

## **The Rise of Death-seekers: Commoditizing Death**

**Korstanje Maximiliano**

University of Palermo, Argentina  
Fellow at CERS University of Leeds UK

### **Abstract**

Over recent years, tourists have changed their preference respecting to sun and beach products, for spaces of mass death and suffering. This new segment which is known by specialists as Thana Tourism or Dark tourism consists in visiting places castigated by disasters or mass suffering in order to interpret the proper life. Whichever the case may be, it paves the ways for the rise of a new class, death seekers, in a new facet of capitalism, where death plays a crucial role in configuring social relations. This essay review exerts a radical criticism to dark tourism and thana capitalism, as a platform that emulates the modern culture.

**Key Words:** Thana Capitalism, Thana Tourism, Death, Consuming life, Commoditization of death

### **Introduction**

When I came across with the texts and books of Jean Baudrillard and Zygmunt Bauman, some decades ago, we get the belief that capitalism started to change. Unsure in what direction, I have explored not only the genesis of capitalism, a radical analysis of Norse Mythology, I have published in 2015, but also the main limitations of bio-politics. Particularly, I agreed with Baudrillard, Foucault and Bauman capitalism was mutated, but not with their diagnoses. Over recent decades, it is truth that a global audience captivated by the rise of an atmosphere where disasters, terrorism and virus outbreaks instilled panic into the population. In fact, the problem of ISIs and Terrorism has changed geopolitics after 9/11. Whether terrorism planned their attacks on military targets or celebrities through 70s decade, now mobile civilians are hosted, kidnapped and decapitated in public to expand a climate of terror over the veil of main central nations. This type of spectacle, instead of producing a pseudo-reality, appears to be conducive to tactics to control work-force; to mitigate their potential discontent levels can be tolerable by status quo. No less true is that terrorism saw in leisure-spot or tourist destinations as fertile grounds to create political instability, in order for their claims to be accepted. Though terrorism is not the common-thread argument in this essay-review, it is fascinating to see how the system recycles spaces of mass-death, suffering and pain as Ground-zero into a spectacle. This raises a more than interesting question that guides all my investigation, to what extent capitalism has posed death as its main cultural value?

In other times, capitalism mutated in many forms. Mercantilism sets the pace to industrialism, and this latter force paved the ways for the rise of modern capitalism. After the accident of Chernobyl, sociologists devoted considerable efforts in criticizing the role played by technology in an ever-changing world. Always under the influence of Durkheim or Weber

### *The Rise of Death-seekers: Commoditizing Death.*

they envisaged that this new stage was alienatory for social fabric. Quite aside from this, sociology devoted considerable efforts to understand the world of risk as a precondition of social ties decline, even, as the founding parents, social scientists have woefully adopted a pejorative view of modernity which in some conditions affects their diagnosis. The hopes and dreams of Rational Westerners contemplated risks and threats as anomalies produced by the complex interactions of many agents and components within systems that should adapt to environment. This conception of social world, more associated to biology, deposited excessive trust on the possibilities of nation-state to endorse protection to their citizens. The society of risk as it was imagined by Beck and Giddens, two senior sociologists who were representative of an age, understood risks as glitches which should be fixed. The globalization and the complexity of modern productive systems prevented a clear diagnosis to expand the understanding how these glitches may be reversed. This created a paradoxical situation because the technology employed to mitigate risks reproduces the conditions for the advent of disasters, as Chernobyl. However, this society oriented to protection and risk perception sets the pace to a more complex version of capitalism, where death is the main commodity. Unlike other times, people are not interested in be safe from frightening apocalyptic scenarios but in consuming the suffering of others. We live in times of Thana-Capitalism, which was based on the rise of a new class, death seekers. This is the point of entry in this discussion, addressed throughout this short essay review.

## **The Rise of Death Seekers**

The advent of a new millennium adjoined to a wave of disasters and tragic events which oscillates from terrorism to the outbreak of lethal viruses that defied the old well-fare state. Although, disasters were inherited to social imaginaries and cultural consumptions, for example, expressed in movies as Vulcano, Deep Impact or The Perfect Storm among others, in this new century fiction becomes in part of reality (Quarantelli 1960; 1980; Bursma&Picou, 2008). The shocking attack to WTC in New York known as the financial centre of the World inaugurated a new age of fear and uncertainty where West understood that nobody was safer anymore and in any place (Zizek 2006). It is tempting to say that risk studies and texts on risk perception flourished in almost all disciplines from engineering to social sciences (Skoll 2010; Korstanje, 2015); in this vein, many philosophers focused on the problem of risk as an ethical quandary resulted from the decline of trust accelerated by late-capitalism (Beck 2002). At some extent, albeit these studies shed light on a new time which was next to come, less attention was paid to some aspects that explain further on why this happens. This conceptual discussion not only continues with earlier efforts in risk studies, but also coins the term “Thana-Capitalism” to refer this uncanny fascination for disaster-related landscapes. What the doctrine of risk-zero was unable to explain was why technological advance did not suffice to make a safer world. Following the rational paradigm, external or internal threats can be found by the net of experts who work for state. Whenever these risks are located, experts should intervene according to protocols of surveillance. In this process science would play a crucial role expanding the produced knowledge in order for society to be protected (Beck, 1992). If Harvey (1999) indicated that Oil Embargo was the epicentre that started postmodernism, and Paul Virilio (2010) evinced the rise of uncertainty that subordinated the security of Work-force to profits and businesses, the evolution and consolidation of a “culture of Fear remained unchecked. In this essay-review we hold the thesis that disasters do not affect cultures, rather, are cultures pre-determined by earlier disasters or traumatic events. Interesting evidence can be found in founding myths as Noah where God disposes of an apocalyptic natural disaster for the reconstruction of a new exemplary culture. At a first look, Noah is the first survivor and the only chosen by God to continue with humankind on the earth. Doubtless, the force and influence of this myth in capitalist system is stronger than other cultures, simply because paves the ways for the configuration of a sentiment of exemption where the destruction of all

