Tourism in the European economic crisis:

Mediatised worldmaking and new tourist imaginaries in Greece

Abstract

The paper interrogates the rationale and origins of changing imaginaries of tourism in Greece in the context of the current economic crisis. We detect a radical change in the 'picture' of the country that circulates in global media conduits (YouTube, Facebook, official press websites and personal blogs). We enact a journey into past media representations of Greece as an idyllic peasant and working-class site, but proceed to highlight that such representations are being recycled today by Greeks living and studying abroad. This stereotype, which focuses on embodied understandings of happiness and well-being is being challenged by the current economic crisis. In its place, we detect the emergence of a new dark and slum imaginary, propagated by both native and global intellectuals-activists. The new imaginary both tests in practice and bears the potential to re-invent Greece as a tourist destination. Not only is the change informed by the European histories of art, slum and dark tourism focusing on middle-class refinement and philanthropy, it also bears the potential to promote Greece as a cultural tourist destination in global value hierarchies in controversial ways.

Key words: activism; dark tourism; epistemology; Europe; Greece; migration; mobility; tourist imaginaries; well-being; worldmaking

Introduction

Keeping the cultures of tourism apart from the socio-political and economic context in which they emerge and flourish betrays analytical oversight – at least, this is what we proceed to argue in this paper that examines the production of tourist imaginaries focusing on the bankrupt Greek state. Media spheres (newspapers, Internet blogging and other journalistic and activist technological scripts) act as popular spyglasses into this context – in fact, we note that, empirically, there is enough to-ing and fro-ing in the cyber-sphere on the so-called 'Grexit' to warrant a study of ideological mobilities in the country's tourist futures. The term 'Grexit' is a word referring to the Greek withdrawal from the Eurozone monetary union, so that the country deals with its public debt – a scenario rejected in 2015 with a referendum in Greece. Dating back to the 2008 global economic crisis, it supported Greece's immediate exit from the Euro and a return to the old currency (drachma) to boost exports and tourism, while discouraging expensive imports that may lead local markets to further decline. Our paper addresses a significant issue in tourism policy that connects to the nature and future of its markets. These markets are already under immense pressure due to the imposition of the 'European troika', a term commonly used to describe a decision group formed by the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to coordinate questions of economic stability and now also monetary harmonisation. We argue that locally-situated responses to globally-imposed troika policies (Robertson,

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1995), point to a radical alteration in the country's image as a tourist destination. For critics of market policies bent on tourism flows, it helps to remember that, as is the case with other island states (Bramwell, 2004), a great part of the Greek economy depends on tourism, so 'doing without' it is not an option (Tsartas, 2004: 70-6; Andriotis, 2004: 115).

Epistemology, methodology and terminology

The changing nature of tourist markets provides a template on which we can unpack ideas of 'gazing' as institutional surveillance (foreign monetary control) and a tourist way of knowing places from afar and while visiting them (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). The epistemological nature and cultural style of gazing suggests that we examine how foreigners (tourists and policy-makers) came to view the country as a 'host' over the last few years under the constraints of the global recession: temporary economic decline in trade and industrial activity. In terms of governance, recessionary pressures currently communicate with a Europe-wide management of cross-border crises such as those triggered by war and ensuing migrations, especially from the Middle East, into the countries of the Mediterranean basin – and Greece is currently such a migration 'hotspot'. This further muddies the waters, promoting rearrangements in host-guest (migrant and tourist) interactions, affecting the ways foreigners of different status, class and income are welcomed in Greece or not; the reasons tourists run away upon arrival in Greece or cancel their pre-booked holidays in the country; and the overlapping contribution of

global political discourses on a future successful 'Grexit' as a window to an alternative, darker tourist future. In common tourist parlance, we see a slow shift from the beach and cultural tourisms for which Greece has become known to dark and slum tourism in urban enclaves that the recession impoverishes more by the day.

To record examples of this shift we look at how visitors equipped with knowledge of the country react to its woes, while retaining their identity as a peculiar blend of tourists-migrants – of professional Fremdenverkhern or 'stranger traffic' (Dann and Parinello, 2009). More precisely, we focus on a blend of visitors, including organic or home-grown intellectuals, international scholars with academic interest in Greece, Greek students abroad and visiting foreign artists-activists. Several overlapping factors affect the nature of their engagement with Greece's recession cultures, but it is worth highlighting one that defines their tourist subjectivity: an inconsistency between their status as customers/visitors and their intimate biographical record (Desforges, 2000), which connects Greece's economic downfall and socio-cultural suffering to their own or their family's experiences. Other such 'involved' tourists with no immediate heritage connections behave in similar ways that alleviate their helplessness as mere spectators of the crisis. Symptomatic of such inconsistencies in status and emotional engagement would be the very denial of all these subjects' tourist activity – virtual or embodied – and its presentation as activism, artistic philanthropy, pilgrimage and the likes. Therefore,

empirically we deal with intersections of tourism, migration and professional mobility (Cohen et.al., 2013; Favell, 2014); methodologically, we track data/testimonies via mobile technologies and new media platforms, such as You Tube, activist blogs and Facebook, thus performing multi-sited research (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Tzanelli, 2015); and conceptually we examine how such combined mobilities point to the formation of new tourist imaginaries of Greece as a destination heading into socio-cultural darkness. We argue that because they do not function outside tourist structures of gazing and economic systems of mobility, such visitors display a form of agency and response to Greece's state identical to the rationale underlining dark tourism markets.

