

PURSUING THE ETHICS OF HOSPITALITY: THE CASE OF LOLA CHOMNALEZ

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ABSTRACT

Crime against tourists not only shock local communities because of their vulnerability but also represents serious offense to “other states” where these tourists come from. Tourism would not work without hospitality. By introducing tourists in the homeland implies the respect for hosting-law, as well as the commitment of states for protecting them while touring. For example, whenever terrorism in Bali took the life of dozen of Australian holiday makers, Australia asked for a rational explanation, in the same way France issued a protest against Argentina when two young tourists were killed in Salta. The fact is that hospitality is based on a much deeper human prone to reciprocity. But what would happen whenever the state blame the tourism-delivering society to avoid its duties as hosting-state?.

KEYWORDS: LOLA CHOMNALEZ. HOSPITALITY. RISK. RESTRICTED HOSPITALITY. TOURISM.

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INTRODUCTION

As good neighbors Argentina and Uruguay had benefited from trade, tourism and historical relationship from their foundations. Although both nations share a similar culture, even based in the same founding parents, the rivalry between them was raising in last years. The present short essay review explores the dichotomies of hospitality, in a context where Lola Chomnalez, a young Argentinean tourist was killed in Valizas located at “El Municipio de Rocha” [Rocha County], a quite beach of Uruguay coast. Lola arrived to Rocha waiting for her parents before Christmas and New Year. She was welcomed and hosted by family friend of her parents. The young of 15 years old anticipated her holidays enjoying of a wonderful landscape and whether. She opted this destination declining other options as New York, or even Europe. In one sense, after she was assassinated, on Friday 02 January, Rocha issue a communication blaming other Argentinean tourists as responsible of this event. Undoubtedly, not only this was a case of neglected hospitality, but also government was traced the case in order not to create a negative image on Uruguay. Indeed, Pepe Mujica former president of this country was in charge of the ebbs and flows of the investigation. Although the Justice never found the real guilty, Rocha Attorney alluded to the “moral decline of Argentineans” as the main reason why Lola was killed. How can we interpret this overt manifestation?, is this racism or only a cultural tension aggravated by crime?.

CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

Globalization has showed the conflictive nature of ethnic encounters, accelerated by tourism. Though the technological breakthrough paved the ways for strengthening the host-guest meeting, no less true is that nationalism and chauvinism surfaced in some areas. In this vein, tourism and nationalism seems to be historically intertwined (Keiserfield 2010). In the same token, Burnt & Courtney (1999) argue that tourism not

only alters the cultural values of hosting society, but in tourists as well, there is a change in the way the other is perceived. At time of return, tourists tell to other connationals of their experience, expectative and how they were treated while touring. The epicenter of conflict and violence derives from the resentment produced by historical relegation of community in some cases, or from the ostentation tourist did in others. Some voices have investigated the role played by resentment in the crime against tourists (Smith 1992; Mc-Intosh, Goelder & Ritchie, 1995; Brunt & Courtney 1999).

As this backdrop, Pizam, Reichel & Stein (1982) hold the thesis that any hostility against tourists expresses an impossibility to break the financial asymmetries where local live. The ostentation, as well as the ethnical differences, is key factors that wake up hatred acts, which are re-channeled against aliens. Last but not least, M. Korstanje (2011) suggests that geopolitical conflicts conducted by nation-states plays a negative role by creating hostility among citizens of both sides. This was exactly what happened between Argentineans and Chileans post conflict of Beagle and Malvinas-Falkland War. At some extent, tourism allows the coordination of resources to develop regional industries, but does not control long-simmering states of conflict. By the subordination between hosts and guests, the interaction evolves in good terms, but conflict and ethnocentrism remain. This begs a more than interesting question, is hospitality a mechanism to undermine violence?.