is based in the salvation of few ones. Ideologically speaking, Noah's story leads to "a much process of social Darwinism", in which case capitalism was successfully reproduced worldwide. This reflects an asymmetrical system where a privileged group amasses almost 80% of produced wealth while the rest is pressed to live with limited resources. As the previous backdrop, the culture of disaster within modern capitalism aims at disorganizing the social ties. In so doing, the derived narcissism is adopted as the main cultural value of society. The question whether capitalism expanded faster than analysts precluded correspond with two key factors: the needs of being different and the needs of protection. The society of risk sets the pace to a new capitalism, (thana-capitalism), where the presence of death allows changes otherwise would not be feasible. In days of Thana Capitalism, the life is seen as a long trace where only one will be the winner. The death of others, which is present in Media, Journalism, TV Programs not only feel us special because we are in trace after all, but also remind how special we are. This is the reason why disasters captivate today to global audience. At the time, they exhibit the disgrace in Others news reinforce the supremacy of West over other cultures. Secondly, leisure practices as classic Sun and Sea tourism is changed to new forms where mass-disaster or mourning spaces are the main attraction. This new segment, known by some specialists as Thana-Tourism or Dark Tourism, recycles spaces of disasters or mass-death to be visually commoditized to international consumers who need to be close to Other's death. If older leisure practices embraced an apollonian view of beautiness that invited workers to spend time and money in paradise-alike destinations, now we are witness of the rise of a new class, death-seekers. What would be more than interesting to discuss is the intersection of death and consumption. It signals to radical shifts that certainly denote the beginning of a new capitalism, Thana-Capitalism.

## **Consuming Dark Tourism**

Dark tourism has woken up a hot debate in recent years. While some experts have focused attention to the phenomenon as a sign of cultural entertainment based on a repressed sadism (Koch, 2005), others emphasized in the mediated nature of tourism so that visitors may understand their own death (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Miles, 2002). Dark-tourism sites denote territories where mass-death or suffering have determined the identity of a community but no less true is that under some conditions these sites are commoditized to sell the other's death as a product (Poria, 2007; Chauhan & Khanna, 2009). In this token, Stone & Sharpley (2008) warn on the needs of defining dark tourism form other similar issues. The curiosity or fascination of death seems to be one of the aspects that define thana-tourism, or dark tourism. But it is important not to lose the sight how these experiences are framed under shared values that tightens the social bondage (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Dark tourism may be defined as a pilgrimage or a experience but what seems to be important to remind is that it can be an attempt to contemplate death of the self, by sightseeing the other dead (Stone, 2012). Stone adds that some sites offer darker products than others depending on the degree of suffering. Each subtype can be framed into a spectrum of dark suppliers. To cut the long story short, this essay review suggest that dark fun factories present a fictionalized death perceived as less authentic than Auschwitz museum. At time tourism is embraced as a main industry, the experiences for visitors become more naïve. In respective to this, Raine devoted considerable time to validate Stone's hypothesis to empirical fieldwork. She contends that the fascination for death may be operationalized in variables which range from lightest to darkest spectrum. Visitors take diverse attitudes to dark tourism sites (Raine, 2013)

It is often assumed that dark tourism sites exhibit spaces of great pain. To what an extent these spaces are conducive to a spectacle of horror, as some sociologists put it, is one of the themes that remain unresolved. Detractors of dark tourism have criticized the fact that suffering should not be commercialized. Recent investigation has posed the question on the economic nature of dark tourism. At the late modernity, the post industrial societies, far from

*The Rise of Death-seekers: Commoditizing Death.*

correcting the problems that led to disaster, recycle the obliterated space to introduce new business and building infrastructure. Affected families not only are not economically assisted, but also are pressed to live to the peripheries of the city. Death and mass-suffering seem to be employed to reinforce the pillars of capitalism. At this stage, tourism is conducive to logic of exploitation where death is the primary resource of attractiveness. Particularly, this makes tourism a more than resilient industry (Korstanje, 2015; Tarlow&Korstanje 2013; Tzanelli 2014a, 2014b). In an early study, M. Korstanje & S. Ivanov (2012) delineate a strong connection between dark tourism with psychological resilience developed by a community to overcome adversities. Any disaster or trauma not only gives a lesson to survivors and their community, but also re-structures the politics of community. The function of dark tourism consists in situating death within the human understanding of past, present and future. Death generates substantial changes in the life of survivors. The community, which faced disasters or extreme pain, runs serious risk of disintegration, unless a much profound sentiment of pride is developed. To be united, the society alludes to find reasons that explain the disaster. Dark tourism is conducive to that end.

