



Vol 5, Nº 13 (Diciembre/Dezembro 2012)

DARK TOURISM AND THE PROCESS OF RESILIENCY POST DISASTER CONTEXTS. A new alternative view.

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Resumen

Para algunos especialistas, el turismo es una actividad de gran resiliencia porque en la mayoría de los casos recupera los efectos de guerras, desastres y riesgo globales. No obstante, el presente paper sugiere una idea contraria. El turismo, como industria, revitaliza los tendones económicos de la comunidad luego de un estado de emergencia, dando a los sobrevivientes una lección, un discurso el cual muchas veces hace que el evento se vuelva a repetir. Desde esta perspectiva, el turismo es un mecanismo importante de resiliencia que ayuda a la sociedad a recuperarse. No obstante a ello, la modernidad ha hecho de los eventos catastróficos un espectáculo mediatizado y vendible según intereses comerciales. En vistas de esta realidad, las causas que llevaron al desastre no solo son tergiversadas, sino olvidadas generando un alto riesgo a que el evento se repita mañana.

Palabras Claves: Riesgo, Desastre, Dark Tourism, Modernity.

Introduction

Recently, the study of death as criterion of attraction for tourist destinations has been typified under the name of Dark tourism. Our appetite for consuming death is associated to a much older fear to be killed. This of course begs one interesting question, is Thana-tourism a Cultural Entertainment or a new type of repressed-sadism?. Why are people being captivated by the disaster and suffering of others represents one

of the most striking aspects of dark-tourism?. Even though a countless studies have focused on mass-death as a form of cultural entertainment in tourism and hospitality fields (Lennon and Folley, 2000; O'Rourke, 1988; Miles, 2002; Blasi, 2002; West, 2004; Laws, Prideaux and Chon, 2007; Blom, 2000; Stone, 2011; Kaelber, 2007; Tarlow, 2005; Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Strange and Kempa, 2003; Gunlu, 2010; Cohen, 2011), few research has emphasized on the anthropological roots of Dark-Tourism or Thana-Tourism highlighting its connection with ethnocentrism and nationalisms. To some extent, disasters, mass-death and dark tourism seems to be inextricably intertwined. This valuable research has emphasized on the process of thanaptosis that create attractiveness in certain sites, while others are silenced. Under such a context, the present short conceptual paper explores dark-tourism as a sub-type of psychological resilience that helps the community understanding the nature of disasters that operates in the principle of contingency. Museums, battlefields, masterpieces of art, cemeteries, and other zones of disasters refer to events mythically constructed to fulfil economical needs. These sites are commoditized and broadcasted by the Mass-Media as mythical archetype that reinforces the social bondage and cultural values of every society, which is only a way, among others, of intellectualizing the uncertainty. Tourism provides to survivors not only with a reason to live, but also leaves a lesson to learn. Tourism is not a resilient activity (Chauhan and Khanna, 2009), as some scholars preclude, but a mechanism of resiliency society uses to accelerate the recovery process after disasters.

The Role of Resilience in Society

At a first glance, “psychological resilience” was originally a term coined by the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl after his crippling experience in holocaust fields in Second World who combined the previous existentialist literature with Freudian psychoanalysis (Frankl, 1985). Based on the assumptions that resilience is the capacity to face, tolerate and overcome situation of suffering or extreme loss, many studies have been devoted attention to this process post-trauma. Substantial evidences now show that resilience is a product of the convergence and interaction between self and its environment (Werner and Smith, 2001; Castro and Murray, 2010; Zautra, Hall and Murray, 2010; Korstanje, 2010). Haigh and Amaratunga (2010) recognize the importance to study resilience in built environmental contexts because it strengthens the connection between the community and their economies. From their view, the resilience may be defined as the

capacity of every system to resist and recover the preceding levels of functioning in an acceptable manner before adversity. In view of this, MC Entire, Crocker and Peters (2010) emphasize that the psychological resilience is interconnected to the degree of vulnerability of victims and survivors. K. Erikson, in this vein, explains that one of the aspects that predominate after a shocking event is a wide sentiment of superiority whereby one speculate that after all the life must go on (Erikson, 1994). For that reason, one might speculate that as a form of learning dark tourism and Thana-tourism can very well be defined as residual elements that contribute to resilience. Resilience after all seems to be a type of response.

As the previous argument given, Scanlon & Mc-Mahon (2011) clarify that the responses in situation of emergencies vary on culture, demographics, and of course the type of disaster. In some circumstances, classic disasters as quakes, floods or fires allow the assistance of neighbour cities in case of mass-death. Rather, the problem lies with epidemics because the funeral services and burials should be concreted rapidly to prevent a rapid contagion in the rest of survivors. This not only makes a profound emotional impact in social imaginary but also the lack of necessary graves. The complexity of mass-death situations should be examined by experts with accuracy. This point explains why historically planning from disaster and pandemics have been done separately. Most certainly, resilience represents the ability to learn of disaster-lessons orchestrating an efficient system of risk-communication that helps mitigating the disaster-effects. Risk communication planning is of paramount importance to mitigate the negative effects of disasters but sometimes it unfortunately, fails to anticipate rescues and evacuation in tourist-spot because of many reasons but the lack of attention to communication related to risk or hazards is the primary one (Handamer, 2000).

