The Impact of Coronavirus on Religious Tourism: Is this the End of Pilgrimage?

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The present paper, attends to the theme of COVID-19 and its negative effects on the tourism and pilgrimage industries. To be honest, although conclusive findings on this topic are premature in view of the velocity of facts, no less true seems to be that COVID-19 reaffirms a tendency originally stipulated just after 9/11 and declaration of the War On Terror by Bush's administration. COVID-19 not only has shocked the world cancelling international flights, closing borders and airspaces, making irreparable damages to tourism and hospitality but it has operated on a much deeper level, developing a culture of fear, where 'other' is feared and neglected. This point, which was envisaged by the founding parents of sociology, today can be empirically tested with daily facts. At a closer look, hospitality and pilgrimage are inevitably entwined. Hence the thesis this paper holds is that COVID-19 accelerates a moral crisis in Western civilisation that leads *the sacred-law of hospitality* (at least as the Greeks imagined it) to its death.

Key Words: Covid-19, pandemics, tourism, hospitality, pilgrimage.

Introduction

The present paper, attends to a kind invitation from the leading scholar Razaq Raj to take part in a special issue which covers the theme of COVID-19 and its effects on the tourism and pilgrimage industries.

Animals, after all, fear of dying but we, humans, are the only one who can prefigure our own death. We confer meaning to 'other's' death, putting ourselves before our own sense of finality. Over recent years, scholars have reached some consensus that religious tourism is a vital force which not only helps to struggle against poverty while boosting local economies but is also one of the leading sub-segments of tourism worldwide (Cochrane, 2007; Olsen & Timothy, 2006). The interest and growth of lay-people in religious tourism coincides with the attention recently paid by journalism and scholars to the theme. On a closer look, religion and tourism are inevitably entwined (Vukonic, 2002; Stausberg, 2012). As Olsen & Timothy (2007) put it, although religious tourism seems not to be a phenomenon associated with pleasure travels, no less true is that it has reached higher volumes of economic transactions which contribute directly to hosting destinations. Experts agree that pilgrimages and religious tourism will play an increasing role in the configuration of under-developed economies in the future.

Having said this, the dependency of under-developed economies on religious tourism opens the door to a paradoxical situation which can be described in two points. On the one hand, sacred-places are certainly commoditised and aesthetically sold to international heritage-seekers who are mainly attracted by cultural tourism. In consequence, sacred-spaces such as mosques and churches are often being recycled as secular tourist attractions. On the other, and what is more important, there is a dislocation between religious tourism as sacred-rite and religious tourism as a secular form of gazing. To present this in other terms, while religion was historically inscribed in the spirit of humans as a quest for authentic experiences emanating from divinity, tourism is seen as a secular force determined by capitalism and the individual pleasure-maximisation of the self. This idea has not only ignited a hot debate within academia but has also led to thinking that religious tourism invariably creates *inauthentic experiences* which dissociate entirely from spirituality.

Some researchers focus on the ideological nature of religious tourism (Auge, 1995; MacCannell, 1976; Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008; Norman, 2011), whereas others emphasise that religious tourism -far from commoditising the religious place- enhances social cohesion (Cohen, 1979; Raj & Griffin, 2015; Korstanje, 2018). Erik Cohen places a distinction between two different types of travellers. Those who are in quest of

novel experiences articulated to understand the alterity, and those who need pleasure maximisation. Even in the case of pilgrims, this differentiation divides the segment into those visitors who look for authentic experiences and those who demand paid-services (Cohen 1992).

In the midst of this mayhem, by the end of December 2019, news came from China alerting the world to the outbreak of a new threat, known as the Coronavirous (SARS-COV2), which put China earlier and the world later into full lockdown. To date, COVID-19 has taken the lives of 1.2 million victims in the world while infecting almost 47 million. Although the fatality rate is low (less than 5%), no less true seems to be that this rate increases to 20% in the case of elderly and vulnerable people. Among the main symptoms, infected people have fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath (to name a few). Particularly, the complicated cases may experience an acute respiratory syndrome which leads to pneumonia. COVID-19 not only cancelled flights, hotel reservations, religious pilgrimage and mega-events such as Christian Holy Week (Rome), Umrah Pilgrimage (Saudi Arabia), Ramadan Bazar (Indonesia), Royal Maundy Money Service (the UK) but also stopped global commerce. Countries were pressed to close their air space as well as their borders while placing their population in strict quarantine. On 28 April of 2020, the United States was the country with most deaths (56.821) followed by Italy (26.977), Spain (23.822), France (23.293) the UK (21.092), and Belgium (7.331). By October 2020, The USA was still the country with the most deaths (231k), followed by India with 123k and Brazil with 160k. It is important not to lose the sight of the fact that these figures continue to grow week by week.