By 'dark tourism' we refer to tourism to sites of disaster, visits to locations wholly or partially motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death (Foley and Lennon, 2000). Irrevocably associated with European modernity's trauma, the Holocaust, such sites are constantly marketed by tourist industries, despite the ethical issues generated by this marketization (Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Cohen, 2011). Our commentary on 'dark tourism' borrows from these ethical debates to make an epistemological point on the uses of memory by our subjects, who perform the pasts invented by tourist and media industries, but while performing them, they change their meaning. In these testimonies we deal with emerging tourist imaginaries, representations of Greek culture that acquire immense institutional force and serve as a means by which

individuals and whole communities come to understand their place in the world (Salazar, 2012: 864). The recent production of dark tourist imaginaries moves from conventional enactments of a reflexive journey to previous epochs (hence, imagined 'sites') of simulated happiness for foreign onlookers and tourists to the enactment of an activist ethic to improve the well-being of Greeks and their new refugee populations, both consigned to living in dire conditions. To define this darkness we borrow from what Miles (2002) terms 'darker tourism', Kaelber 'darkest tourism' (2007) and Peirce (1998) debates in terms of an enactment of experience. Put simply, current tourist imaginaries of Greece look back to individual and collective/national histories that were eroded by time, intentionally modified and romanticised and therefore are today malleable by industries and individual tourists alike. Such tourism-related representations bring to the fore how all viewers of past and ongoing tragedies actively participate in what Hollinshead (2007) recognised as tourism's 'worldmaking' power, its ability to produce realities: if you are 'there' through/in the reality of the image 'and you are "sentient", you are engaging in it' (Hollinshead et.al. 2009: 432).

The paradox of 'thereness' rests in that nobody will definitely go 'there' as a disaster or a political tourist before first visually apprehending the problem. Although such touring into the 'other' via imagery and text might comply with the rules of industrial design of holidays to contribute to our own betterment (as tourists), its moral basis in charity and

volunteer engagement can also alert us to the unequal distribution of resources across the world. At first glance, the tourist guest's education and relaxation clashes with the host's welfare and well-being (Skoll and Korstanje, 2014). But when inspected closely, the introduction of a dark gaze can also set in motion a positive change for Greece in terms of world status. In fact, we note that the shift from pop and even 'kitsch' imaginaries of happiness (the beach, party and film-induced tourisms for which Greece became known after the 1960s) to dark and heritage-inspired ones, might prompt a controversial status upgrade in global tourist markets. On this, we remind readers of how Thurot and Thurot's conception of 'tourism imaginaries' is expressed in advertising. Their archaeology of 'tourist imaginaries' followed, by turns, contestations of aristocratic habitus, a middle-class return to naturalist egalitarian simplicity, more adventurous (gout du risqué) and well-documented journeys by various classes and especially youth, and, finally, voluntourist and edutourist activity (Graburn, 2014 in Tzanelli, 2016). Each of these stages claimed higher moral ground over its predecessors, thus establishing various mobility hierarchies, a phenomenon ubiquitous in contemporary evaluations of tourism as a 'cheap' or 'praiseworthy' activity (McCabe, 2005).

To clarify this transformation in which Greece finds itself, we take readers through three analytical phases: the following section explains the development of native and tourist understandings of Greek 'habitus': institutionally (by family, through schooling and

media representations) inculcated forms of social value that find both embodied (how we perform status, class, gender and ethnicity) and discursive extensions (how we express ourselves). The third section examines interpretations of the current capitalist crisis' roots from abroad. In this section, we provide an account of the Greek crisis and debate in more depth the ways it impacted on native self-perceptions and foreign perceptions of Greece as a tourist destination. The fourth section elaborates on the changing tourist imaginary of Greece by looking at particular types of new mobile subjects from abroad that both provide glances into new global flows into the country and try to affect positively its global image. International reporting partakes in Greece's tourist refashioning as a worldmaking agency that recycles the scripts of international policy-makers, the true authorities of world tourism. Complicit in the production of Greek social realities, these institutions act as tourist mythomoteurs, actors determining 'the manner in which a regime of representation can grow speedily and incrementally (but not necessarily, consciously) to deny other visions of cultural life and other vistas of local/regional/provincial being' (Hollinshead, 2009: 530). We conclude with reflections on the productive aspects of such new representations, both negative and positive.

