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Vol 6, Nº 15 (diciembre/desembro 2013)

## CRITICISM ON THE CONCEPT OF NON COMERCIAL HOSPITALITY

Andriotis K & Agiomirgianakis G. (2013) “*Market escape through exchange: home swap as a form of non-comercial hospitality*”. Current Issues in Tourism. DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2013.837868

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### Abstract

In the present review, we explore the problems of market specialists when try to go though anthropological texts, even in tourism. This is the case of Andriotis & Agiomirgianakis who develop a biased conception of hospitality. Not only they consider hospitality only from the economic paradigm, but also are enrooted in a big misunderstanding respecting to the theory of gifts. Certainly, the concept of a non-commercial hospitality rests on shaky foundations. Ranging from a bad definition of used terms towards the needs of imposing speculations without any type of validation, this troublesome text is pour for many reasons. The main goal of this review is precisely to place a hot-debate on the problems pseudo-Scientific studies have.

**Key Words. Hospitality, Theory of Gift, Tourism, Social exchange.**

It is unfortunate for the past several decades tourism research has taken a new direction in support of tourism marketing. This pseudo-scientific discipline appears to employ the theories and frameworks from other social science disciplines, but with a biased view with tunnel vision. The distortion by tourism marketing has from sociological and anthropological texts have created a distorted view of what and how tourism works. Much tourism pseudo-anthropological studies rely on the work of Dean Maccannell, especially his 2003 *The Tourist*, because it argues for a distinction between authenticity and staged authenticity. It is not our purpose to criticize the limitations and benefits in

reading Maccannell here (Korstanje, 2009a; 2009b; 2012a; 2012b, 2013). There is no need to earn, although it is important, a degree in anthropology to make good anthropology. In fact Levi Strauss was philosopher. Tourism-oriented studies by marketing pseudo-scholars lack leave much to be desired. They offer only self-referential views based on programs to protect tourism from those aspects that can affect the product. Undoubtedly, this is the case of the paper authored by Andriotis K & Agiomirgianakis G. (from now A&A) recently into the accepted papers of *Current Issues in Tourism*.

This review examines the argument of A&A, and also shows how capitalist instrumentalism is present in works like this. The goals of this investigation are manifold, but can be summarized as follows. First, A& A builds a preliminary conceptualization of home-exchange (swapping) to understand how tourism can lead to local authenticity. The whole argument derives from the idea derives from understanding capitalism as shaped only by economic forces in free market conditions; in other words, a restatement of neoliberal doctrine. Two implications derive from the logic of A&A. One pertains to non-market oriented practices; while the other refers to goods and commercial trade-offs monetized in economic behaviors. Like the theory of authenticity versus staged authenticity, the economy is seen in this paper as a dichotomy between two contrasting forces. Exchange plays a pivotal role to reconstruct a conceptual framework for understanding capitalism.

Unfortunately, although A& A cites profusely from anthropologists like Marshall Sahlins and Claude Levi Strauss, they do not use them to develop their argument. A&A fail to explain the origins of capitalism in either Marxian or Weberian terms. They fail to connect Marcel Mauss's theory of gift with the concept of social bonds. These founders of anthropology created a theory of social cohesion. Capitalism, as described by Max Weber, is not defined by the degree of capital circulating in a society but by bureaucratic logic, which triggers a new way of thinking about the world. The archetype of the nation state paved the way toward a new legal rational spirit, which subordinated other forms as traditional or charismatic social control. Economic gain as it is formulated in modern capitalism is based on a rational means and ends. It is a clear error to link the capitalism only with economics, since it stems from a wide cultural change which is not limited to exchange of goods. A&A state that anthropological studies have contributed to the advance of economic exchange, the issue has not been properly interpreted by scholarship. Of course, one example of where this happens seems to be tourism. The concept of non-commercial hospitality deserves attention because it represents the space where negotiated exchange exists. A commercial hospitality, which is linked to infrastructure, capital owners, and hoteliers, should be understood in sharp contrast to a non-commercial hospitality involving the concept of gift swapping. With this backdrop, we feel A&A have no idea of what hospitality means or at least its evolutionary history. But things get worse. A&A propose non-commercial hospitality a new field of study in tourism, which has roots in Ancient Greece. Unfortunately, they are not minimally familiar with the anthropology of hospitality. As a social institution, it is present in Celtic and German tribes, in African cultures, and as an inter-tribal mechanism of defense. Hospitality is not a Greek invention, nor does it exclusively refer to exchange of goods. Etymologically, hospitality and hostility share the same origin, the Indo-Aryan term *ospes*, which means that which belongs to the master. Since strangers represented a serious threat for a hosting city, hospitality scrutinized travelers. At the same time, hosts were constrained to give protection to their

guests on a temporary basis. Tribes wove pacts of non-aggression and intertribal defense in contexts of war, but in peace they committed to celebrate hospitality as a sign of friendship. Far from the A&A argument, hospitality is a sign of reciprocity, as Sahlins and Levi Strauss put it (Korstanje, 2010).