Ethnology and Anthropology have collected an interesting conceptual framework to understand hospitality as a rite of passage, or a pact, where “strangers” are well-treated to ask for the protection to Gods, once death. The same treatment strangers receive Gods will harm or protect the human beings. Natural disasters, famine, plagues and other calamities were considered “a just punishment” when the community vulnerated the right of aliens. For whole part of cultures, the concept of evilness and tragedy stems from the violation of hospitality-guiding rule (Korstanje & Olsen, 2011; Korstanje & Tarlow, 2012). Those who break “the pact of hospitality” corrupt their soul to evilness.

TOWARDS THE ETHICS OF TOURISM

Although, marketing is a valid and useful instrument to revitalize tourist destination images, or even to be used to boost economies, serious doubts have been posed on its ethical contours. In a thoughtful and provocative development, Dean MacCannell (1992: 2011) questioned the logic of tourism in subordinating “Others” to tourist-gaze. Far from being an ethical activity, tourism produces cultural commodities where native are silenced. To what an extent native can be commoditized or not, corresponds to the fields of ethics. Tourists visit remote places not only because they are interested in knowing further about the difference, but their ontological sense of security should be granted. Abundant bibliography shows the disastrous effects on tourist destinations whenever news of crimes or disasters are disseminated to global audience (Kozak, Crofts & Law, 2007; Hall, Timothy & Duval 2004; Aschauer 2010). However, less attention was given to the dialectics of risk perception and ethics. Under some contexts, profit-oriented interests cover the roots of hospitality in order for protecting the businesses. Of course, this reality is not new. The American film *Jaws* (starred in 1975) shows a local attorney concerned by the threat of a hungry jaw that may devour vulnerable holiday-makers but he ignores the alarms because the image of destination is prioritized. This allegory suggests that tourists often are viewed as “commodities” whose protection only is desirable in terms of profits. Ultimately, this noted film reminds that whenever “the hospitality rules” are broken, the disaster takes hit the community. Nedelea (2010) claims whether marketing is employed following the ethical boundaries, it represents a fertile ground to solve problems otherwise would be aggravating the economic conditions of local communities. The understanding of tourism’s effects should be carefully designed taking care in “the social marketing”, which means the protection and well treatment of human resources in the process. When marketing focuses on community-based commitment, residents are empowered to take part of the project, reducing this way the possibility of conflict and dispute. As a result of this, tourists not only move with further security but liberty. This is the reason

why, as Germann Molz puts it, hospitality is vital for the coherent development of tourism in sustainable terms. Technology adopted for travels can be seen as a double-edge sword. This happens because hospitality consists in a pervasive platform where the curiosity for the Others engenders risks. She places the example of couch surfing platform addressed in fifth and six chapters of her book, *Travel Connection*. The sociology of tourism from its inception has focused on the landscape, the gaze, the encounter between hosts and guests, and the problem of authenticity. Through the third chapter, Molz discusses that the technological innovation ushers us to rethink the classic literature in view of how the tourist landscapes are formed. The social connections are mobilized, mediated and fabricated according to “hybrid performances” (p. 59). Her argument explores the importance of social networks, which serve as platforms of togetherness self-oriented to produce hospitality. That is the case of couchsurfing.org, which through cyberspace offers a great variety of opportunities to contact others (hosts) while traveling. It consists in using a platform where members surf, while are guests at hosts’ homes. This engenders serious risks in view of the fact that the hosts and guests have no previous familiarity. The project was developed by Australian surfers to get free lodging when they were abroad. Now it has become a global network that connects peoples in quest of new experiences. At the time when the host brings hospitality to the guest, the cultural exchange starts. Of course, this reformulates the already discussed meaning of hospitality and authenticity. Travellers using this software have alluded to a narrative of authenticity that is based on innovative practices and changes our conceptions of tourism. Here some questions arise, is technology opening the doors for more genuine forms of hospitality?, under what circumstances can be hospitality neglected?.