Media worldmaking and separations of native welfare from tourist well-being

The promotion of Greece as a tourist destination originates in global economies of post-war automobility. With the promotion of charter flights and holiday packages from the

1960s, Greek islands began to be marketed as idyllic destinations for Western hippie youth, with working-class families following the set trail later (Urry, 2002). Opening Greece to foreign markets triggered other social changes within the country, including the ways Greek culture came to view itself through the eyes of its ephemeral incomers, ever more fascinated by its 'exotic' flair (Tsartas, 2004 on tourism; Papadimitriou, 2000 and 2006 on Greek cinematic representations). Concurrent media flows in Greece from the North-Western hemisphere contributed to the production of such mythologies of Greek habitus, with such instant hits as Never on a Sunday (1960) and Zorbas the Greek (1964), adjusting Greek custom to foreign consumer expectations. Cinematic production was complemented with the portrayal of Western tourist-adventurers that would visit the country to experience their personal dream of emotional completion and escape from industrialised modernity (see for example *Shirley Valentine's* (1989) (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000) challenging of patriarchal norms in tourism mobilities) - all the phenomenological points Cohen (1979) discussed in his elaboration on tourist experience.

Under these circumstances, knowing about modern Greece differed little from the old Grand Tourist's epistemological givens, comprised of textbooks on ancient Greek literature and travel books produced by Western travellers in the country. For modern Greeks, however, such encounters with Western modernity introduced a dialogics of identity, a plural interpretation of it that, under media and state control, would be

consolidated into uniform visions of identity. Touristic 'Greekness' did not exist a priori but emerged through the encounter itself, so as to be grafted into enduring formulas by state and non-state agents (tourist and media industries). Media and tourist mobilities 'staged' Greek authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), but the insertion of performances of Greekness for others slowly removed their 'fakeness' from the consciousness of collective memory (Herzfeld, 2005: 3-4). As is the case with other societies undergoing 'delayed modernisation', the essence of Greek 'cultural intimacy' (Herzfeld, 2005) was located in the domestic hearth and the value of the family (Tzanelli, 2011). The new market conditions also dictated the insertion of families into tourist economies, with women occupying low-paid or unpaid roles in the sector (Tsartas and Galani-Moutafi, 2009: 307). But such social realities were masked behind a marketable habitus, which promoted the image of the Greek working-class or peasant beauty and the defiant dancing man of similar standing as tourist staples.

Such stereotypes formed the core of Greek understandings of well-being in post-industrial European contexts, characterised by a progressive decline of social trust (Bauman, 2013). When we consider accounts of happiness and well-being in the social sciences and humanities, we must assess peoples' satisfaction with living standards not as mere judgments but as endorsements: embodiments of their individual and collective views on life qualities, ideals facilitating responses to their lives (Nussbaum, 1988; Sen, 1992,

1999; Haybron, 2008: 32-4). The note on embodiment in social scientific approaches remains significant for an assessment of the qualities of Greek well-being as a simulated but also real condition of happiness: much like any embodied tourist in search of authenticity in their immediate multi-sensory communication with the visited places, people and cultures (Crouch, 2009), Greeks learned to see themselves as social agents at home through their holistic embodied performances of informal socialisation, dancing, drinking and singing (Cowan, 1999).

Greece's experience of twentieth and twenty-first century (post)modernity consolidated this mode of social participation: the economic Renaissance the country experienced after the end of the junta (1974), its incorporation into the European Union (1981), and the ensuing cash inflow from EU developmental programmes (1980s) accelerated its integration into civilizational norms at European and global levels. By turn, this triggered the production and reproduction of a middle class, educated abroad under aesthetically reflexive norms of association (Giddens, 1994). Greeks stopped being mere 'hosts' and began to partake in global tourist, gap year and professional mobilities, unknown to the Zorbas generations that migrated for work and catered for tourists. The emergence of such affluent Greek migrant-tourist mobilities contributed to the solidification of old tourist imaginaries of the Zorbas type, only now embraced and further disseminated globally by Greek migrants and expats via imagery and in emotionally charged rituals of

belonging. But the rapid economic decline of the country in the last decade would also couple such embodied expressivity with an esoteric experience that comprises non-embodied, cognitive speculations of the cultural self (Scheler, 2003: 55; Graburn, 2012). In any case, for the enlarged Greek community of expatriates, migrants and locals, this esoteric self already populated the big screen, Greece's tourist advertising and economy. If capitalist networks acted in this fashion as worldmaking agents, so would Greeks of all walks of life would, albeit in less formalised ways (Hollinshead et. al., 2009).

There are transformative 'continuations' within this phenomenon in new social media spheres today. One of our latest Facebook travels revealed a link to a video in which Greek students from Birmingham dance in the rhythms of Zorba the Greek on campus – a bizarre reaction to the definitive 'No' the 'Greek people' delivered to its 'EU oppressors' during the last vote on the Grexit. The video does justice to the 'dance event', whereby 'individuals publicly present themselves in and through celebratory practices (eating, drinking and talking as well as dancing – and are evaluated by others)' (Cowan, 1990: 4). As dancing is both an experiential site for the performer and a 'sign' for audiences, in which sexuality, gender and other visible traits such as race are embedded, its role in the organisation of a now globalised Greek 'social' merely de- and reterritorializes the fundamental moral values by which Greek culture is kept alive on a

globalised public stage, in which authenticity is constructed for media tourists (MacCannell, 1973, 1989).

