aural and the tactile) and the affective engagements they potentialise (Scarles, 2009; Degen et al., 2008; Duffy and Waitt, 2010). These lines of enquiry offer productive ways to grasp the continuing influence that ‘being there’ exerts over policy-making efforts.

## References

- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2003). USA - Common Ground. *Foreign Correspondent*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/stories/s934726.htm>
- Baker, T. & Evans, J. (2016). ‘Housing first’ and the changing terrains of homeless governance. *Geography Compass*, 10, 25-41.
- Clifford, B. & Morphet, J. (2014). A policy on the move? Spatial planning and State Actors in the post-devolutionary UK and Ireland. *The Geographical Journal*, 181, 16-25.
- Cook, I. R. (2008). Mobilising urban policies: The policy transfer of US Business Improvement Districts to England and Wales. *Urban Studies*, 45, 773-795.
- Cook, I. R. & Ward, K. (2011). Trans-urban networks of learning, mega events and policy tourism: The case of Manchester’s Commonwealth and Olympic Games projects. *Urban Studies*, 48, 2519-2535.
- Cook, I. R. & Ward, K. (2012). Conferences, informational infrastructures and mobile policies: the process of getting Sweden “BID ready.” *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 19, 137-152.
- Cook, I. R., Ward, S. V. & Ward, K. (2015). Post-war planning and policy tourism: The international study tours of the Town and Country Planning Association 1947–1961. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 16, 184-205.
- Davidson, J. & Milligan, C. (2004). Embodying emotion sensing place: Introducing emotional geographies. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 5, 523-532.
- Davidson, J., Bondi, L., & Smith, M. (Eds.) (2005). *Emotional geographies*. London: Routledge.
- Degen, M., Desilvey, C. & Rose, G. (2008). Experiencing visualities in designed urban environments: Learning from Milton Keynes. *Environment and Planning A*, 40, 1901-1920.
- Edensor, T. & Falconer, E. (2012). Senuous geographies of tourism. In J. Wilson (Ed.) *The Routledge handbook of tourism geographies*. London: Routledge.
- Evans, M. (2009). Policy transfer in critical perspective. *Policy Studies*, 30, 243-268.

- González, S. (2011). Bilbao and Barcelona “in motion”. How urban regeneration “models” travel and mutate in the global flows of policy tourism. *Urban Studies*, 48, 1397-1418.
- HomeGround Services (2008). *Therese Rein announces her support for National Common Ground Network led by HomeGround*. Media Release. 27 March.
- Hudson, J. & Kim, B.-Y. (2014). Policy transfer using the “gold standard”: Exploring policy tourism in practice. *Policy & Politics*, 42, 495-511.
- McCann, E. (2011). Urban policy mobilities and global circuits of knowledge: Toward a research agenda. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101, 107-130.
- Miller, J. R. (2011). *Vancouver’s Auratic Geographies*. Masters thesis. Simon Fraser University, Canada.
- Parsell, C., Fitzpatrick, S. & Busch-Geertsema, V. (2014). Common Ground in Australia: An object lesson in evidence hierarchies and policy transfer. *Housing Studies*, 29, 69-87.
- Peck, J. & Theodore, T. (2015). *Fast policy: Experimental statecraft at the thresholds of neoliberalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pow, C. P. (2014). License to travel: Policy assemblage and the “Singapore model.” *City*, 18, 287-306.
- Probyn, E. (2005). *Blush: Faces of shame*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rapoport, E. (2015). Sustainable urbanism in the age of Photoshop: Images, experiences and the role of learning through inhabiting the international travels of a planning model. *Global Networks*, 15, 307-324.
- Rickly-Boyd, J. M. (2012a). Authenticity & aura: A Benjaminian approach to tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39, 269-289.
- Rickly-Boyd, J. M. (2012b). “Through the magic of authentic reproduction”: Tourists’ perceptions of authenticity in a pioneer village. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 7, 127-144.
- Rickly-Boyd, J. M. (2013). Alienation: Authenticity’s forgotten cousin. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 40, 412-415.
- Rood, D. (2008). A tale of two cities ... and their homeless, *The Age*, 5 May, p. 12.
- Russell, L. (2007). Adelaide's homeless revolution, *The City Messenger*, 21 November, p. 12.
- Scarles, C. (2009). Becoming tourist: Renegotiating the visual in the tourist experience. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27, 465-488.
- Temenos, C. & McCann, E. (2013). Geographies of policy mobilities. *Geography Compass*, 7, 344-357.

- Tsemberis, S. (2010). Housing First: Ending homelessness, promoting recovery, and reducing costs. In I. Ellen and B. O'Flaherty (Eds.), *How to house the homeless* (pp. 37-56). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Tsorbaris, D. (2008). Supportive housing in Australian and North American contexts. *Parity*, 21, 15-16.
- Waitt, G. & Duffy, M. (2010). Listening and tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37, 457-477.
- Ward, K. (2011a). Entrepreneurial urbanism, policy tourism and the making mobile of policies. In G. Bridge and S. Watson (Eds.) *The new Blackwell companion to the city* (pp. 726-737). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ward, K. (2011b). Policies in motion and in place: The case of Business Improvement Districts. In E. McCann and K. Ward (Eds.), *Mobile urbanism: Cities and policymaking in the global age* (pp. 71-95). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wood, A. (2014). Learning through policy tourism: Circulating bus rapid transit from South America to South Africa. *Environment and Planning A*, 46, 2654–2669.