In this token, L. White and E. Frew (2013) compile a book formed by 19 good investigations which are very difficult to discuss in a limited manuscript like this, but all them are aimed at the following axiom. Dark tourism sites are politically designed to express a message to community. Victims and their families not only have diverse ways of negotiating that message but also by appropriating an interpretation of social trauma. Dark tourism alludes to a psychological need of figuring one death by imagining the other's death. Nonetheless, the myopia of scholars to understand dark tourism rests on two primary aspects. There are no clear boundaries or indicators to mark a unified site of memory which cannot be subject to political struggle. Secondly, starting from the premise heritage depends on the political interests, sometimes the national discourse around dark sites are not accepted one side of community.

In perspective, Sather Wagstaff (2011) presents an original thesis based on her auto-ethnography in the ground-zero of New York. Dark tourism sites wake up sentiment of loss and mourning. The problem rests in the way we define that loss. What is dark tourism? And how it can be defined?. The self mediates between its memory and future by the introduction of reminder. Dark tourism shrine is a form of reminding a paining event. The appearance of death is not only irreversible, but also inevitable. Visitors are needed to feel what other felt, though those emotions are unauthentic. From Hiroshima to World Trade Centre, she acknowledges that disasters should tell a story that helps control the trauma or sense of loss. The solidarity conferred to US by the terrorist attack to New York was a clear example of how people are united in context of uncertainty. Death has the function to strengthen the social bond. Some peripheral nations which are unfamiliar with the American way conferred their trust to U.S because 9/11 fabricated shared experiences to other states which can experience a similar situation in the future. To what an extent, the discourse never reveals the cause of events, nor its social conjuncture. It is not surprisingly that tourists visit sites without knowing the real history; they are in part alienated by the heritage. By introducing the human suffering, dark tourism breaks the influence of ideology. Rather dark tourism, heritage imposes a one-sided argument created externally to dissuade consumers to adopt governmental policies otherwise would be rejected. Heritage often follows to politics roots. The pain is the only way of understanding the other. It enables our natural capacity toward empathy. Death wakes up the society from its slumber creating the conditions to adopt substantial changes. Emotions not only do not accept national boundaries but questions the ethnocentrism given by heritage.

As Sather Wagstaff put it, "Sites of historical and cultural importance that represent violent events are particularly prone to a social misunderstanding about their emergence; it is believed that they have come into existence only through the events that take place at particular location: war results in battlefields, genocides produce mass graves, the

assassination site of a political leader delineates a national sacred place. However, historical commemorative places are not made as important sites simply because of the events that may physically mark them as distinct places through bloodshed or the destruction of building or landscapes. These places are made through ongoing human practices in time and I argue, across multiple spaces and places” (p. 47). Ground-zero exhibits two important aspects which merit to be discussed. Its symbolic hole is filled by the conflicts of involving actors, which range from politicians, families, neighbors and investors. All them struggle to impose their own discourse about 9/11. Sooner or later, stronger stakeholders will monopolize the interpretation of the event in view of their own interests. In this context, Sather Wagstaff adds, tourists are proactive agents to produce meaning beyond the monopoly of political control.

Epistemologically speaking, research in dark tourism has some problems to dissociate interpretation from perception. Besides, studies allude to the voice of tourists as the only agent capable to understand what is happening with the approached issue. Social anthropology has yet acknowledged the problem of positivism to think the truth as an objective reality which can be reached by asking to people alone. If we do not validate our hypotheses with rich information, they run the risk to be false (Korstanje, 2014a; 2014b). The problem lies by paying exaggerated attention to what tourists say, we can be led to wrong conclusions. On one hand, sometimes consulted persons lie, or other they want to exaggerate their emotions. Furthermore, there is a clear dissociation between what people do and say. It is clear how under some circumstance, interviewees do not know the reasons of their feelings or are unable to explain their own behavior (Korstanje 2014a; 2014b).

I remember in one of my fieldwork in the Cromañón sanctuary, a teenager came to me one day to explain me further on the problem I was investigating. I accepted his invitation assuming he had much to say. The interview lasted roughly 5 hours and was tape-recorded. The information I obtained from this young was very important for me at a preliminary stage. Nonetheless, with the passing of months I have advanced my ethnography comparing the collated information by what I can hear and see. Not only I realized that the original interview was completely false, because the involved key-informant wanted to attract attention and exaggerated his stories, but he felt the needs to tell something to me. The importance of this story was not determined by its credibility. He had not lost anyone in the disaster of Cromañón, though developed a strange attachment for the event, for the other’s suffering. This empathy led him to alter his sense of reality. Paradoxically, although this interview was a fake, it underpinned the main hypotheses in my research opening the doors to new cosmologies and opportunities to be empirically validated. This story though false shed light on my investigation.