Herein lies the fundamental contradiction embedded in the broadcast performance: its trading in non-authenticity reifies the original hybrid histories of Greek habitus, while confirming that the production of post-tourist gazes is not the privilege of culture industries such as film and tourism. (Tzanelli, 2007; Lash and Urry, 1993). Note that such students come from privileged backgrounds in Greece and their performance carries the irony of dark tourist kitschification, because it casts a 'second look' into a marketised working class and peasant style already 'tamed', refined and de-classed as a tourist product by global media industries – a common practice also in consuming 'light' versions of dark/heritage tourism (Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Holliday and Potts, 2012: 74-75). The additional ethnic touch of Zorbas and Mercouri-inspired performances (the former is specimen of marginal Cretan habitus, closely connected to histories of Greece's colonisation by the non-European Ottoman Turks; the latter associated his histories of urban working-class prostitution (see Tzanelli, 2011)) also contributes to connections to dark tourist kitschification. So, the performance is not about class but status differentiation: the students possess stylistic taste and reflect anew on already 'lowly' touristified Greek aesthetics. Far from commencing as a profit-making initiative, the digitised performance allows for the transformation of an informal social practice

(folk/pop dancing) into a formal mediatised discourse (a chorus of dancing Zorba students making a 'movie' for global viewers/virtual travellers) (Kristeva, 1980: 15). For Greeks, it is all in the body and its soul, which produces emotional labour (Hochchild, 1983) via its habitus permutations (Bourdieu, 1977: 214). Notably, the actual video was produced in 2012 and was posted on YouTube on Greek Independence Day (Mack, 25 March 2012), signalling for young people a performative Grexit as symbolic liberation from troika oppression outside Greece. It is questionable if the dance event was a nationalist gesture; in all likelihood, it was escapist creativity mocking at dead heritage custom – an alternative tourist modernity (Ateljevic, 2008).

There have been similar performances more recently within Greece under more stringent conditions. One might compare the YouTube video to the dancing and celebration scenes at Exarchia (one of Athens' central squares in which demonstrations take place), when the first referendum voting results were announced (No Comment TV, 06 July 2015). But for this adaptation of by now touristified Greekness to happen on the screen, embodied Greek 'happiness' has to lose its holistic aesthetic-sensory and embodied qualities – to turn into an image, not always followed by sound (Belting, 2011). The performing Greek, who apprehends the world through combined sensory stimuli and conveys it to others in equally multi-sensory ways – part of the widely advertised 'unforgettable holidays' to Greece as a combined culinary, audio-visual and olfactory adventure – has given way by

necessity to the visual artefact of Greek sociality. If we consider Belting's (2011: 90) observations on the pivotal role of art in contemporary technomorphic interpretations of the world, such broadcast images of well-being mediate between the world of a dying Greek happiness and a growing (imported) fascination with the death of Greek society. Instead of examining these phenomena as isolated exceptionalism, we place them in the social thanatologies produced by the present crisis.

The view from above: from native 'dark' gazing to foreign slumming

In spite of the Greek students' 'celebrations', a bailout process in the background slowly transforms the country into a foreign protectorate. The economy of well-being based on mirth in one's leisure and holiday time has been replaced by a new one, based on unemployment and exploitation (Beck, 2009). Obligatory analyses locate genealogies of the present capitalist failure in transatlantic centres: liberal voices claim that the crisis was triggered by the avarice or greed defining the capitalist system, but also by acts of populism with which Greece is historically not entirely unfamiliar, given the pro-Western economic policies of its twentieth century dictatorships (Herzfeld, 2002). In this context, TV programs and Internet sites have little room but to also proclaim a state of emergency and the onset of Greece's 'dark futures' (Urry, 2007: 271-90). Tourism originally promoted the rational significance of leisure, but the outcomes of its institution as a basic right in post-war Europe were broader: people's rest to recover from hard work also

served as a platform for enhancing social ties and promoting welfare policies, the philosophical root of well-being (Dann and Liebman Parrinello, 2009). In a Fordist economy of scale, such rituals were paramount, further ensuring long-term stability of income for the workforce. In this context, as Sennett argues, being mobile is prioritised at the expense of one's duty to be a 'good citizen', especially because the state is not oriented towards the protection of citizenry anymore (Sennett, 2011). However, for an assessment of shifting tourist imaginaries in the Grexit context we must also ask different questions: do the natives (indigenous and migrant Greeks) wish to display the signs of poverty as 'network capital' (Larsen and Urry, 2008), to be served with compassionate responses by tourists and NGOs as the only option provided by worldmaking authorities? This worldmaking script is common in slum and dark tourism business around the world, so it cannot be passed in silence (Baptista, 2012).