As alluded to in the previous backdrop, the present conceptual work aims at explaining the interplay between the state of emergency which COVID suggests, and the quest of authentic experiences offered by pilgrimage tourism. In so doing, the first section contains a discussion about advances in the sociology of religion -since the Durkheimian insights in *L'Anne Sociologuique* to date. Starting from the premise the religion plays a leading role in the configuration of culture, the paper further interrogates the intersection of spiritually and society. Still further, is examines how the morphology and functionality of social institutions are determined by religion. Complementing this, the second section focuses on an in-depth review of the most important publications in the field.

The first section centres on a review of the main ideas of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, two senior sociologists who laid the foundations for the sociology of religion. Both were worried about the advance of industrialism which potentially erodes and disorganises social reciprocity. The future of religion, for them, is grim whereby a depersonalised spirit of rationalisation occupies a central position in all spheres of society. This critical position leads scholars to accept the 'profane-sacred' dichotomy. The second section focuses on the pro and cons of religious tourism as well as the socio-economic impacts in the hosting community. Although scholars have not reached a consensus about the nature of religious tourism, they argue that it is the time to reconsider the idea of sacredness. In the third section, I debate the philosophical dilemmas of COViD-19 that have accelerated a previously established tendency, I dubbed as *the end of hospitality*.

For the sake of clarity, I must draw parallels between pilgrimage, death and hospitality. From time immemorial, and above all since the evolution of sedentary tribes, humans have developed what ethnographers know as 'the cult of dead' which refers to funeral rites to equip the soul with the necessary tools to overcome the risks and dangers in the after-life. Anthropologically speaking, the funeral rite plays a leading role in the configuration of social bonds, because it enhances kinship solidarity before death. Like birth, death makes all humans equal. When these funeral rites fail or are not well-performed, society becomes fragmented. Hence, funeral rites are of paramount importance in maintaining human reciprocity. Having said this, pilgrimages, hospitality and funeral rites have many commonalities which merit further attention. At first glimpse, pilgrims -like the deceased persons- should adventure to an unknown landscape, and so to speak, a probably hostile one. Both face countless threats in the (last) trip. Not surprisingly, poets, over centuries, have drawn parallels between travel and life. Death should be understood as the last station, which travellers reach in the last journey. Secondly, pilgrims and wandering souls need to be protected. Gods often offer this protection leading the soul to shelter (heaven, Tian, Nirvana, Jannah, Valhalla, Svarga Ioka, Eden or any other exemplary centre). Gods offer hospitality to pilgrims and souls in the same way that they welcome lost foreigners into the earth. Here, the concept of hospitality connects the passage from the living to the dead world. To put it bluntly, hospitality brings a certainness, which is reciprocally founded in the communion between

Gods and humans, in moments of fear, uncertainty and instability. When religiosity weakens, probably due to a process accelerated by secularisation, this form of hospitality gradually declines. Third and most important, cosmologies of different religions indicate that pilgrims -like the wandering souls- are accepted or rejected depending on their acts. Pilgrimages are impossible without the hospitality of the hosting (sacred) city or place. Obviously, any state of emergency, like 9/11, or the outbreak of COVID-19, subverts -if not suspends- the logic of hospitality undermining not only human reciprocity but also the possibility to celebrate funeral rites. After 9/11, the West lived in a constant state of emergency that closed itself off to the *Non-Western Other*, laying the foundations of *anti-hospitality*. Covid-19, far from being a foundational event, today reaffirms this tendency towards a culture of fear, where the spectacle is culturally commoditised as a form of consumption. This is the main point the present work pursues.

