

A Book Review: Envisioning Eden: Mobilizing Imaginaries in Tourism and Beyond

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Abstract

Envisioning Eden is one of those books one may read with a delightful satisfaction. Concerning author's experience as ethnographer in Indonesia, it focuses on the circulation of identities in an ever-mobile and globalized world. If the nature of tourism consists in the circulation of subjects, bodies and identities new boundaries should be renegotiated. The globalization, Salazar adds, joined to marketer discourse that the globe has no margins, but indeed a closer look reveals the contrary. The local voices erect by means of conflict. The world not only evidences a very complex mixture but also have specific boundaries and local agents. Certainly these limits are reminded by the material asymmetries produced by tourism and mass-consumption. What does the tourism literature need a book of this caliber?

Keywords: Eden; Tourism; Cultural studies; Tourist; Imaginaries; Sociology; Anthropology

Introduction

Its goals are aimed at discussing how the narratives of leisure are constructed and negotiated to be externally imposed to all involving stakeholders. By illustrating how peripheral destination becomes globalized space of phantasy for the imperial-eye, these spaces of pleasure should be controlled by the imposition of logic of immobility. The ideological power of tourism consists in making believe the non-western people that the better is out where they stand. The paradox lies in the fact while first-world tourists envision commercial heaven in the paradisiacal destinations; local inhabitants need to migrate by the adoption of a powerful value-laden discourse which over-valorizes the industrial style of life. The process of globalization works by two contrasting trends: tourism and migration.

Another point which merits to be discussed is the methodology of the research. At a first glance, the text is based on his ethnographies in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and Arusha, Tanzania. Unlike the experiments conducted in controlled environment (laboratories), studies of globalization are subject to speculations and abstract configurations. To the question how can we examine globalization in an empirical basis, Salazar acknowledges that the narratives are replicated at time visitors heard the tour guides as story-taller agents. This exhibits a clear problem for the research design simply because ethnography goes beyond the speech of key informants. Sometimes, interviewees are unfamiliar with their behavior or may lie when the ethnographer interferes in slippery matters. We have no details on the role of ethnographers, if this is neither covert, nor further explanation is given why these cultures have been selected for fieldwork.

Quite aside from this, Salazar explains that moving activates a series of contacts, experiences and crossing-motilities whose effects activate other forms of social upward. One of the problems the theory of mobility presents is the euro-centrism to think our current ways or modes of displacement are more mobile than others developed in ancient world. The labor requirement are fixed and expanded from the center to the periphery as well as the geographies of leisure. Millions workers annually abandon their metropolis to enjoy from underdeveloped tourist destinations. This operates as an allegory that allows the imagination of landscapes. To what extent we are really mobile is one point of entry in the discussion Salazar likes to re-situate

by combating long-established prejudices. Illegal migrants, homeless vagrants and many others else are unable to travel abroad or spending their wages for experiencing a memorable holidays. This suggests that cultural encounters seem to be exceptions than norms.

Nation state builds their legitimacy according to the degree of controlled-mobility their citizens have, but in context of uncertainty or catastrophe, the disciplinary mechanism of control interrelates the subject by reducing its mobility. The process of post 9/11 securitization evinced that globalization created two types of mobilities which range from openness for some nationalities and isolation for others. One of the merits of this book was the discussion on the influence exerted by imaginaries to produce experiences and expectances. The act of imagining implies the creation of a mirror between the self and the otherness. Why West is prone to produce imaginaries in a hyper mobile world?.

A tentative answer on this rests on the idea that flows and mobility as well as the global spaces both generate is not based on randomness. These global forces are produced by a Centre and distributed to the periphery to legitimate a specific social hierarchy, or territorial distinction among human beings. The process of circulation is based on ongoing negotiation where the local and global struggle to impose their meanings.

Salazar goes on to accept that

"I want to unravel some of the mechanisms that turn tourism into an icon of both the global and the local. I do this by tracing the historical and semiotic making of tourism imaginaries, while keeping the very material effects of these processes in view. A currently fashionable metaphor like flow, flux, mobility, and movement hint at instability and uncertainty,

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but tourism sells meaning and experience by creating essentialized representation of people and places in an eroticizing and static frame”.