We will stand for a socio-culturally rooted conception of well-being, as well as for its significance in representations and self-presentations in tourist contexts. The darkness and the guilty landscapes of poverty might be significant aspects of old Greek mentalities and representations, but it is wrong to assume their dominance in a progressively individualised modern Greek society along the North Western European and American lines. The seeds of this epistemological frame are detected in anthropological accounts of the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s, which, although focusing on gendered conduct

(Campbell, 1964; Herzfeld, 1985), describe the same phenomenon of individual self-expression in public and its involvement in official Greek inflections of modernity. The crystallisation of kefi (mirth), tsachpinia (coyness) and kalabouri (joking) as fundamental principles of the good life and their mediated projections in cultural industries such as media and tourism also point to a holistic conception of well-being that clashes with imported iconic discourses of dark slumming. Therefore, the recent dissemination of depressive images of slum futures and poverty in global media platforms might be forecasting a socio-cultural change, by 'transporting' global viewers of the Greek drama back to the early twentieth century, when, after three crippling wars (the First World War, the Greek-Turkish War (1919-1921) and the Second World War), Greece was truly transformed into a country of dispossessed migrants and slums.

Let us backtrack a bit to explain the rationale of contemporary mediatised reactions, without resorting to prioritisations of media theory. Aspects of the 2008 political backstage to the Greek crisis were connected to the failure of the conservative party Nea Dimokratia to restructure the country's labour markets (Papadimitriou, 2009: 51-2; Tzanelli, 2011: chapter 6). The promise of restructuring revived the promise of inclusion in Europe and its civilised histories but also native ideals of the good life, sustained with good salaries, pensions and holidays. Such links were challenged from 2010, when the economy experienced another economic dip that would push Greece to borrow more,

accumulate a debt impossible to repay and, under a left-wing government (SYRIZA), respond to its debtors' threats with proposals to exit the common EU currency and the EU (Grexit, 2014-15). There is so much media talk about the proliferation of disorder and fostering of all sorts of 'terrorism' in the country (including union strikes and protests) that we do not have to explain in detail why, for tourist returnees, booking holidays to a Greek island is a de facto bad idea.

If not cautiously unpacked, such statements reverse Fukuyama's (1992) reflections in the End of History, the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government that shunts radical alternatives in a conservative deadlock: either our history terminates in evolutionary terms, or extremism terminates its industrial human capital. There are other voices arguing that tourism has ended in new global environments in the sense that we cannot separate it from other forms of spatio-temporal and functionally differentiated movements, such as migration, business travel, technological services and skills – that we live in the age of nomadology (Hannam, 2008; Hannam et.al. 2006). Unfortunately, observations that tourism ends where various forms of social conflict thrive (Korstanje and Clayton, 2012; Korstanje, Skoll and Timmermann, 2014) are very close to contemporary Greek realities. In this vein, risk, far from reducing discrepancy among stakeholders, is streamlined into tourism safety and surveillance to exploit the conflict – a true troika-Grexit plot (Tzanelli, 2015). This discourse is countered

by some nations which use their heritage to improve their living conditions, but, as we explain below, various actors that operate in disorganised capitalist environments today are co-active innovators able to achieve more than the central government does (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009).

From the start of the global recession the end of 'happy' Greek tourism manifested in bundles of endogenous (strikes and protests against cuts, welfare retrenchment, poverty-induced troika policies and rising levels of xenophobia against both tourists and migrants) but also exogenous mobilities (terrorism allegedly exclusively of alien origins). All of them retain the nomadological attributes of strangeness by reference to privileged and disenfranchised aliens respectively. As press reports suggest (see below), gone was the peace of island beaches, upon which tourists would increasingly find migrants (alive or dead) washed ashore (usually from Greece's archenemy, Turkey). (Bearden, 29 May 2015); Acropolis tours for cultural tourists, who would be blocked by labour strikers and protesters against heritage privatisation (Smith, 27 January 2011 and 16 March 2014); and luxury urban tourisms that hordes of homeless beggars and emergency food provision stalls would disrupt with invocations of consumerist guilt. Contemporary Greek social landscapes tend to be at odds with otherwise persistent tourism trends in the country (beach and heritage holidays), but one thing is sure: the clash is here to stay. The (justified) fear is that Greece might enjoy short tourism renaissances (Lowen, 25 June

2014), but its slide into a 'Third World' purgatory will eventually coerce it to redefine its global market presence. Given constant invocations of Second World War 'debts' (that Germany refuses to discharge) by both the country's leadership and common folk (Reuters, 06 April 2015), it seems that the recession promoted a resentful retrenchment into past suffering that matches Greece's contemporary disenfranchised landscapes so well.