Religion and Society

From their outset, sociology and anthropology were two disciplines concerned with the study of religion. Both started from the urgency to explain how society keeps united. The invisible hand of Adam Smith, which reflects the role played by the free trade on economic theory, set the pace for the social bonding in the view of the founding parents of social sciences. Emile Durkheim -and his *L'Anneé Sociologique* (an academic journal of Sociology established in 1898)- was a pioneering scholar who shed light on describing how totemism articulated the political authority of chieftains, which cemented tribal organisations. Although Durkheim was neither a sociologist nor anthropologist, who has experience in conducting ethnographies and fieldwork, part of his ideas illustrate the knowledge production of sociology from the nineteenth century to the present date. His model was previously borrowed from his nephew Marcel Mauss who formulated what ethnographers know as 'gift theory'. Mauss assumed that cultures are mainly configured through a deep ritual exchange (known as giving-while-receiving ritual). To put this plainly, people are accustomed to give, to receive, to give back. This giving-while-receiving process lays the foundations for the formation of society. In Mauss, like in Durkheim, social ties and religiosity were inextricably interlinked. In 1912 one of Durkheim's classic works (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*) saw the light of publicity in France and gradually became a trailblazing text in Europe. For Durkheim, religion and religiosity were

social constructs internally orchestrated to give durable stability to society. What is real in the aborigines' minds seems to be real, because it is real in their minds. In this way, Durkheim struggled against the prejudices of the epoch, which derived from the ideals of Enlightenment, which punctuated that there is no truth beyond the borders of Western rationality and science. In Durkheimian texts, religion plays a similar function to science in secular society. To the uncertainty which is proper of the external environment, society develops emotional mechanisms to maintain social cohesion. The vulnerability, as well as the human fragility before the hostile environment, leads a community to create symbols to achieve a durable sentiment of security. Centred on the studies of totemic groups in Oceania, Durkheim acknowledges that animals often confer sacred powers and capabilities to humans. These capabilities not only allow the organisation of political authority but also mediate in the relationships of clans. Likewise, animals express the role of Gods as a much deeper system of beliefs and narratives that legitimate the morality of the community. In a nutshell, this sacred origin, in Durkheim' thinking, is the common factor all religions finally share. Durkheim casts some serious doubts on the future of industrial societies. It is unfortunate, he notes, that advances of secularisation will not only dismantle the influence of religiosity but also social ties. The advance of industrialism may very well place social reciprocity in jeopardy (Durkheim, 2008).

The same point of concern was succinctly expressed in the early works of Max Weber (1993). Unlike Durkheim, who supported his evidence with ethnographies which other scholars conducted, Weber ultimately adopted a historical exploration of religion. Educated in an erudite tradition, Weber elaborates an all-encompassing model which contained vital information from many non-western religions. Weber, like Durkheim, toys with the belief that Calvinism and Puritanism were key factors that finally consolidated the capitalist system, as well as the secularisation process. The question is whether Puritanism centres on a sense of predestination as a closed cosmology to understand 'otherness', or is it -as Weber adheres- that the old magic -which belongs in the pre-modern epoch- is in the process of disappearing. He coins the term *Disenchantment of the World* to denote the decline of religion in the public sphere of society. Weber concludes that the rationalisation of social life, accompanied by an emerging professionalisation paved the ways for the rise of capitalism, and the resulting decline of religiosity.

As the previous argument is given, Durkheim and Weber have left a rich legacy for historians and fieldworkers to understand the essence and dynamism of religion. To some extent, their lessons were misunderstood, while in other ways exaggerated or ignored (Stark, Doyle & Rushing, 1983; Mommsen & Osterhammel, 2013). For some reason very hard to understand now, Max Weber has not been duly cited in tourism studies even if his theory was continued and expanded by a young American anthropologist, who devoted his life to the study of authenticity, religion and tourism: Dean MacCannell. MacCannell's vision innovatively ranged from the anthropology of consumption to cultural studies in religion without mentioning his theoretical interrogations of Levi-Straussian structuralism. In this respect, he is interested in exploring more fully the forces that intervene to maintain human solidarity. This seems to be an interesting point of convergence which MacCannell shares with Durkheim and Mauss but he incorporates other traditions as such as Marxism and Goffmanian dramaturgy. MacCannell, like Urry, interrogates how society works. For those readers who are unfamiliar with Levi-Strauss' theory, reading MacCannell will be a hard task to perform. To wit, he acknowledges that capitalism has evolved not only according to an evolutionary model where the most sophisticated means of production overweigh the tribal economy, as Durkheim eloquently observed, but this is also linked to a gap between two contrasting spheres: leisure and labour. While the latter determines the economic order of society (hierarchy), engendering a state of psychological frustration and resentment, the former signals to a recreational sphere where the deprived workers are rejuvenated.