In tourism fields, like many other managerial disciplines as marketing or management, persons are importance sources of information, simply because they are consumers. Nor business-related research neither managerial literature is interested in searching the truth, but also to incorporate valid and efficient plans of sales enhancement. It is unfortunate that tourism has a strong legacy of these pseudo-scientific disciplines where the speeches of consulted respondents have vital value for developing plans of commercialization. Further interested in improving the profit and business of dark sites, than understanding the roots of death, much research has fallen into overt simplifications of what consumers feel or simply perceive. But things can come worse to worst, in recent decades the cyberspace and technology has emptied out the anthropological spaces of negotiations. Today, the relationships are bolstered through a cyber-reality. Death is being experienced by many ways, which escape from the traditional visit to real spaces. Many cyber nauts visit virtual pages specially designed and programmed by families to experience the suffering of others, like a dark-site. By a simple click, persons can access to web-pages related to dark “virtual” spaces. This leads to re-think the problem of dark tourism in view of a new context.

### *The Rise of Death-seekers: Commoditizing Death.*

It is safe to say that the life in the world of our grand-fathers was pretty different to present times. Travels were planned and made not only involving a real displacement but also in weeks. The high-degree of mobility introduced by the last tech-revolution shortened the distances and times (Urry, 2007; Korstanje&Tarlow, 2012; Vannini, 2012; Tzanelli, 2014a; 2014b). The same technology paved the ways for the advance of a new virtual world, where even travels are made through cyberspace. Although, few academic studies have focused on this issue, virtual-touring represents a common practice in post-industrial societies. In specific terms, virtual tour seems to be a “simulation” generated by special software, where the user meets with fictitious landscapes or pictures taken by other visitors of real landscapes. The experience of this, though it is manipulated by the multimedia, is authentic by many persons. Is this new phenomenon a sign of our irreversible alienation or a new way of escapement without moving?.

As this backdrop, Kaelber contends that trauma-scape if hard to access physically can be encouraged through virtual world. These forms of access can be of three types, tourism on-line, online-tourism and virtual tourism. Whereas tourism on-line limits to provide complementary information that couples to a real travel such as brochures, online tourism is characterized by the emotions surfaced after a virtualized snapshot which is based on a real site. Galleries often portray a set of pictures enrooted in certain territory. Lastly, virtual tourism is fully constructed and reconstructed in cyberspace. The last one subtype is unique in many forms (Kaelber, 2007).

The confusion as to what dark tourism may be or not authentic rests on shaky foundations. Death is symbolically appropriated by the self from different ways. Dark tourism exhibits a pathway to interpreting death among many others else. The fascination of understanding death is enrooted in the core of industrial society. To set an example, TV programs, journalists, and TV series dedicated to cover murders work, like dark tourism, as disciplinary mechanism to control the other death. It is unfortunate that the concept of “thanatopsis” was misunderstood by some tourism scholars as Seaton or Sharpley. To put this in straights, the term was originally coined by the American poet William Cullen Bryant (1817) to denote the needs of anticipating the own death through the eyes of others. Those who have read this poem will agree that other deaths make us feel better because we avoided temporarily our end. At time we want to retain life, we are suffering because death is inevitable. To overcome this existential obstacle, we have to listen to “nature”. Our death is a vital process in the transformation of life cycle in the earth. To be more precise, Bryant alludes to “thanatopsis” as the happiness for life, which only is possible at time of accepting own-death. This does not mean or explain the current fascination for other’s death since “Thanatopsis” represents a pantheist concept of evolution. This is the opposite how Sharpley, Lennon and Seaton and British school understand what thanatopsis is. This poses two questions, how we may explain our current fascination for death?, and to what an extent virtual dark tourism is ethical?.

## **Thana-Capitalism**

As discussed in earlier section, the term thana-capitalism comes from thanatopsis which was coined by Willian Cullen Bryant (1948) to describe a state of nostalgia to see life through the eyes of death. It signalled to the needs of recycling life through death and vice-versa. In other terms, we are not born to live, because we are dying while growing. This neologism comes from the word Thanatos (Greek) which means death. In this token, modernity and death seems to be inextricably intertwined. In this vein, Phillipe Aries calls the attention to the fact that in Middle Ages peasants were subject to countless dangers and real death was just around the corner. With the expansion of life expectancy, modern citizens expanded their hopes to live but undomesticated the death producing a paradoxical situation. Effects of disaster or mass-death will resonate in modern capitalist society higher than in medieval times (Aries