A&A employ a troubling definition of commoditization which says that things and activities are valued in terms of their exchange value. They define commodities as “basic marketable goods only” necessary to the elaboration of exchangeable products. They ignore the theory of commoditization under which capitalism upends the relationship between workers and their products. In the past, workers produced merchandise for pay, but now workers themselves become products monopolized by capital. Commoditization and alienation are inextricably intertwined. This is the process of commoditization formulated by sociology, to which A&A alludes (Bauman, 2011)

Secondly, A&A did not mention how the concepts of free transit and hospitality were manipulated by the Spanish empire to legitimate its conquest of the Americas. Once the continent was discovered, Spain received a lot of criticism from England and France because of its brutality in the expropriation of land. Philosophers as Locke and Hobbes said that Spain did not legitimize their claim to legal ownership of aboriginal lands. Even inside Iberia, scholars in Salamanca’s School questioned the political pretensions of the Spanish crown in a continent which did not profess the Catholic faith. The problem was that some aborigines were unfamiliar with the cultural principle of free transit and hospitality. They resisted the trespassing of Spanish travelers on more than one occasion. Philosophers agree that if aborigines were not educated to honor a universal right that applied to all human beings, they were not humans. Under-valorized by a tergiversation of hospitality’s principle, homo viatores (conquerors) expropriated the land of America without any remorse (Pagden, 1995). As Clifford Geertz (2000) put it, the line between hospitality and hostility is thin. Hospitality was never just a friendly act to bolster durable exchanges of favors, as A&A want to believe.

This investigation loses the sight in a futile discussion of superfluous works, to affirm

“From one point, home swap is often linked in sequence with other forms of non-commercial hospitality and shares some of their features. For instance, although WWOOF and house exchanges serve different purposes, their commonality is that both have a certain degree of perceived risk and uncertainty involved, due to the fact that arrangements are initiated online amongst strangers. On the other hand, home swap presents significant departures from other forms of exchange of non-commercial hospitality” (A&A, 2013, p. 5)

Well, at a closer look, risk does not exist in ancient times; it is derived from a modern construct to denote capital gains in financial markets. Hospitality has nothing to do with risk, but on the condition of safety each civilization constructs (Giddens, 1991). Risk seems to be a modern term adopted recently by tourism-related scholars, because of 9/11. The problem here is that A&A does not provide any conceptual definition of the terms they use, such as hospitality, capitalism, exchange, risk. This creates an unabated set of misconceptions and misunderstandings. Further, to overcome this obstacle, A&A understand that home swapping should be equaled to exchange networking. In a globalized world, digital technologies make “bartering” easier than in other times.

Travels and holidays become as any other consumable product, as something that can be arranged in few seconds from home at a computer. Once again, A&A interpret hospitality as a material definition of exchange. They not only ignore what has been written on this, but also make absurd manipulations of terms.

Methodologically speaking, the manuscript is poor for the following reasons:

- a) Employed terms are badly defined.
- b) Equality is not synonymous with reciprocity or networking, as Sahlins said; it may be generalized, balanced or negative. Money or capital makes balanced reciprocity among actors by introducing a symmetrical exchange, but this does not mean all exchange in hospitality should be balanced. Other balanced reciprocities are possible beyond the market (Sahlins, 1972).
- c) There is neither a clear distinction between alienable and inalienable possessions, nor the type of authorities this generates (Weiner, 1992).
- d) Inequities have no effect; they are part of exchanges.
- e) The home is only one unit where the concept of reciprocity operates; visas are an aspect that needs examining. The reciprocal covenant of protection and signified by the visa is one of the modern aspects that today defines hospitality.
- f) Reciprocal swap and hospitality reduced uncertainty and risk.
- g) There is no empirical validation of A&A thesis.
- h) Home Swap is commoditized as commercial hospitality.

Last but not least, the anthropological theory of gift is very difficult even for anthropologists. While A&A, who have only marketing degrees have done their best to make a coherent and original investigation. Nonetheless, the paper leaves much to be desired. They not only use definitions out of context to prove their preconceived notions, but consider exchange, which has been the historical sign of solidarity among humans, should be defined by the dichotomy between commercial or staged authenticity and non-commercial which is the authentic. In my view, this is a contradictory argument. Regrettably, such a marketing-led investigation is to be published in good journals like CIT.

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