In his seminal book, *The Tourist: towards a new Theory of The Leisure Class*, MacCannell (1976) highlights -citing Durkheim- that sociology was correct in discovering the influence of tribal totems as a force towards social cohesion; but at the time there is an unquestionable division between the sacred and the profane, the secularisation process has accelerated the decline of religion in modern societies. Whereas tribal organisations witnesses how totemism served as the main source of authority which emanates from the archetype of the animals, in industrial cultures there is a gap that is inevitably filled by leisure consumption and tourism. In a nutshell, tourism is a totem of a different variety (MacCannell 1976). The secularisation process disorganises social ties, ushering the modern human to a stage of alienation and depersonalisation but religion never disappears, rather it mutates to a new hybrid and commoditised form: *tourism*, as MacCannell proposes.

To some extent, this resolves part of the problem, but still is a partial story of the truth. MacCannell explains how society maintains cohesion (through the figure of staged-authenticity) but gives little details that explains with accuracy why people look to consume authenticity. The production of capital is fixed by the combination of costs and prices. Because of this, marginal poverty is a direct consequence of capitalist production. This happens because capital owners make their profits monopolising the means of production, as well as the legal framework disposed of by law and modern jurisprudence. Lay-workers move as mere consumers who voluntarily transfer their profits back to capital owners; sublimating their needs in hedonist consumption. On holidays workers become consumers who return their profits -from their paid-wages- to the capitalist system. Henceforth, tourism, reportedly, acts as an ideological instrument oriented to revitalise the psychological frustrations which occur in the working contexts. But this leads to a more than pungent question: what is the main motivation of modern tourists to visit -fabricated- landscapes?

To answer this question, he employs a neologism known as 'staged-authenticity' -according to Goffman's works- to decipher the complex analogy between theatre and social life. At a theatre, countless micro-interactions among subjects take place. The self carefully constructs a staged front to engage in an act in a play with 'others' while at the back-stage, the 'self' shows as it is. In the modern world, tourists are obsessed with consuming 'authenticity' which paradoxically opens the doors towards 'a staged-authenticity'. The urgency in consuming fabricated narratives (landscapes) adjoined to the decomposition of religion, ushers society towards a need for transforming theatricalization -authenticity- as their main reason to live (MacCannell, 1973; 1976).

As the previous argument suggests, tourism has systematically evolved in a growing industry with higher levels of depersonalisation. Tourism is replicating not only the material asymmetries which are proper of capitalism but the meta-discourse that legitimises the authority of the ruling elite. As a result of this, cultures, cities, even persons are commoditised and exchanged in the marketplace where the digital technologies produce 'emptied spaces'. The alterity is not overly significant to tourism consumption which can be adjusted to what

the tourist finally wishes. Ethics plays a leading role in sanitising the negative effects of modern tourism, as MacCannell concludes (MacCannell, 2001; 2011; 2012). Although he was widely criticised -like Durkheim- to proffer a generalising and essentialised theory of tourism, which adjusts empirically only to certain modern destinations -not to tourism as a social institution- (Cohen, 1987; King, 2000; Knudson & Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Korstanje, 2016), no less true was that his insights influenced religious tourism studies -for better or worse. He provides an eloquent and critical diagnosis of tourist behaviour as well as the quest of authenticity, which seems to be externally imposed by a supra-structure that precedes it. Then, and methodologically speaking, what tourists feel or experience is not important as a source of information for the fieldworker. A clear explanation lies in what he dubbed *Meta-Discourse* which means a set of stories, narratives, signs and cosmologies organised and pre-fixed to shape '*the tourist consciousness*', a type of mega-matrix where these allegories and signs carefully articulated to keep the hegemony of the status quo.

To sum up, religious tourism should be understood as an anachronism -a type of tautology for MacCannell- simply because tourism IS religiosity (emanated from the tribal totem) by another name. The advance of the secularised (western) rationality undermined the authority of sacredness over daily life, and in so doing, weakened social ties, creating a gap which is finally filled by tourism consumption and the quest of authenticity.