2013). In a world full of social inequalities, not surprisingly, death corresponds with a criterion of exclusion but what is more important; in the current times, death-seekers not only are moved by Thanatos or a death-drive, but are in quest of reinforcing their ego by the Other's death. Dark tourism became in one of the most growing segments of tourism in recent days. Zone of extreme poverty situated in the periphery as India, Brazil, or South-Africa offers a fertile ground for visiting places characterized by slumming and ghettoization. Similarly, to dark tourism, slum tourism initiated new trends where the criterion of attraction seems to be human suffering (Reijnders 2009; Freire Medeiros 2014; Tzanelli 2015; 2016). In fact, as Tzanelli (2016) puts it, Thana-tourism and slum-tourism are inextricably intertwined since both are efforts to re-interpret the pastime according to the needs of financial elite, which do not make responsible for the arbitrariness of colonization process. The aura of special travellers, very important persons dotted of higher mobility is reinforced to gaze "others had not the same luck". It is interesting to discuss to what extent capitalism, even in these modern times, encouraged the mobilities of few, constrained the work-force to immobility. Quite aside from this initial debate, scholars interested in dark tourism issues agree that visitors are aimed at experiencing new sensation, or are in quest of novel experiences, where the "Death of Others" serves to shed light on their own lives (Seaton 1996; Lennon & Foley, 1999).

In this respect, Seaton defines Thana tourism as the travel dimension towards thanatopsis understood this as a trip to a site wholly or partially motivated by the desire of meeting death (Seaton, 1996). Others of the authoritative voices of this topic, P. Stone addresses this meaning anew taking into consideration the wider role of media, in covering not only spots of disaster as ground-zero or New Orleans but other interesting sites as memorable prisons as Alcatraz or Auschwitz. The complexity of this issue leads Stone to see Dark tourism under the lens of a spectrum which oscillates from lightest to darkest dimensions. For Stone's account, dark tourism represents an anthropological need to anticipate the own death by means of Others' death. In retrospect, this deep-seated issue mediates in ways of filter between life and death crystalizing a modern symbolic platform so that the self to negotiate the ontological meanings of its own mortality (Stone 2012). With some exceptions, one of the conceptual problems of applied research or fieldwork in dark tourism issues not only is the lack of shared meaning of the term, but also an "over-reliance" in positivism which postulates the asking is the only way towards truth. As my own experience as ethnologist, I have a plenty of anecdotes where interviewees simply lie or are not familiar with their inner-emotions. Under some contexts, administering closed-or-open questionnaires' or obtrusive interviews obscure more than it clarifies. This is the reason to reconsider dark tourism beyond what tourists or visitors believe. Apparently, they will respond their motivations are associated to heritage consumption, or knowing further on tragic event enrooted in history, but far from this, their motivations go to the opposite direction (Korstanje, 2014). Therefore, in earlier approaches Korstanje (2014), Korstanje and Ivanov (2012) and Korstanje and George (2015) exerted a radical criticism on dark-tourism approaches. Underpinned in the propositions of Malinowski that death causes a symbolic rupture of in-group members and officialdom, a gap which should be fulfilled by rituals, Korstanje argues convincingly that disasters not only produces a great trauma in society, but rattles her socio-political scaffolding. At some extent, tourism broadly speaking and dark tourism more specifically, work as mechanisms of resilience to give a lesson to community about the event (Korstanje & Ivanov 2012). This discourse facilitates the steps towards an efficient recovery process. Nonetheless, over recent years, a radical shift surfaced (Korstanje & George 2015). To wit, disasters pose as the commodity for media and cultural industries to construct a "spectacle" that instill a combination of fear and entertainment to a much wider globalized audience. In this respect, Naomi Klein (2007) explores the obsession for capitalism to produce allegories of disasters through the media. She contends that elite alludes to fear not only for work-force to accept policies otherwise should be rejected, but to

### *The Rise of Death-seekers: Commoditizing Death.*

recycle geographical spaces according to Schumpeter's term, the logic of "the creative destruction". As Korstanje (2015) observed, in post-disaster contexts, victims face a great mourning or extreme loss which disorganizes their feelings. However, they feel that after all, Gods have protected them. Despite the great obliteration, survivors develop a biased image of themselves, understanding they have survived by some supernatural strength-holds as virtue, force, or any type of superior spirit. Just there where "Others" have been domed, they were chosen by God(s), fate or destiny. In view of this, these token follows a goal, which often are associate to violence resistance or the quest for justice. Reactions like this are typical of victims in post trauma conjecture, but if it is not regulated, pathological forms of behaviours as nationalism, Chauvinism or disproportionate Ethnocentrism can emerge. The idea of exceptionalism by means survivors sublimate their pain leads towards a state of narcissism, where they feel special, superior, more-civilized and outstanding respecting to Others (Korstanje 2015). Precisely, this is the moot-point that characterizes the ideological core of Thana-Capitalism, where the needs in gazing for disasters with victimization coexist. To put this in brutally, this is a society that valorises death over other social values. In next section, the passage from risk-capitalism to a Thana-Capitalism will be placed under the critical lens of scrutiny.