HOSPITALITY

Tourism, as an activity that implies displacement, leads people towards unfamiliar landscapes. The tourist experience combines not only the quest for novelty, but the needs of security. Certain fears surface simply because hosts do not know the

intentions of guests and vice-versa. This is the reason why hospitality not only revitalizes the necessary level of trust in order for both sides to interact each other, but also reduces the sense of risk any travel triggers (Germann Molz, 2014; Korstanje & Olsen, 2011).

As the previous argument given, hospitality confers to tourist a veil of protection reminding them their status of invited aliens who have to respect the local law. Jacques Derrida alludes to the figures of “foreigner” to draw the limits between inside and outside. Following Plato’s legacy, he questions to what an extent foreigners may be defined as those who asks about others. Guests are often accompanied with their own language, which is derived from their constitutional culture. Hospitality is offered or denied depending on the foreigner’s personal properties. New-comers interpellate the hosting community in the same way, the question may be or not hosted by the speaker. The language of the host interrogates violently and suddenly since it imposes the home owner’s interpretation. Therefore, the foreigner is forced to adopt another tongue which is not the one he usually speaks or writes. The host’s translation is part of his very own abode and it is precisely the point where the possibility of hospitality takes place. According to Derrida, two types of hospitality emerged in the “absolute” (unconditional) and “restricted” (conditional) forms. In this sense, the absolute hospitality demands the host to open the proper home not only before foreigners but also before anonymous Travellers who are unknown for me. This way, I am obliged to let them to enter but to ask reciprocity. Rather, restricted hospitality signals to those foreigners who meet the criteria of laws, considering that hospitality is applied ^oto a certain person, not an unknown alien. As Derrida puts it, once we are in presence of “Others”, we are constituted as “us”. The “other” not only is disciplined, marked or regulated by host’s rules it reminds that tolerance is given by the law of masters. Since its grounds are inclusion and acceptance, Derrida adds, democracy (at some extent) may be equaled to hospitality. However, its effects on politics are paradoxical. On one hand, the nation-hood confers the belief of an exemplary centre to be naturalized in the course of time. This space of exception not only gives “identity” but introduces “uncertainty” to close the unconditional hospitality. The late-capitalism is tended to “create an oligarchy”

within democracy, to monopolize the disciplinary mechanism of control over workforce (Derrida, 1997; 2005; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). Ana Paula Penchaszadeh (2014) discusses to what an extent any act of hospitality is determined by a counterforce of hostility, but exerts a radical criticism on the current democracy, impossible to respect the “Other”. In sharp contrast to current literature, Penchaszadeh argues convincingly that hospitality is determined by the combination of five items: language, gift-exchange, sovereignty, representation of death and democracy. Whether Derrida over-emphasized on the tolerance as the borderlands of hospitality, she understands that hospitality goes in the opposite direction than tolerance. Starting from the premise that the self is enrooted into a certain territory, citizens are constituted according to the figure of “Others”, who are not citizens but are tolerated. By exercising their power, nation-states allude to tolerance to encourage the gift-exchange system. In fact, Derrida made a radical critique to post-modern society and its principle of property, which undermines the possibilities for peoples to embrace the “unconditional hospitality”. This leads us to a second question, may hospitality be conceived beyond the politics?.

Well, in the hyper mobile world of communication, instant experiences, hedonism and consuming life, two types of mobilities coexist. The global financial elite encourage travels to take distance from reality, embracing the belief that good citizens are legally allowed to be mobile. While thousand of vagabonds, migrants, refugees are condemned to starvation and an imminent death. As a project, capitalism has consolidated generating serious asymmetries in the means of production, where few monopolizes the slavery of the whole (Virilio, 2012; Bauman, 2000; Tzanelli & Yar, 2009, Eagleton, 2011; Maccannell, 2011; Korstanje & Clayton, 2012; Korstanje, 2011). Paradoxically, though TV news are fraught of events characterized by “humanitarian disasters” of new-comers who do not find suitable welcome in the centre, nothing is done to change this radical situation. Undoubtedly, the problem of violence and hospitality seems to be inextricably interlinked.