Religious Tourism

Over recent decades, religious tourism has attracted the interests of many social scientists and disciplines. In some contexts, locals are reluctant to receive tourists when their intentions are not mainly associated with religiosity (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart, 2008; Zhu, 2012). The main point on which to begin this discussion is to explore religious tourism as a sacred or profane activity. One of the aspects that characterise sacredness is its impermeable nature regarding the 'outside'. Religious beliefs are locally practised and -of course- what is seen as sacred in one group is valorized as culturally interesting by others (Raj & Griffin, 2017). Is religious tourism a source of conflict or a mechanism that helps to foster social bonds?

Raja & Raj (2017) emphasise religious tourism as a primordial element to enhance social cohesion. Religious

tourism allows the convergence of different faiths and cultural values into the same community. Furthermore, there is no absolute evidence to suggest that tourism epitomises a secularised logic while religion is subject to sacredness. Complementarily, Olsen & Timothy (2006) acknowledge that the reappearance of religious pilgrimage stems from many combined factors such as the rise of fundamentalisms, the retreat of some traditional expressions to a medieval spirituality, as well as the expansion of mobility infrastructure (to name a few). Lay-people, who are daily subjected to countless deprivations, need not only to believe in something superior but also understanding deeply the meaning of life. However, as authors agree, the notion of pilgrimage also encompasses 'secularized forms' which range from nostalgic attractions to rock star mansions.

> *Likewise, many people travel to a widening variety of sacred sites not only for religious or spiritual purposes or to have an experience with the sacred in the traditional sense but also because they are marked and marketed as heritage or cultural attractions to be consumed. They may visit because they have an educational interest in learning more about the history of a site or understanding a particular religious faith and its culture and beliefs, rather than being motivated purely by pleasure-seeking or spiritual growth* (Olsen & Timothy 2006: 5).

As with this previous backdrop, Raj & Griffin (2015b) overtly lament that tourism had been misconceived as a naïve activity finely-ingrained in a postmodern consumerist society. From its inception, tourism emulated a 'sacred-journey' in quest of a lost paradise. This coincides with the reflections of Justine Digance (2006), who departs from the premise that the notion of pilgrimage is directly linked to the sacred-journeys of the Middle Ages, even if the term turns into a less spiritual definition in the current days. Nonetheless, such a distinction -that places the secular in opposition to the sacred rests on shaky foundations. As she (Digance) contends, ancient travellers to festivals or games are often catalogued as pilgrims. What is important to remember in postmodern days, is that religious festivals and pilgrimages to holy cities are considered significant events in the popular parlance. Digance holds the thesis that pilgrimages activate a much deeper and philosophical search for meaning -above all about the mysteries of life. Hence, we have to pay attention to two types of secular-journeys. Those which satisfy the spiritual needs -always

within the frontiers of traditional religions-, and those which emancipate new Age experiences, which means looking for inner-spirituality. As Digance observes:

> *All pilgrims share the common trait in that they are searching for, and expect also to be rewarded with, a mystical or magico-religious experience -a moment when they experience something out of the ordinary that marks a transition from the mundane secular humdrum world of our everyday existence to a special and sacred state* (Digance 2006: 38).

In this respect, Ian Rotherham (2015) focuses attention on pilgrimage as one of the oldest forms of traveling, although as he accepts, this is recognised already by tourism-related scholars. The academy requires that we have to define separately pilgrimage, tourism and religion. As a sacred-journey, pilgrimage exhibits an act of devotion which is enrooted in religion. Rather, tourism denotes the act of moving out of the usual environment for recreational ends. In this case, as Rotherham reminds, tourists and locals achieve religious and non-religious beliefs which are inter-exchanged in the same contested place. Many visitors who are agnostic may very well experience a religious interaction generating a strong attachment to the visited site. Equally important, a Church is economically benefited by the visit of secular tourists. For that reason, secularisation (and tourism in particular) entails a destruction of the borders between the sacred and the profane. Religious tourism represents the most important economic resource for many sacred-spaces.

While in Europe church-going is undergoing a major crisis, increased cultural interests for consuming religion is in evidence. In the context of higher levels of uncertainty and anxiety, people are massively abandoning traditional institutions to enthusiastically embrace new forms of faith. This search for meaning materialises in the surfacing of religious tourism as a major sub-segment of the industry (Richards & Fernandes, 2007). The crevasse between sacred and profane was examined by Thomas Bremer (2006) who argued convincingly that 'place' is a culturally fabricated and negotiated term that dynamically changes with the passing of time. Places materialise reciprocal relations -among peoples- and interactions which transcend the individuality of the subject.