We have no interest in contributing to post-neoliberal redefinitions of Greek tourism, but plenty in providing an understanding of its worldmaking genealogies within and without Greece. The aforementioned performative protests already sit comfortably at a crossroads between dark (of war, famine and suffering) and slum (poverty and normally urban) tourisms in that they have become the country's enduring representational core on global media platforms (Gopal, 31 March 2015), its 'worldmaking' end product. In many ways, global audiences have already become trained to gaze on Greek anger, despair and poverty, with all the ethical issues this may provoke (Baptista, 2012), when common Greeks adhere, where possible, to some everyday pleasures as before. Global reporting on the crisis portrays a society at its final gasp, ready to be sacralised in marketable images of begging, death and 'endemic' terrorism. But do global audiences really care?

The new cultural tourisms: darkness and aesthetic reflexivity in new mobile subjects

In this section we endeavour to connect media representations of risk and darkness to active participation in the production of new worldmaking scripts by the very global nomads Hannam (2008) discusses in his paper on nomadology and mobility. We do not examine how these actions may unintentionally valorise nationalist trends or question whether they betray indifference towards current refugee flows into the country, with the ensuing xenophobia these may support – these are valuable themes that should inform the scope of a different paper. Also, given the socio-cultural profile, occupation and political commitment of such individual worldmaking agents we present below, the assumption of indifference towards the suffering of new migrations from the Middle East in Greece would be both offensive and inaccurate. Better, we stress how the identity of such relatively affluent socio-cultural groups from abroad 'errs' on an activist style that social movement theorists have termed 'radical habitus': a particular type of social action that questions social norms and values and grants activist groups with a form of pedagogical agency, a so-called 'aesthetic reflexivity' constitutive of bourgeois radicalism (Beck et.al., 1994; Crossley, 2003: 45). In plain terms, these groups, which visit Greece virtually and terrestrially in various combinations, display a middle-class ethic of care for the welfare of native populations, as was the case with the original individuals, state institutions and NGOs involved in the improvement of the living conditions in the Global North's slums (Seaton, 2012), but with a creative twist. The agency of such activist-nomad-tourists is to prognosticate and prevent such a representational slide of Greek

culture into the hands of industries, to proffer an alternative, if utopian, future, in which

Greeks are not characterised by defeatism but emerge as co-creators of their country's

tourist image. The activism is, in other words, 'radical' in that it suggests the promotion

of a new worldmaking process, via an imaginary of heroism and resilience, which can

feed into industrial calibrations of cultural tourism.

Such professionals are highly mobile and networked subjects, in that they may participate

in local activist cultures in person, travel back and forth to Greece to conduct

ethnographies and maintain active digital profiles in social sites, such as Facebook. Where

time constraints limit some of those professionals' ability to change reality in particular

geographical contexts, the deterritorialised Internet accelerates and globally disseminates

visions of alternative futures. Doing things via digital networking contradicts the

'capitalist and nation-centred order of things, emphasizing transnational actors' resistance

and freedom in [transnationalism's] conceptualization of "agency"' (Favell et.al. 2007:

15). Of course, critical voices may pronounce the danger that, regardless of their good

intentions, such mobile subjects may now flock into the urban and rural enclaves of

Greece as a version of the global volunteer or politically committed slum tourist, who is

co-opted by neoliberal governmental agencies to play the welfare worker (Favell, 2015:

166), or who accumulates personal cultural capital but leaves little of it behind (Wearing,

2001). There is no way to provide definitive answers to any of these questions, only to

stress that such commitment requires time and effort and seems to currently help in small ways.

The first example of the changing atmosphere is provided by an extraordinary gesture attributed to renowned Chinese artist and activist, Ai WeiWei. Weiwei displays a mobile identity as a professional and a travel imaginary as an artist whose style conforms to the very European arts that immortalised death and darkness (Tzanelli, 2013: chapter 5). The son of one of China's most famous poets (Ai Qing) who was imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution, he carried his father's activism through his artwork, prompting the Chinese authorities to imprison him and the government to confiscate his passport. To date, the politics of Weiwei's artwork, which, despite the CCP's hostility retain a left-wing sentiment, complement his digital activism: for a long time he maintained a blog from which he critiqued the government until his arrest on 3 April 2011 on allegations of financial misdemeanours. Blogs and websites supporting the communist regime airbrushed his Olympic contribution (the Bird's Nest conceptualisation is attributed to him), presenting him as a difficult individual, a liar and a trouble-maker without a cause (ibid.)). His more recent release allowed him to travel the world again, setting up new art projects and slowly resuming his combative politics on and offline. Amongst those, his recent announcement that he will set up a studio on the Greek island of Lesbos, where he also called for the construction of a monument dedicated to migrants and refugees, created

international commentary. Posing today next a UNHCR worker, he promises that his studios in Beijing and Berlin would be involved in the production of new material focusing on the crisis, and that the Lesbos studio would be occupied by six to ten of his students (Neunedorf, 4 January 2016). His recent pose on one of Lesbos' beaches as a corpse with his face down, emulates the dead migrant child washed ashore in 2016, so his intervention is already based on emulations of dark gazing upon contemporary realities and within himself, like a committed tourist (Keabler, 2008). Hence, as is the case with other subjects presented below, Weiwei already posits tourism as a justice issue in consideration of disparities, racism and corporate power's role in destructions of well-being (Fennell, 2008: 221-224).

