

Dangerous Others, Insecure Societies

Michaelis Lianos, Editor (London: Ashgate, 2013, 174 pp.; £55 hbk; ISBN: 978-1-4094-4399-5)

Whilst representations of otherness are manifest and broadly applied (and misapplied) to groups around the globe, with various perspectives well documented in the social sciences, it remains a slippery term. Michaelis Lianos, Professor of Sociology at the University of Rouen-Haute Normandie, France, rather than combining various perspectives on otherness, has in a edited book brought together sociologists, social philosophy, social anthropologists, and political scientists to more narrowly address how “insecurity” has become a constituent part of “otherness.” In his introduction, Lianos explains the structural links that turn postindustrial societies in times of economic austerity and political turmoil “towards fearing cultural, racial, religious or socioeconomic externality” (p. 2). From insecurity in “multicultural,” globalized, networked societies such as Greece to the insecurity of emancipation to citizenship and otherness, various perspectives in this book offer a dynamic and convergent picture of otherness and the representations of dangerousness now associated with it.

This may seem paradoxical for tourism scholars, many whom would argue that the fear of otherness is what makes travel and tourism attractive. The tourism industry can mobilize seductive tourism imaginaries through immense institutional and organizational forces that reinforce otherness, since global players have learned to profit on social organization and relations by naming, domesticating, and making familiar the other for the middle classes. These splitting and naming processes reinforce otherness and create attraction (i.e., slum tourism), but also security and safety issues for tourists whom are often merely cogs. Dennis O’Rourke’s *Cannibal Tours* (1988) documentary film by Australian director and cinematographer is a case in point, with the “cannibals” staging their backwardness so that tourists can defend their own position. Likewise, by embedding the fixed role of guests (the interacting) and hosts (the interacted)

into the fabric of the tourism system, it reproduces a form of social organization that is profitable, but involves little intersection, overlap, and collaboration. Whether driven by institutional forces for efficiency and profit, appeasement for insider groups, or an expression of individual’s own fear and search for capital, splitting processes has risen to become major organizing principle of social relations in tourism imaginaries. Within these imaginaries, internal complexities are delimited, where market and nonmarket relationships are defined by fear, creating a link between insecurity and otherness. Shedding light on the contemporary cultures of fear and risk in relation to the other, the book, upon a deep reading, opens up a forum for future debates on tourism’s relationship to otherness.

While the book largely addresses exclusion from full citizenship within a European context, it does suggest that the host–guest, tourist–other distinction, which has installed itself more in to the discourses and practices of everyday life, can lead to codified hospitality provision and the management of behaviors and expectations as tourists and locals are often told how to behave and interact. The book, by drawing on varying disciplines, notes how capitalist relations of production can reinforce, reproduce, and solidify mutual distance, with those who can’t “develop similar reflexes” or “adhere to behaviours that revolve around the same axes of competition” (p. 2) being treated differently by institutions. This may be true in destinations where multinational institutions are given a free reign, because they are often allowed to regulate insecurity and otherness on behalf of tourists by keeping “impeding” locals out, and only using those others as units of facilitation, without equitable networks of exchange. Others may become obstacles to the values and lifestyles of these imaginaries, assert a position of nonadherence, or refuse to accept a subordinate role may become associated with insecurity. The book also suggests that the marginalized other lacks sufficient

cultural capital to reduce the inequality of exchange with tourists. In an interesting debate, the book in my reading suggests that tourists may increasingly find themselves portrayed as other, with Lianos noting that “everyone is at some level an Other” (p. 5). Given how tourism imaginaries are ordered, denying equitable exchange, native people or destination residents seeking empowerment may begin to see the tourist as other. Recent calls for Chinese mainland tourists to be geographically limited to shopping malls near border gates in Hong Kong, fed-up Venetians asking whether tourists have finally gotten out of hand, slum tourism protests in Mumbai, and a recent *Time* cover story about tourists-turned homeless in Bangkok mean otherness and relative fear of tourists themselves has become an issue for many communities.

Whether associated with fear or desire, the book illuminates ways we can coexist with and relate to the other. Rather than expecting governments and institutions to facilitate understanding through regulation, education, and codes of conduct, many of the authors call for creativity, ethics, and trust to break the hegemonic “commonsense” of distinctions such as the “set in” social relations of the host and guest. Cash, in chapter eight, argues that all sorts of impossibilities are possible, because individuals can emerge through and as part of entangled intra-relating, and thereby break the logic of the predetermined. He calls for alternative imaginaries

that make available “competing reality-principles” that can be individually realized. The chapters often pay attention to particular experience of individuals who rethink their habits to get caught up within and between flows, networks, and systems, utilizing “cracks” in social relations, spaces, times, and activities to enable individuals to find new ways to structure their experiences so as to deny and resist the social determinations of modern society and an overpowering systems. The book, by illuminating connections between identities, imaginaries, belongings, and geographies, suggests that we can no longer view the host and guest as independent objects waiting to be discovered.

In recommending the book to researchers and postgraduate students, I caution that tourism and tourists are neither mentioned nor addressed. I do argue that the book allows researchers to share a sense of difference with the other that extends beyond the realms of prevailing language of hegemonic tourist discourse, which often merely validates the tourist–host encounter. By drawing upon implications for the development of accountability, responsibility, and sustainable practices, it encourages all of us to attend to, work through and with differences that make a difference.

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