> *The importance of place in social relationships goes beyond its role as the site where people interact. In fact, the place serves as an integral element in all social relations, both as a determinant of those relations and as a product of them as well. This is specially evident in places of religion. The special character of a holy site endows its occupants with a degree of social prestige* (Bremer 2006: 26).

The religious practices -accompanied by the hierarchies they create- are far from being static but they evolve constantly in time. With this background in mind, Bremer recognises overtly that religious places suggest relational discourses articulated in a specific semiotic infrastructure. This point assumes two important connotations. On one hand, the same place can sustain differently-motivated tourists -i.e. adherents and non-adherents to religion. On the other hand, these visitors get different interpretations and meanings from the same place. What both forms of tourism -classic tourism and religious tourism- have in common seems to be the quest for authentic experiences. In this vein, the discourse of authenticity connects with religiosity in the same plane either related to pleasure or religion - tourists move to gaze on authenticity as a mediated form of being-in-the-world (Bremer, 2006).

By reviewing the concept of religious tourism, one might speculate that a shared definition that sheds light on the term remains open. Some critical voices highlight the negative impacts on the environment and local economy after thousands of pilgrims visit a sacred-site. Social maladies engendered by the tourism industry such as territorial degradation, real-estate speculation, gentrification, cultural impacts, resource exhaustion and environmental contamination are not avoided by religious tourism (Shackley, 1999; Richards, 2007; Karar, 2010; Egresi, Kara & Bayram, 2014; Raj & Griffin, 2017).

At first glimpse, not all pilgrimages are strictly linked to religiosity or interpersonal mediation. The etymology of the term pilgrimage comes from Latin *Per Agrere -peregrinare-* which means going across the land. The fact is that the ancient voices selected this word to express any trip which lacks comfort. These kinds of journeys were reserved for people -who for any reason- decide to travel outside any normal infrastructure or road. To date, the etymology of the term says much more than our colleagues surmise. Of course, the episode of COVID-19 deserves special attention and a separate section in this story. This begs a more than a challenging question, is the decline or suspension of pilgrimages a sign that marks the end of religion as Durkheim or MacCannell have envisaged?

COVID-19 and the end of Pilgrimage?

To explain successfully the connection between pilgrimage and COVID-19, it is necessary to return to my own experience as a fieldworker, above all my experience in sacred spaces of dark tourism or tragedy. Anthropologically speaking, shrines and temples are often constructed in sites were bodies have fallen or on sites where heroes or Prophets rose to heaven in body and soul, a process known as the *apotheosis of the hero*. Heroes are particularly-characterised persons subject to a great tribulation or pressed to struggle against Gods because of an original sin which is unforgettable. Like Prophets, heroes remind us not only of the human temple which never succumbs to the arbitraries of Gods but also the human tolerance to suffering. What lies beyond this cosmology seems to be that heroes -once killed- mediate between Gods and humankind. Having said this, the same applies to shrines or sacred temples where a Saint's body lies. I remember my first days -as ethnographer- in *La Republica de Cromañón*, a dark site where 194 young people lost their lives on 30 December of 2004. This was a nightclub where a sudden fire was initiated by a pyrotechnic flare that ignited the foam in the ceiling. In consequence, the materials used for building the room were not only flammable but initiated a real disaster that took 194 lives and wounded 1500 attendants. At the point where the first bodies were placed, survivors constructed a shrine dotted with an altar, flowers, candles, pictures of the victims, poems, and other personal objects. These main elements formed the cosmology of Cromanón Shrine, elements that can be observed in other sacred-sites such as 9/11, ground zero, or spaces of mass death, so to speak, space of dark pilgrimage.

The first and most important association is to do with the absence of a body. Victims -like Jesus or Muhammad- are not believed to be buried. This leads to a process which anthropologists dubbed '*the sacralization of the dead*'. At this point, victims are considered heroes who wake up society from the slumber it was in.

These dead should be venerated as martyrs so that their death was not in vain, but also their death must have a purpose. Such a purpose, may not always be shared by all members or groups, creating the precondition for an inter-personal rivalry or state of *tension* (second element). The formation of a sacred pilgrimage sites appears to be fraught with conflict, tensions and rivalries between different groups who scramble to impose their vision of the tragedy.