## **From Risk Society to Thana Capitalism**

The Old society of risk, technically, starts with the nuclear accident in Chernobyl, Ukraine. This event reorganized the already-existent hierarchal order to a new reflective logic. In decline, the classic institutions created by welfare state were unable to protect citizens no longer. Ulrich Beck, who was one of the pioneers in envisaging a radical change in political making up, argued that the sense of community is now based on the risk perception (Beck, 1992). In the society of risks, the process of knowledge production leads to a state of complexity that creates a paradoxical situation. The same technology originally designed to make safer the life of people, if unregulated it can result in a real disaster. The old Word of classes where the first Marxists exerted their radical critique has set the pace to a new one. The classic division between riches and pours, or have and have-nots has gone forever. Now, all citizens seem to be equal before to risk. The stage of globalization that accelerated the transport orchestrated a closed-system which is very well market-oriented to mass-consumption. For exegetes of Thana Capitalism, who echo social Darwinist, economic inequalities among class can be compared to the conception of life. If millions spermatozoids compete for the fecundation of an ovule, this suggests that only one will be the winner. Unlike risk society, in this new age, few concentrates much while the rest live with lower resources.

The society of risk operates under the logic of protection. No matter neither the causes nor the ideological position, nation-state endorses the market to function as protector of citizenry. The means of production corresponds with a decentralized way, where the process of reflexivity plays a crucial role. This leads to the atomization of agents, which are segmented by marketing experts to be bombarded by different products. In this epoch that begins with Chernobyl, society changes from an economy of producers to an economy of consumers (Donohue, 2003). The paradigm of protection supports the over-valorisation of Science as the only instrument capable to provide and disseminate valuable information to make the life safer. Undoubtedly, Chernobyl poses a serious dilemma to the use of technology. The same took-kit used to protect society can be fertile towards a real disaster. Paul Virilio has envisaged this apocalyptic scenario in his book *The University of Disaster*. Starting from the premise that the produced knowledge that determined the interests of scientists at universities has changed, Virilio argues that there is an epistemological dispersion by means researchers fail to get an all-encompassing model to understand reality. At a closer look, science passed to lead a position to produce a precautionary platform to



inseminate fear in population. The days of science as an instrument towards a better world have passed. The greatest business corporations appeal to science not only to predict the weather, by the use of many climate catastrophe simulation softwares, but in introducing “an economic disaster modelling-geek”. The nets of experts seem to be more interested in locating and eliminating all risks that may threaten the current means of production, than in helping others (Virilio 2010). In this world, which has gone, risk, risk perception and the industry of insurances have pivoted the interactions in the societal order.

The epicentre of Thana Capitalism comes from the attacks to World Trade Centre in charge of Al-Qaeda, an event occurred 11 September of 2001. This shocking blow represented a turning point where Islam radicalism showed not only the weaknesses of West, but also how the means of transport which were the badge of US, were employed as mortal weapons directed towards civil targets. Educated and trained in the best wester universities, jihadist showed the dark side of the society of mass-consumption. Many of the steps followed by Al-Qaeda were emulated from a Management guidebook. This made-man disaster showed the proud USA that regardless strength, power or levels of development of the country, terrorism will be present in all central nations. From this moment on, nobody will feel safe anytime and in any place. As Catholic Church in Lisbon`s Quake through 1755, the rational basis of risk-experts or risk-related analysis was placed under the critical lens of scrutiny. Beyond what radical conservative in Bush`s administration precluded, this event initiated a new age where the concept of security and prevention start to dilute.

To put this in other terms, we passed from a society that prioritized the collective protection, to a new stage where “Others` pain” is used as an instrument of self-gratification. The concept of risk as the main value of modern capitalism as it was imagined by Beck sets the pace to death.

As discussed, Death seeker, the new class in Thana-capitalism, encompasses similarly-framed indicators. Though originally interested by heritage they have a naïve knowledge of the past, without or any real compromise by the Others, as charitable organizations show. Death seekers are visually attracted by suffering always it does not comprise further commitment with pours. Unlike those persons who are involved in real battle against poverty such as social workers, death-seekers use the others to reinforce their sense of superiority. Captivated by what is transmitted in the media, they select the networks according to their individual needs, framing relations according to their desires. Educated to be winners, they feel special, or exceptional in many angles and think the life is the place to show their skills. Since their gratification rests on the fact they are the only chosen by God to shed light on how the life should be lived, they do not hesitate to struggle against what is labeled as the evilness.

Death-seekers as this emergent class was baptized in this essay-review corresponds with a new group more prone to consume death, in many cases through visual and virtual high-technology. If we can detach their psychological profile in relevant points, the following scheme may help,

- ? They are lovely prone to discuss about events that do not involve them directly, as the war in Middle East, or the news in 60 minutes. However, in rare occasions this crystalizes in real help for others.
- ? Starting from the premise that the present time always is better than past, they have developed an ethnocentric view of non-western societies or ancient civilization.
- ? Death seekers only embrace heritage to understand this time is the best of the possible realms.
- ? This group appeals to claim how bad the world is, only to highlight their wellness or their particular situation. News on crimes, disasters, and sad events are used as a pretext to tell others how happy they are.
- ? In this case, death seekers did not understand reality unless by fact that events reinforce their cognitive background or previous beliefs.

