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# Travelling through a powder keg: War and Tourist Imaginary in Sarajevo

Patrick Naef

The following lines refer to ongoing research presented during a conference at the University of California (Berkeley)<sup>1</sup>, more precisely within the framework of reflection on the agents which produce imaginary in the tourist sector. This study is based on empirical sources collected in the course of a research project still underway while this article was being written, and realized in Sarajevo during the summer of 2010, as well as in Vietnam and in Cambodia in 2009. The methodology included the use of semi-directed interviews, participant observation, as well as content analysis. Interviews were conducted with local tourist actors — guides, promoters, employees from the tourist sector — as well as with tourists. Furthermore, about ten guided tours, specifically related to the war theme, were taken. Finally, numerous objects and media, such as postcards, promotional materials, travellers' blogs or press articles were analysed in order to account for the ties between tourism and war.

I will highlight the imaginary-producing vectors which are specifically linked to the tourist industry (postcards, travel guides, promotional material, etc.), as well as others, not directly associated with the tourist industry, such as films portraying the region, and the war which scarred it. The main question underlying this analysis is whether the war, or more precisely the heritage left by the conflict, can constitute a reason for tourists to visit places such as Sarajevo. From this perspective, how can the objects mentioned above become vectors participating in the creation of different forms of imaginary closely linked to the war and its legacy? The presentation of certain practices and of certain objects which are directly related to tourism and the war will allow me to develop the notion of "war tourism" or alternatively of "post-conflict tourism", while situating it in the more general field of "dark tourism" (Lennon & Foley 2000, Stone 2006).

## The Balkan powder keg

To begin, let us briefly comment on the the image of the "powder keg", which is used in the title of this article, and which is often used to describe the Balkan region. This metaphorical and simplistic

vision aims at describing a territory passing from a stable and calm situation to an outburst of violence, due to an event which is considered as the "spark" leading to this explosion. Already in 1914, Sarajevo had been compared to a "powder keg" when the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian nationalist. This incident is seen as an event, in other words "the spark", which would lead to the outbreak of the First World War. This image would then frequently be used to refer to what is commonly called the "Balkan war", whether in media such as CNN or Euronews, or in films. The film entitled "Powder Keg"<sup>2</sup>, directed in 1998 by the Serbian film-maker Goran Paskaljevic, or "Fire!"<sup>3</sup>, by the Bosnian<sup>4</sup> Pjer Zalica already seem to be representative examples of the use of this metaphor. If these productions encountered a certain success outside of the former Yugoslavia, they nonetheless remained too discrete to participate in the construction of an imaginary for potential foreign visitors. The productions of a worldwide famous film-maker like Emir Kusturica, on the other hand, are in my opinion essential agents in the production of an an imaginary Balkan world, replete with Gypsy music, alcohol, and firearms. "Underground", for example, evokes the history of the region, from the Second World War to the conflict of the nineties, as seen by a community hiding underground. Kusturica is quite criticized in his homeland – Bosnia — in particular because of the subventions he might have received from Slobodan Milosevic's nationalist Serbian government, or again because of the content of his films, which some qualify as pro-Serbian – branding the film-maker as a "traitor". Although the aim of this article is not to return to the controversy surrounding the film-maker, it is still interesting to note that at the heart of the criticisms which are linked to him, some focus on the fanciful image which he gives of the region in his films, and which is often seen as derogatory. Indeed, there appears to be a huge gap between what is seen locally as the Balkan reality, and the "myth" transmitted by the film-maker, as supported by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek in an interview conducted during the film festival in Sarajevo in 2008: "[...] I think that cinema is today a field of ideological struggle, some struggle is going on there and we