When such commitment develops in international policy coordination voids, it can transform into an exploitation tool – in any event, it suggests a return to the principles of what Seaton (1996) has termed thanatopsis as the gaze upon the dead and death that subliminally induces in the gazer pleasure for escaping such a fate. Thanatopsis has been pivotal in the consolidation of all types of thanatourism or dark tourism (Seaton, 2002). It has informed the artistic sentiment of travellers to various sites of mourning, devastation and violence since the birth of Western modernity, and more recently the digital work of artists operating in the context of powerful audio-visual industries, such as film (Tzanelli, 2014, 2015). Weiwei's involvement in the politics of Lesbos, currently

one of the main entry points to Europe for refugees, especially from war-ridden countries such as Syria, involves sharing images on Instagram from the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island to expose the migrants' difficult living conditions, as well as a video of aid workers helping people off a rubber dinghy as they arrive from Turkey to the Greek island. Notably, his gesture prompted other unregulated initiatives, including one orchestrated by Avaaz.com, a global community campaigning in 15 languages, served by a core team on 6 continents and thousands of volunteers, to circulate a petition online. The petition is accompanied by images of a Jesus-like volunteer saving a child from the sea (Avaaz.com, undated).

The initiative prompted the compilation of a formal letter to address the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, which on February 2016 was countersigned by 236 international scholars from all over the world, nominating the 'Aegean Solidarity Movement (ASM)' for the award. The ASM is an umbrella term including 17 exclusively local migrant/refugee-relief groups formed by anonymous volunteers from the Aegean islands with the participation of many foreigners. The nomination is also supported by two Nobel Laureates, Archibishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and the Economist Sir Christopher Pissaridis, and 700,000 citizens, who provided their signature through the online Avaaz petition. The petition is endorsed by British newspaper The Guardian and a series of renowned social scientists from the Anglophone and Francophone academia: Professor

Richard Sennett, Maurice Bloch, Anthony Giddens and Nikos Mouzelis of London School of Economics, Professor Margaret MacMillan of Oxford University, Professor Michael Herzfeld of Harvard University, Professor Molly Greene of Princeton University, Professor Katherine Fleming of New York University, the Fellows of the British Academy Emeritus Professor Marilyn Strathern of Cambridge University and Professor Joanna Bourke of Birbeck College, Professor Costas Douzinas of Birbeck College, Professor Mark Mazower of Columbia University, Professor Étienne Balibar of Université de Paris X – Nanterre, Professor Michelle Perrot from Université Paris 7-Diderot (France); as well as distinguished members of the Greek academia, such as Nikiforos Diamadouros, member of the Academy of Athens and ex-European Ombudsman Professor, the Rector of the University of the Aegean Professor Stefanos Gritzalis, Emeritus Professors Anna Frangoudaki, Kostas Gavroglu, Antonis Liakos and Konstantinos Tsoukalas from the University of Athens. From this long list we single out a couple of scholars, who present the two ends of the highly networked 'tourist type': LSE Regius Professor of Economics, Sir Christopher Pissarides and Ernest E. Monrad Professor of the Social Sciences at Harvard, Michael Herzfeld. Their significance as networked professionals, home-grown intellectuals and world travellers with self-declared emotional and intellectual bonds with urban and rural Greece makes them stand out of the pool of other physically mobile and digitally networked younger colleagues, who nevertheless stand behind the compilation of the letter but are also worldmaking

agents in the (self-)making. The greatest part of this contingent (not identified by name here for personal reasons) works from academic outposts within Greece. Some of these scholars hold academic jobs in peripheral institutions in places once known for their domestic and international tourism. Their involvement in other voluntary work in refugee camps is an interest shared with a frequent foreign visitor and researcher in the country, Professor Heath Cabot, from the College of the Atlantic, the only participant to be mentioned here by name (Cabot, 25 February 2016). The involvement of native academics reminds us that all tourist imaginaries are produced via worldmaking practices upheld by national institutions (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn, 2012) – in this instance, individual citizens both reproduce empathic ideologies and self-presentations and create new empowering collective narratives in the absence of state welfare. Let us not forget that it was not difference that created tourism but 'the extension of belonging, the prospect of taking up a place in the new national cultures that beckoned them' (Franklin, 2004: 298).