### *The Rise of Death-seekers: Commoditizing Death.*

- ? They behave in an instrumental way, using people as means for achieving their goals. No genuine commitment with others are found.
- ? Serious problems to understand the otherness.
- ? Sites of mass-death, disaster or suffering (Thana-Tourism) are often selected as the primary destinations for visiting in holidays.
- ? Since they are special, death consumers feel they have the right to interact with others well-skilled like them.
- ? Death seekers support social Darwinism where the survival of strongest is the main cultural value.
- ? Consuming others suffering they feel special, superior or more important.
- ? They do not take part of charitable organizations or political militancy, unless by what they visually consumed through TV.
- ? Although they boast how altruist they are, they follow individual and instrumental ends in their life. It opens the doors to a dissociation between what they say and what they really do.
- ? Excessive endorsement to democracy which became Western civilization as a superior ladder in the process of evolution.
- ? Psychologically they feel problems can be solved only speaking. They are not pragmatist persons. Narcissism is enrooted in the psychological trait of death seekers.
- ? Frightful personalities that think the world is a dangerous place.
- ? Death seekers entertain witnessing how others struggle. Very open to mythical conflagrations as goodness against evilness, they symbolically associate death to “condemnation”. For them, the correct persons should not die.
- ? Pathological problems to understand death.

Regardless the political affiliation, they embrace “counterfeit politics”, or the theories of conspiracy. All these discussed indicators set the pace to a more complex scenario, where economy turns chaotic (unpredictable after financial stock and market crisis in 2008) where the atomized demands become in a competence of all against all (in the Hobbesian terms). The Darwinist allegory of the survival of strongest can be found as the main culture value of Thana-Capitalism in a way that is captivated by cultural entertainment industries and cinema. Films as Hunger Games portray an apocalyptic future where the elite govern with iron rule different colonies. A wealthy capitol which is geographically situated in Rocky Mountain serves as an exemplary centre, a hot-spot of consumption and hedonism where the spectacle prevails. The oppressed colonies are rushed to send their warriors who will struggle with others to death, in a bloody game that keeps people exciting. Although all participants work hard to enhance their skills, only one will reach the glory. The same can be observed in realities as Big Brother, where participants neglect the probabilities to fail simply because they over-valorise their own strongholds. This exactly seems to be what engages citizens to compete with others to survive, to show “they are worth of survive”. In sum, the sentiment of exceptionality triggered by these types of ideological spectacles disorganizes the social trust.

## **Conclusion**

Last but not least, capitalism signals to the constructions of allegories containing death prompting a radical rupture of self with others. Whenever we see ourselves as special, put others of different condition asunder. In a context of turbulence, the imposition of these discourse is conducive to the weakening of social fabric. Thematising disasters by dark-tourism consumption patterns, entails higher costs the disaster repeats in a near future. The political intervention in these sites covers the real reasons behind the event, which are radically altered to protect the interests of status quo. The political and economic powers erect monuments to symbolize sudden mass-death or trauma-spaces so that society reminds a

lesson, which allegory contains a biased or galvanized explanation of what happened. Though at some extent, community needs to produce these allegories to be kept in warning, the likelihoods the same disaster takes hit again seems to be a question of time (Korstanje 2014). As the previous argument given, Thana-Capitalism offers death (of others) as a Spectacle not only revitalizes the daily frustrations, but enhances a harmed ego. Visiting spaces of disasters during holidays, or watching news on terrorist attacks at home, all represents part of the same issue: the advent of new class death seekers.

## References

- Ariès, P. (2013). *The hour of our death*. New York, Vintage.
- Baudrillard J (1985). "Intellectual Commitment and Political power: an interview with Jean Baudrillard". Thesis Eleven.
- Baudrillard J (1986). *America*. New York: Verso.
- Baudrillard J (1995a). *The Systems of the Objects*. Mexico: Siglo XXI.
- Baudrillard J (1995b). *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Sydney: Power Publications
- Baudrillard, J. (1996). *The perfect crime*. London: Verso.
- Baudrillard, J. (1997). Aesthetic illusion and virtual reality. *Jean Baudrillard: Art and Artefact*, 19-27.
- Baudrillard J (2000). *Pantalla Total*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- Bauman, Z. (2008). *Liquid fear*. Buenos Aires, Paidós.
- Bryant, WC (1817). "Thanatopsis". *North American Review*, 5(15): 338–341
- Bauman, Z., & Lyon, D. (2013). *Liquid surveillance: A conversation*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (Vol. 17). London: Sage.
- Beck, U. (2002). The terrorist threat world risk society revisited. *Theory, culture & society*, 19(4): 39-55.
- Beck U (2006). *La Sociedad del Riesgo: hacia una nueva modernidad*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (Vol. 17). Thousands Oaks, Sage.
- Brunsmá, D., & Picou, J. S. (2008). Disasters in the twenty-first century: Modern destruction and future instruction. *Social Forces*, 87(2), 983-991.
- Bryant, W. C. (1948). The Genesis of "Thanatopsis". *New England Quarterly*, 163-184
- Freire-Medeiros, B. (2014). *Touring poverty*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Harvey, D. (1999). Time-space compression and the postmodern condition. *Modernity: Critical Concepts*, 4, 98-118.
- Kaelber, L. (2007) "A memorial as virtual traumascapes: darkest tourism in 3D and cyber space to the gas Chambers of Auschwitz". *E-Review of Tourism Research*. Vol. 5 (2): 24-33
- Koch, A. (2005). "Cyber citizen or cyborg citizen: Baudrillard, political agency, and the commons in virtual politics". *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 20(2-3), 159-175.
- Korstanje, M (2014a) "Review: dark tourism and place identity". *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*. DOI: 10.1080/14766825.2014.892560
- Korstanje, M. (2014b) "Review: heritage that hurts" *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. DOI: 10.1080/14766825.2014.892560.
- Korstanje, M. E (2014c). Chile helps Chile: exploring the effects of earthquake Chile 2010. *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment*, 5(4), 380-390.
- Korstanje M. E (2015) *A difficult World. Examining the roots of Capitalism*. New York, Nova Science Publishers.
- Korstanje, M. E., & George, B. (2015). *Dark Tourism: Revisiting Some Philosophical Issues*. *E-review of Tourism Research*, 12 (1-2): 127-136.
- Korstanje, M. E., & Ivanov, S. H. (2012). Tourism as a form of new psychological resilience: The inception of dark tourism. *cultur-Revista de Cultura e Turismo*, 6(4), 56-71.
- Miles, W. (2002). "Auschwitz: museum interpretation and Darker Tourism". *Annals of Tourism Research*. Vol. 29 (4), pp. 1175-1178.