The third element is the *syncretism* which means the interplay between different cosmologies, beliefs, and ideas enmeshed into a new rising credo.

The fourth element signals to the *rite of rememorations*, which are liminal rituals oriented to engage pilgrims with their saints, heroes or prophets. Pilgrimages are clear examples of this factor.

The fifth element is *hospitality* which corresponds with the ritual that allows the acceptance of foreigner, or unknown 'other'. Hospitality and pilgrimage are inextricably entwined. Ancient tribes believed strongly that foreign travellers were Gods camouflaged to probe the ethics of the chieftains. If hospitality was neglected, Gods unilaterally dispatched severe famines, disasters or mass death. On closer look, hospitality occupies a central position in many cultures as a key factor that explains human solidarity. Gods protect people in the after-life, in the last journey, in the same way, the people protected others who asked for aid, assistance or lodging.

In a nutshell, these basic ideas are part of what we anthropologists know as *the ethno-genesis of the sacredness*. But what has this got to do with COVID-19?

Paragraphing Jacques Derrida, two types of hospitalities coexist in opposition: absolute and conditioned hospitality. While the former signals to a utopia where guests are always accepted no matter their patrimony, the latter refers to the core of politics, as Derrida clarifies. What is more important is that *Xenos* (the 'other') is interrogated by language asking always who are you? And what do you want? Language serves as a catalyst which separates but at the same time unites persons. The language notably marks a symbolised border that cannot be easily crossed. Those who cannot pay for hospitality are often jailed and deported from the state while those who can pay are welcomed. Undoubtedly, this is the essential difference between the tourist and the migrant. The former applies for conditioned hospitality where he or she can give a return in exchange (money). The latter, unfortunately, asks for absolute hospitality because they have nothing to offer. Derrida's thesis suggests that absolute hospitality is a utopia, as he recognises it, because nobody opens the doors of their home to the 'unknown other'. Not surprisingly, hospitality and hostility keep in common the same etymological origin. Hostility is connected with regulating, exorcizing or rejected the *undesired guest* (who is considered as a

parasite) (Derrida, 2000). Hospitals can be equated with the example of absolute hospitality while hotels are the hallmark of conditioned hospitality. Has COVID reversed this logic leading towards a more egalitarian society?

Probably yes and probably no. What is important to discuss is to what extent is COVID really changing our culture or consolidating an established hegemony which remains unexplored to date. In earlier studies, I hold the thesis that terrorism -above all after 9/11- started a process where Western hospitality was seriously affected. Not only did the US, Europe and others tighten their borders but also new radical discourses against the foreigner or the *Non-Western Other* emerged. 9/11 ignited a new culture of fear where anyone could be a potential terrorist. In the 1970s, terrorism targeted important persons, celebrities, the royal family, or chief police officers. After 9/11 the targets radically changed to lay-citizens. Today's lay-people in public leisure spaces are killed to cause panic and uncertainty. People believe that if anyone can be a victim of terrorism any place and at any time, nobody is safe. This began *a culture of fear* where the enemy lived inside. Terrorists were not born in some far off land, rather they were now natives of the societies they hated. They were educated in western universities, used western technology and looked like westerners. The culture of fear is based on the precautionary principle that engages with the idea of living with the enemy within, so to speak, a new climate where anyone can be a potential terrorist. Echoing Durkheim or Weber, the immediate result of this conception is social fragmentation, the dissolution of trust which is the symbolic touchstone of society and human reciprocity. What is equally important is that what 9/11 started at that time, Covid-19 has more recently reaffirmed: the end of hospitality at least as we know it.

To discuss COVID-19 and its immediate or long-lasting effects on society is very difficult in these moments because of the velocity of the mediated events. What experts know -to summarize in a few lines- is that little is known about how this virus, which was firstly detected in Wuhan (China) in 2019, mutates. Even if the virus reproduces exponentially with easy transmissions, its mortality rate is slower than other viruses.