Dark Tourism and Resiliency

To what an extent resiliency can be compared with dark tourism?. Ranging from genocides towards made-man disasters, dark tourism becomes in an issue that drew the attention of scholars in last years. Under such a context, the book edited by two recognized specialists as Phillip Stone & Richard Sharpley (2008), entitled *the Darker side of Travel*, focuses on the thana-tourism and dark tourism from their inceptions considering all anthropological factors that lead a subject to visit a site wherein other have been tortured and violently exterminated. Sharpley and Stone emphasize on the

needs of outlining certain conceptual boundaries and scope to dissociate dark-tourism from other types of similar activities. Quite aside from this, Thana tourism can be defined as an extrinsic fascination not in the manner but in the meaning of mass-death. This of course emulates a staged-experience that reminds the event not as it happened, but enrooted inside a much wider discourse. As something else than a play, this experience evokes a common-shared celebration that tightens up the social bondage of participants linking somehow people with death. In this vein, Kucukaltan (2006) suggests that the states of emergencies, proper of capitalism, mobilize symbolic resources to bring stability to the system. Although a disaster or a state of war may at a first stage to cause serious concerns among populations, once finished the event, the market exerts considerable pressure to re-channel the demand. The site, where the disaster hit, not only is commoditized as a product but also reconstructed to nourish a discourse.

The primary point of discussion is associated to the belief all wars as widespread types of political crisis correspond with the convergence between religious, economic, and ideological reasons. To some extent, Kucukaltan (2006) acknowledges that even if war shows negative aftermaths for local economies, the nostalgia for involved countries or the sentiment of nationalism can very well create a demand-boom even for tourism and hospitality industries. That way, battlefields, museums and cemeteries are often commoditized to be offered as a product of mass-consumption for international tourists. This means that crisis or disasters should be capitalized and transformed in tourist-spots (Thana tourism and Dark-tourism seem to be alternative form of consumption emerged post-disaster).

Park and Reissinger are not wrong when says that the primary example of disaster and dark tourism is the sinking of Titanic wherein thousand of travellers and passengers perished. Around this tragic event, films and industries of cultural entertainment built a specific narrative based on heroism, outrage, love and destiny (Park and Reisinger, 2010). It is unfortunate, history is fraught of examples like this as well as the human intention not only to symbolize what is fact is understandable but also gives to disasters a consumable nature. The connection between humankind and nature seems to be unresolved for us. The fictionalization of causes that led to catastrophes is often preliminary condition of human-mind and a precondition the disaster takes room at a latter day (Finch et al, 2010).

Last but not least, Biran, Poria and Oren (2011) introduce a new interpretation to understand dark tourism. Based on the assumption that the existent literature is insufficient to explain thanatopsis simply because the majority of these studies are not empirical-rich, authors said that the motivation of visitors who consume dark-tourism sites seems not to be pretty different than those who seek for heritage. Similarly, these limitations lead reader to think the appetite for death not only is not the primary concern of thana-tourism but also a deeper emotional heritage experience. Using the case of Auschwitz, Biran, Poria and Oren explain that unlike what literature says, visitors are interested in expanding the knowledge about history and past. Even though their criticism against dark tourism related studies would be correct, they ignore that heritage experience share the same root with dark tourism sites. This means that heritage sites are often memorized and presented as extraordinary places where some tragedy or important event happened. The heritage as social construe is something else than a site of history, this represents a space where ideology works articulating mechanism of legitimacy and authority in order for community to remind something important. Heritage and dark sites are forms of resilience that traverse across all human beings and cultures. Methodologically speaking, one of the most troublesome aspects of this development is the over-valorization researchers give to what tourists state. Following this reasoning, it is important to contend sometimes there is a gap between what people say and do.

Dark Tourism as a mechanism of Resiliency (conclusion)

What is important to remind is that the complexity of tourist-system which replicates the earlier conditions that caused the disaster. Tourism preliminary may be affected before a threat, but in the passing of years, the demand considerably increases. Even though the role of ethnocentrism in the formation of dark-tourism sites are not the primary concern in the valuable contributions of Stone, one might question dark tourism is a type of implicit sadism or a form of commercialization based on curiosity for tragic past?. Death is one of the events in this world that terrifies human beings simply because she is uncontrollable. After a state of disaster, tourism plays a pivotal role in the process of recovery providing to survivors a political discourse that enhances their own sentiment of superiority over others (Korstanje, 2010).