Both scholars provide written endorsements to the project of relevance in our study: whereas Cypriot-born and Athens-networked Pissaridis praises Greek islanders for 'forgetting their impoverished state and the humiliations they have gone through in recent times…standing alone as the bastions of what Europe stands for – the caring state that puts human dignity above everything else', renowned anthropologist of Greece Herzfeld

stresses that 'as a child of refugees', he understands the importance 'of looking beyond ethnic or religious identity to the humanity of those who suffer the indignity and pain of violent displacement' and of the Nobel-nominated islanders 'at a time when Europe is beset by racist doctrines and practices' (for the official Facebook announcement of the letter see Kostopoulou, 6 February 2016). Such endorsements are statements in support of peripheral Greek well-being (islanders saving refugees from the sea), worldmaking action that is currently also being supported by global media networks, such as the Greek Radio Television (ERT) and the British Guardian. Not only does their discursive potency signify a return to the familiar romantic tourist script (a la Urry, 2002) of urban nostalgia for a diminishing rural purity of intention (a la Williams, 1999), they promote a 'flight to the virtual' in the hope 'of reviving structures of community relations, solidarity and reciprocity' (Yar, 2014: 63). Close to embracing the conditio humana or utopian paradise xenophobic national retrenchment and the alleged emptiness of beach tourisms threaten in Mediterranean countries, such as Greece, the endorsements produce together with Avaaz's images of salvation the pictorial recovery of pure human nature we tend to associate with the great European arts (Henning, 2002: 173, 178). As is the case with Weiwei's actions, the world picture this group drafts is based on the very principles of 'making things right', of 'paying a debt' to the suffered ancestry and its contemporary reminders in the peasants' act of kindness. The idea(l) of discharging a debt, which guides the narratives of European modernity's Holocaust trauma (Bauman, 1989), is also a

marketing arc in the production of dark tourism in diasporic communities around the world (Mowatt, R. and Chancellor, 2011). But as blends of Greek and foreign professionals provide the worldmaking script in this instance, we could safely note that one of the initiative's unintended consequences has been the production of a new dark tourist imaginary that might not escape the marketing structures of tourism. How do all these scholars work on site, if not by using the very automobility structures organised by tourist industries, after all? The narrative of the self-sacrificial Greek native is embedded in the very 'human condition' of the new worldmaking script. This outlines the image of a plodding worker (Arendt's (1958) Homo Faber) set to rectify an axiological (ethical) damage inflicted upon post-industrial societies by war, genocide and migration/rootlessness. This working human should be gazed upon and scrutinised in global media spheres, if (s)he is to make a real difference to their social world (see also MacCanell, 2011 on the ethics of the gaze). But this precisely how dark/slum tourism commenced.

Conclusion

Korstanje and Escalona (2015) stress that despite the enthusiasm in considering the globe as a mobile space, only 1% of the total population is legally or financially allowed to travel. Though illustrative, the concept of mobility rests on conditional foundations, with privileged groups being more mobile than the disenfranchised masses, or the latter

moving unwillingly and with suffering (Cresswell, 2006, 2010). Hospitality is granted only to those who have financial resources to travel. What easily moves from disenfranchised socio-cultures is the image of community – albeit this is an image subjected to cosmetic beautification to match Western utopias. The problem with unregulated 'social tourism' is its propensity to promote living 'guilty landscapes' (Reijinders, 2009). By this we do not refer to the original touristified sites of suffering that are today promoted as 'dark tourist' destinations but to the living sites of poverty on which affluent tourists can unload their guilt. Although under a tight troika regime Greek cities present signs of poverty and immobility, their intimate enclaves (of friendship gatherings or family get-togethers) can also adhere to a different politics of well-being based on camaraderie and support. It is problematic to subject these to a global romantic gaze of the tourist-guest – which is why, our examples flag ambivalence and continuities between the present activist ethos of Greece's post-referendum spaces and practices of mobility informing tourist imaginaries, hence projected consumption regimes. The relevance of native conceptions of well-being to market policies is contingent upon neoliberal policy-making that today preys on social intimacies through new surveillance technologies, much like the European troika's rationale of economic surveillance.

Our paper highlighted how, decades ago media industries contributed to reifications of modern Greek happiness in tourist contexts but now, alongside the true authorities of new

worldmaking practices, the global markets, they threaten to alter Greek happiness' epistemic basis due to the economic crisis. In fact, the shift in tourist imaginaries from those based on conceptions of 'lowly' (ethnic, working-class and peasant) happy and embodied habitus to serious, dark, ocular/digital and contemplative activism already suggests a controversial, if much-needed, 'promotion' of Greek tourist imaginaries on a European value hierarchy. With an eye on the impossibility of fair representation without media expositions of disaster, we point to transnational policy-making of the troika as the real source of this controversial change. But this is the theme of a different paper. Instead, our analytical enquiry concludes with the observation that culturally-bound notions of well-being are part of an interrogation into alternative (to Western) paths of modernity via tourist encounters. As tourist futures inevitably constitute our focus in an unpredictable globe, it helps to note that such interrogations are always dialogically produced, so an exploration of Greek epistemologies of well-being is bound to communicate with worldmaking authorial scripts and actors. As a major worldmaking agent, tourism ought to promote equitable interactions between host and guest. It helps, as a postscript to stress that refashioning Greek habitus as an esoteric experience along the lines of what took place in other world societies under non-development, can also lead to the end of cross-cultural exchange and its replacement with withdrawal and resentment towards the other.

Acknowledgments

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