The process of globalisation faced its first blow on 11 September of 2001, when four commercial airplanes were weaponized against commercial and military icons in the US. As a foundational event, not only did 9/11 humiliate the United States, it showed how the pride of the West (its mobilities-based ideals and modern tourism) can be used as weapons against innocent civilians. From that moment onwards, the West questioned its obsession with mobilities, exhibiting the risks of effacing geographical borders. 9/11 accelerated radical transformations in the Occident paving the way for *the end of hospitality*. The psychological fear instilled in the US and Europe activated more aggressive protocols of surveillance, including border closures, the emergence of supremacist discourses, Islamophobia and Tourist-phobia. Tourists, as imagined 'non-Western others' are not admired any more, they are feared, even hated and considered as undesired guests.

The second blow was the financial crisis that affected the capitalist markets in 2008 - something that had a knock-on effect on the tourist industries. The crisis was employed by some reactionary circles to blame globalisation and migration; it also endorsed reactionary movements that led to the triumph of Donald Trump in the US, to Jair Bolsonaro's election in Brazil, Orban's in Hungary and Brexit in the UK. What seems to be important to say is that terrorism started a new era where the enemy is not coming from outside anymore. The enemy -in a never-ending war- is living here with us and looks like us. This cultural metaphor has produced a culture of fear that erodes common social ties. A terrorist is now a person, who looks or behaves like us, he or she is even native of the targeted society. If during the nineteenth-century colonial rule, Westerners consume the alterity of subordinated 'Others', in a post-9/11 context, they cannibalise their essence, by blurring the boundaries between risks of 'being here' and 'being there.

COVID-19 is a third foundational event that interrogates and affirms this trend. Like the terrorist who lives within, the virus, which circulates everywhere, is hosted by our body - for, anyone can be turned on COVID-19's behalf into a lethal weapon. Governments, now in the war, struggle against an invisible enemy. This brings us to the metaphorical extensions of 'quarantine', as a radical rejection of 'otherness'. Citizens are arbitrarily confined, in some cases with no contact with their environment, living in isolation. As silent carriers of the public enemy *par excellence*, who display no external symptoms of infection, citizens are equalled to potential terrorists who harm public security. Those who violate quarantine are repressed, or even jailed for an attack on public health. Like the 1970s War on Cancer, the war against criminality in the 80s or the war on terror in the 21st century, we are

now caught in the tugs of a war on a virus. Here there is a clear retransformation of conditional hospitality of modern tourism, into the unconditional hospitality provided by the hospital. To cut a long story short, commercial hospitality succumbs to non-commercial hospitality.

Two authoritative voices, Tom Selwyn (2019) and George Ritzer (2019) -in their respective works- attempt to deal with this question. They call attention to the inevitable decline of hospitality in the global environment - a gradual collapse that allows the rise of a deep hostility that mediates between citizens and their institutions. To take a closer look, Brexit or the Windrush cases in Britain, Executive Order 13769 (Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry) in the US, and many other such measures around the world, proclaim not only hostility against the *Xenos* (foreigners) as the foundational cultural value of the West, but also a new era where 'other' is not desired. Global capitalism -as a major cultural and economic force- seems to be a project unilaterally based on efficiency and prediction, which in its constituencies, contradicts the essence of hospitality. *Ethics of Hospitality* is more than an interesting book, where Daniel Innerarity (2001; 2017) alerts us to the philosophical challenges posed in the case of hospitality decline. Modern society, using science, coordinates efforts to detect and eliminate external dangers while ushering the culture of a zero- risk world. Like a guest who asks for hospitality, risks should be contemplated as a part of life. A zero-risk society is not only impossible but if it were, it would eradicate 'selfhood'.

Conclusion

Like the terrorist who lives within, all of us are potential killers, who carry the virus. This opens the door to re-questioning the future of hospitality and pilgrimages as a sign of trust in 'otherness'. Just after 9/11, as Durkheim and Weber imagined, the West experienced a gradual process of moral decline where selfhood was closed off from alterity. Not only was border security tightened in the First World but also the *Non-Western Other* was transformed into an *Undesired Guest*. In consequence, social ties were disorganised and rechanneled towards an economic matrix of mass-consumerism. Today's COVID-19 threatens our life as never before, and some persons feel nothing will be the same after this foundational event.

This conceptual paper aims to re-discuss COVID-19 and the collapse of tourism as a phenomenon which re-engages a previously-established tendency originated after the World Trade Centre, the end of hospitality and pilgrimage as genuine *Encounters with Otherness*.

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