*The Rise of Death-seekers: Commoditizing Death.*

- Lennon, J. J., & Foley, M. (1999). Interpretation of the unimaginable: the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, and “dark tourism”. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(1), 46-50.
- Quarantelli, E. L. (1960). A note on the protective function of the family in disasters. *Marriage and Family Living*, 22(3), 263-264.
- Quarantelli, E. L. (1980). The study of disaster movies: Research problems, findings, and implications.
- Raine, R. (2013) “A Dark Tourism spectrum”. *International Journal of Culture, tourism and hospitality Research*. Vol. 7 (3): 242-256
- Reijnders, S. (2009). Watching the Detectives Inside the Guilty Landscapes of Inspector Morse, Baantjer and Wallander. *European Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 165-181.
- Sather-Wagstaff, J. (2011). Heritage that hurts: Tourists in the memoryscapes of September 11 (Vol. 4). California, Left Coast Press.
- Seaton, A. V. (1996). Guided by the dark: From thanatopsis to thanatourism. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2(4), 234-244.
- Skoll, G. (2010). *Social Theory of Fear*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stone, P. R. (2012). Dark tourism and significant other death: Towards a model of mortality mediation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(3), 1565-1587.
- Tarlow, P. & Korstanje M. (2013) “How do you build the trip product? Tourism as a tool for post disaster recovery Fukuyima, Japan”. *Pasos: revista de turismo y patrimonio cultural*. Vol 10 (5): 629-369.
- Tzanelli, R. (2013) *Olympic Ceremonialism and the performance of national character*. ampshire, Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Tzanelli, R (2014a). “Embodied art and aesthetic performativity in the London 2012 handover to Rio (2016)”. *Global Studies Journal*, 6(2), 13-24.
- Tzanelli, R. (2014b). “Business as usual? Transforming Brazilian slumscapes in hyper-neoliberal digital environments”. *The Sociological Imagination*.. Available at [R Tzanelli - The Sociological Imagination, 2014 - eprints.whiterose.ac.uk](https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk)
- Tzanelli, R. (2015). On Avatar's (2009) Semiotecnologies: from Cinematic Utopias to Chinese Heritage Tourism. *Tourism Analysis*, 20(3), 269-282.
- Tzanelli R (2016) *Thana Tourism and the Cinematic Representation of Risk*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Urry, J (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Vannini, P. (2012). *Ferry tales: Mobility, place, and time on Canada's west coast*. New York, Routledge.
- Virilio, P. (2010). *University of disaster*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- White, L. & Frew E. (2013) *Dark Tourism: place and identity: managing and interpreting dark places*. London, Routledge
- Žižek, S. (2003). *The puppet and the dwarf: The perverse core of Christianity*. Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Žižek, S. (2006). On 9/11, New Yorkers faced the fire in the minds of men. *The Guardian*.

## About the Author

**Maximiliano E. Korstanje** is editor in chief of *International Journal of Safety and Security in Tourism* (UP Argentina) and *International Journal of Cyber Warfare and Terrorism* (IGI-GlobalUS). Besides being Senior Researchers in the Department of Economics at University of Palermo, Argentina, he is a global affiliate of *Tourism Crisis Management Institute* (University of Florida US), *Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies* (University of Leeds), *The Forge* (University of Lancaster and University of Leeds UK) and *The International Society for Philosopher*, hosted in Sheffield UK. With more than 800 published papers and 35 books, Korstanje is subject to biographical records for *Marquis Who's Who in the World*

since 2009. He had nominated to 5 honorary doctorates for his contribution in the study of the effects of terrorism in tourism. In 2015 he was awarded as Visiting Research Fellow at School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK. Email-[maxikorstanje@arnet.com.ar](mailto:maxikorstanje@arnet.com.ar)