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“Besides the sadness we feel by death, a death of any young women, the episode that involves two Argentinean families ushers us in the opportunity to think. Tourism is a human activity aimed at fostering economic progress in local communities, to the extent it opens the doors for adopting new technologies and bettering our infrastructures.. however, there are some occasions strangers import their cultural behaviors, conflicts, and dreams.... Although our families are open to strangers, this episode of violence between two Argentinean families in these exceptional landscapes, hurts us but at the same time reveals the crisis or the decline of a moral cultural model... What is our urgent challenge after this?. We are ought to give more cohesion, further rights, prevention and of course education. It is not a slogan that leads us to place a dome to protect Valizas from the corruptions of Others, rather, further liberty and tolerance are the solution to nuance the vices of newcomers in order to optimize the vital experience our landscapes and friendly climate give” (Excerpt translated by author).

The conception of hospitality exposed in this document appeals to a restricted view of “the other” as a carrier of moral declination. Following a blaming the victim tactic, it alludes to “nationality” as the key to explain why Lola murdered was. The econometric conception of tourism is evidenced by the profits of thousand of Argentineans left in these coasts, however, they brought with pathological behaviors, which are proper from their society. Valizas, the destination Lola chose, is “an exemplary centre”, a type of lost-paradise the “porteños” (Buenos Aires dwellers) look for. This comfort and peaceful atmosphere not only is determined by a style of life, but by the cultural values of cooperation that distinguishes Uruguay from other countries. Since Uruguay offers “freedom”, it is very difficult to control when others (who are not Uruguayans) do not follow the law. As Derrida puts it, Lola case evinces the nature of restricted hospitality proper of modern tourism. There is no reciprocity for those who are financially or legally unable to pay for their holidays. Secondly, freedom plays a crucial role by allowing the exchange of values between Argentina and Uruguay, but if

further attention is paid, the term *think* here as it is used means “concern”. Fear to be contaminated for these chaotic and violent aliens who can modify the social scaffolding of Valizas. Pitted against Argentina, Uruguay offers a discourse enrooted in the resistance to modernity. Though Argentinean tourists brought “progress” or “development”, their “moral declination” should be avoided. In an last-ditch attempt to pose an idealized image of a secure destination, Rocha not only engendered a biased stereotype of their neighbors, but also imposed a restricted sense of hospitality. This short essay review does not deepen on the anthropological roots of ethnocentrism, but is aimed at discussing how national identities enter in conflict in tourism fields. At bottom, Argentina and Uruguay are cloned-nations; they have no major differences even sharing the same language. A more than interesting point of discussion is given by the covert hostility of Uruguayans against Argentinean tourists. ¿How can we understand this subtle hostility against those who choose us?

The act of hospitality, where tourism evolved, is marked on what psychoanalyst Hugo Bleichmar (2002) called, “bipolar narcissism”. The therapist puts a good example to understand this. Two couples enjoy an evening with excellent wine and food, but once returned to home, not surprisingly, they criticize “the other side” reinforcing some prejudices which never were manifested during the meeting. He observes that this hostility allows the restoration of self-identity which is very important for couples. As merged by the friendly climate of hospitality, both couples need from hostility to recover their self-esteem. The tension between Argentina and Uruguay, as this example showed, remains in the commonalities both keep.

CONCLUSION

Doubtless, hospitality has been widely studied over the last decades from diverse perspectives. As Lynch et all (2011) put it, the specialized literature has developed two clear waves of investigation. While some scholars see in hospitality a type of mechanism of control, others focus on its gift-exchange basis. Far for being resolved, this discussion leads to question the roots of hospitality in our contemporary society.