From our end, this finely-grained work is oriented to explain the connection of tourism and myth-producers with phantasies. The author’s vast experience in ethnographies alludes to the study of tourism imaginaries as “issues of power” controlled by an invisible hand that encourages mobility and inter-culturalism. What is not clear in the book is the connection of these imaginaries with conflict. The financial dependence of Indonesia respecting to tourism cemented the possibilities to face terrorist attacks. The Bali’s bombs in 2002 and 2005 jointly major disasters affected seriously this destination since many reservations were suddenly cancelled.

In earlier studies we have argued that tourism is a nuanced form of terrorism. In this respect, Salazar not only ignores the historical evolution of terrorism but also gives simple descriptions of his studied communities which are very hard to orchestrate in an all-encompassing explanation. Salazar’s insight of bombing in Bali and Indonesia are naïve and shows serious problem to understand the historical roots between terrorism and tourism. This book review attempts not to criticize Salazar the man, but to fulfill the gap about the attraction of terrorists for tourism. Neither cultural studies nor mobility-research can explain why tourists are important for terrorist cells. To shed light on this puzzle, we have to come back to the industrial stage of America and the unionization process.

The mid of XIX century found Europe with serious economic imbalances. Millions migrants arrived to America in quest of new lands and opportunities to prosper. Nonetheless, the working conditions in this promising country were far from what have been imagined by European workers. The capital-owners monopolized the security of their property by the nation-state. The workforce, at the same time, struggled to gain better wages and less working hours but the strike was not a legal option. Anarchist activists, coming from Italy and Germany, not only planned but also perpetrated terrorist attacks against the political power. According to the degree of violence generated, they were traced, jailed and deported in few years, but their ideology never was effaced from the industrial America’s heart.

In parallel, other anarchists opted to organize the struggle of workers for a rapid unionization that protects their interests. Of course, we must accept that worker union claims cemented the possibility for us to enjoy mass-tourism no less truth is the fact terrorism was of importance in such a stage. Basically, terrorism and tourism have their differences but keep many commonalities. Sociologically speaking, the

state exerted the violence to expel the terrorists toward its boundaries at the time their ideology was adopted as the main value of capitalist-ethos. What beyond the borders was called a terrorist attack; inside received another nomenclature, strike. Not only is the exploitation of the others to negotiate with State but the surprise factor valid tactics employed in terrorism and worker unions. It is truth that the process of globalization made a wider world without frontiers liberating terrorism from its cage. Like a vaccine, which is an inoculated virus, terrorism persists in the modern division of labor and the dichotomy between leisure and work. Once broken the boundaries that contained terrorism, it was set free to all nations of the world. The violence is a deseperated try to restore the lost boundaries [1,2]. When started this?. During 90s United States issued a set of uncontrolled credits to the world to encourage the development. These loans were never accrued by solicitant nations. Instead, developed and underdeveloped nations were subject to a financial dependency from banking system. The crash of 2008, which showed the lack of tangible plan to face the economic crisis, accelerated the collapse of capitalism. Terrorism and conflicts serve to revitalize the global economy of mass-consumption and the loans issued by international business corporations. We live in a world of spectacle and disaster.

In perspective, Comaroff [3] explain brilliantly how the late capitalism altered the geography of cultures and states by globalizing the rights of some ethnic minorities to gain some monetary benefits. Although, they live better than their ancestors by the legalization and commercialization of their identities, lore and tradition, the fact is that serious conflicts with nation-state surfaced. The ideology of capitalism makes to believe local aboriginals they are special, unique and exotic, this means, a ethno-merchandise to be visually consumed by the international tourist demands. The self-determination, by which the industry of heritage works, causes derived ethnic-conflicts as civil wars, ethnic cleansing and genocides. Not surprisingly, at the time the ethno-merchandise is globalized to the tourist’s taste, more local riots emerge. It is the time to revisit the idea that tourism is the peace-keeper we originally thought.

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