Based on the assumptions Empires have historically elaborated a narrative of disasters to gain more acceptability, we argue that ethnocentrism is the primary motive why thana-tourism entices thousand of visitors. Disasters wake up the emotional and moral strengths in devastated communities. Four elements are of importance in the genesis of dark-tourism: a) an uncanny curiosity for the suffering of others, b) a sentiment based on the fear of death, c) a political discourse attached to ethnocentrism and d) as a form of resilience, dark tourism allows survivors to intellectualize the principle of contingency. It is ultimately important to denote that sentiment of superiority is a key factor, which still remains underdeveloped in the specialized literature, to understand how dark-tourism works.

It is normal to see in post disasters context, the surface of old patriotisms and nationalisms. This happens because survivors feel the destiny had given a second chance. This sentiment not only allows engendering a sentiment of superiority, often based on strength or extraordinary power, but also creates a discourse to be passed to next generations about the reasons behind the event. In this process, tourism plays a crucial role re-structuring the economic forces to re-build the necessary infrastructure to gain attractiveness. Ground Zero in New York City and Katrina Hurricane in New Orleans have sites recycled for today to receive thousand of tourists. Secondly, tourism industry facilitate to combine two contrasting feelings, the fear an event of this nature happens again (memorial) and the pride for being a survivor.

The memorial of reconstruction described in early point seems to be related to a much broader-seated ethnocentrism. Throughout these kinds of rituals, the involving society highlights its own sentiment of superiority creating what specialists denominated “the archetype of disasters”. Accompanied with the mythical guidelines that explain how the community was reconstructed, tourism, festivals and event-management elaborate a specific narrative of how the events happened, a new story with emphasis on masculinity, outrage, heroism, and strength. This creates a sentiment of ethnocentrism that dissociates the own ethnicity from otherness. The process of recovery and memorials not only remind the reasons of disasters as they occurred, and this represents a serious problems for community simply because the structural problems that led the community to a estate of emergency are not solved; for this, the event is repeated. In this context, tourism industry plays a pervasive but decisive role in

revitalizing the economies of obliterated communities, but at the same time, paves the pathways for the advent of a new danger. In view of this, societies or communities are inevitably condemned to suffer a catastrophe-like again. Unless otherwise resolved, the concept of Dark tourism, as today is studied in tourism fields, should at least be re-considered.

In the late modernity, societies develop techniques to forecast adversities and risks. The problem of mass media is that the hegemony of technology is preventing the necessary social change to prevent the next disaster. Based on the 9/11 and its impacts in US, J. Baudrillard highlighted that the wide-spread sentiment of panic is associated to the interaction between tragedy and voyeurism. The former refers to the psychological effects of terrorism in audience while the latter works reifying the suffering of others in a good product of mass-consumption. Baudrillard's pessimism mass-media has been created what one can call an spectacle of disaster. Politic fear works as a mechanism of self-indoctrination and paved the pathways towards a total control. Terrorism is only an excuse of a much broader deep-seated issue. Thus, Baudrillard argued in 1995 that "*the Gulf War did not take place*" (Baudrillard, 2006).

It is important not to lose the sight that Mass-media and advertising play a crucial role in paving the ways for the "Spectacle of Disaster". The significance of this thesis is that 11-September as well as posterior wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are parts of non-events a broader sense. For further understanding, let us transcribe verbatim the following excerpt: "*a whole strategy of deterrence that does service today for a global strategy. Steven Spielberg's recent film, minority report, provides an illustration of such a system. On the basis of brains endowed with a gift of pre-cognition (the precogs), who identify imminent crimes before they occur, squads of police (the precrimes) intercept and neutralize the criminal before he has committed his crime ... ruptural events, unforeseeable events, unclassifiable in terms of history, outside of historical reasons, events which occur against their own image, against their own simulacrum. Event that breaks the tedious sequence of current events as relayed by the media, but which are not, for all that, a reappearance of history or Real irrupting in the heart of the virtual*" (Baudrillard, 2006: 2; 8). By placing the mass-media under the lens of scrutiny, Korstanje envisaged how fear and panic are politically orchestrated in order to enhance the legitimacy of market and State.

The advent of fear in late-modernity is related to the needs to generate a spectacle to reinforce the moral values that give origin to the society (Korstanje, 2010). In foregoing, R. Bianchi focused on how the pervasive role played by tourism conditioning the risk perception (fear) as an efficient mechanism of social control exerted by developed-countries over the periphery. The ongoing state of insecurity created by the so-called “terrorism” corresponds with a politic logic of exclusion and discrimination of otherness. The consistency of tourism in a process of this caliber is being considerably jeopardized. The bridge between white (tourists) and non-white (migrants) travelers have been enlarged (Bianchi, 2007). Paradoxically, studies in risk perception destroy them-selves the goal of security at the same time, they promotes. Tourism is a good instrument for revitalizing the economies of those communities affected by a disaster, but in view of the advance of modernity, as Baudrillard put it, the solution today becomes in a problem tomorrow.

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