This discussion was based on the communiqué issued by Rocha County regarding the assassination of young Argentinean holiday-maker, Lola Chomnalez. At some extent, the examined text reveals the interests of government for tourism as a conduit towards economic prosperity but keeping serious concerns on the effects upon society. This tragedy which today was not cleared, reminds the dark side of hospitality, or as Derrida dubbed “restricted hospitality”. As a producer of differences, tourism exploits commercially “the quest of otherness”. However, beyond the spirit of multiculturalism and hospitality this discourse flourishes, serious imbalances, conflicts and tensions arise. Portraying Argentina as a society in moral decline does blame the culprits to “Others”, keeping tourism as an “ideal archetype to follow”. However no less true is that this signals to “a type of staged-hospitality” where hostility and hypocrisy persist.

POR UNA ETICA DE LA HOSPITALIDA: EL CASO LOLA CHOMNALEZ

RESUMEN

Cuando los turistas son agredidos o presas de un crimen, no solo la imagen del destino queda vedada, sino la relación entre los estados. El turismo entonces funcionaria como un pilar de la hospitalidad. No existe turismo sin hospitalidad. La introducción de un extranjero amerita su compromiso de no romper las reglas del hogar visitado, a la vez que el estado debe protegerlo de cualquier amenaza. Por ejemplo, cuando una docena de turistas australianos fueron asesinados en Bali, Australia presentó un pedido de explicación al gobierno de Indonesia de la misma manera que Francia lo hizo con Argentina luego de la muerte de dos turistas de esa nacionalidad en Salta. Empero, ¿que sucede cuando es el mismo estado quien culpa a la victima para negar su hospitalidad?.

PALABRAS CLAVES: LOLA CHOMNALEZ. HOSPITALIDAD. RIESGO. HOSPITALIDAD RESTRINGIDA. TURISMO.

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Appendix – Communication of Rocha in Spanish

“Además de la amargura de la muerte, otra muerte violenta de mujer y mujer joven, el episodio protagonizado por estas familias argentinas en nuestros lugares nos da espacio para reflexionar. El Turismo es una de las actividades humanas que más implicancias económicas tiene para las sociedades emisoras de viajeros, para aquellas que son receptoras y para los protagonistas de los viajes y las vacaciones. El paso del visitante por nuestros lugares nos deja resultados económicos, nos da nuevas infraestructuras entre otros asuntos. Pero también, cuando viene un visitante y llega con sus valijas con ropa, libros, equipos de comunicación, también viene con las otras valijas, a veces sólo bolsos, otras veces sólo pequeños paquetes de sueños, ansiedades, conflictos. Nuestras comunidades turísticas, como ocurre en forma intensa en estos últimos años, reciben y comparten toda esa presencia. En este episodio de violencia familiar en familias argentinas en este lugar excepcionalmente bello de nuestra costa, sobre todo nos duele la muerte de una mujer, una mujer joven y en circunstancias que revelan crisis de un modelo cultural. Acá, en nuestros lugares de Rocha tenemos episodios de violencia familiar que se han suscitado. Probablemente y por desgracia, otros sucederán. Pero acá estamos embarcados sistemáticamente (y particularmente Barra de Valizas es ejemplo de ello) en un cambio cultural que nos permite lucir con orgullo los primeros pasos de una educación en valores muy fuerte. Sólo en Barra de Valizas la comunidad está cohesionada por seis grupos y organizaciones locales, se aplican siete programas puntuales además de los institucionales del año en los asuntos sociales más diversos. Por eso... respiramos mejor, más tranquilos ahora en medio de la desgracia y el dolor por la muerte de Lola, la muchacha argentina.

Porque no fue inseguridad local ni violencia local ni fragmentación social local la que generó este episodio.

¿Cuál es el otro desafío que nos planteamos?

Darnos más cohesión social, más derechos y prevención, más educación. No se trata de poner un blindaje simplista y aislador en un proceso de libertades. Por el contrario, más solidez y flexibilidad cultural, libre juego con fuerza de valores para que se produzca el otro efecto: además de quedar el inevitable residuo cultural del modelo que sigue el visitante que llega, también se produzca en el visitante que se va de retorno la experiencia vital de nuestros paisajes amigables y nuestro modelo de desarrollo humano que lenta pero seguramente por acá nos va cambiando la vida”.

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