even can see this clearly with regard to the horrible post-Yugoslav war; we have some of the films from here which are authentic but unfortunately the biggest successes were not authentic. By this I mean for example Emir Kusturica's "Underground." I think that film is almost tragic – I would not say misunderstanding, falsification – in the sense that: what image do you get of ex-Yugoslavia from that film? A kind of a crazy part of the world where people have sex, fornicate, drink and fight all the time; he is staging a certain myth which is what the West likes to see here in Balkans: this mythical other which has been the mythical other for a long period"<sup>5</sup>. He adds that the Balkans are constructed like the "unconscious" of Europe, which tends to project all "its obscenities and its dark secrets" on it. Thus the Balkans do not appear to be caught in the trap of their own dreams, but in those of Western Europe. This brings us back to our initial questioning of the construction of an imaginary, of "another" Balkan area, and to whether these "mythical or imagined Balkans" are present in the tourist field, as well as to how certain tourist objects can be seen as participating in the construction of this imaginary in the same way as the aforementioned films.

The image of the "Balkan powder keg" seems to be shared in many respects, and in order to understand the following lines, it would be interesting to briefly evoke how certain thinkers conceive of the ideas of imaginary and imagination. These notions have been dealt with by certain philosophers such as Plato, Spinoza or Kant, as well as by psychoanalysts such as Carl-Gustav Jung, who introduced the idea of collective unconsciousness, which includes all personal imaginaries. For the writer André Breton (1966), imaginary is what tends to become real. From the viewpoint of social sciences, anthropologists like Mircea Eliade, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Gilbert Durand developed the notion of imaginary through representations, myths or the common beliefs which help structure our societies. In an interview, Durand defined imaginary as a common basis: *"The museum of all images, whether those past, possible, produced, or to be produced."*<sup>6</sup> He added that if imaginary can appear in dreams for example, it can also adopt more concrete aspects as in myths, or art and even in television or movie films. From a spatial point of view, the notion of "geographical imaginary" has been highlighted by certain French geographers (Debarbieux, Lussault) and can be defined as *"all the related mental images which bestow the individual or the group with a meaning and a coherence in localisation, distribution and interaction of phenomena in space"* (Lévi, Lussault,

2003, p. 489). According to the Lévi and Lussault dictionary, there is still a lot of resistance to including this notion in the academic field due to *"the very Platonic [idea] that the imaginary is defined in counterpoint to reality"* (2003, p. 490).

In the field of research on tourism, Rachid Amirou (1999, p. 22), through a psychosocial approach, has looked into *"the mythical and anthropological foundations of tourist behaviour."* He thus emphasizes the notion of "tourist imaginary" and presents tourism as a triple quest, that of place, self and other: *"From this perspective, tourist imaginary can be considered from three angles. First of all, it refers to exoticism, which is rooted in the symbolism of places and space. Indeed, for each specific place (Paris, Rio, Calcutta...) and to each type of space (mountain, desert or beach) there are corresponding images, narratives and representations which guide and organize tourists' conducts. The two other dimensions refer to tourism as a personal experience. In the relation to self, it is a manifestation of a quest for meaning. In one's relationship to others, it expresses the search for certain types of sociability which offer an alternative to daily life."* The author also notes that the functions of stereotypical images which shape the tourist universe have been neglected by researchers in the field and he also advances the idea of tourism as a transitional object, taking his inspiration from the theories of Donald Winnicott, the child psychiatrist. Thus, in the same way as a children's game would allow for the transition *"between a state of union with the mother to a state where he is related to her, as an outside and separate subject"* (1994, p.151), the tourist imaginary would take place in an *"intermediate sphere of experience"*, thus facilitating the transition between the here and there, between the known and the unknown. These stereotypical images, even with their distorting dimension, would thus play an essential role in how tourists comprehend the unknown. As for Noel Salazar, he replaces tourism in the conceptual framework defined by David Harvey as *"the image-production industry"*. He partially agrees with Amirou's theory of tourism as a transitional object, by presenting the notion of tourist culture as *"more than physical travel, it [tourist culture] is the preparation of people to see others places as an object of tourism, and the preparation of those places to be seen"* (2009, p. 50). The author, in reflecting upon the influence of tourist imaginary on the Masai society, asserts that the relevant question would be to know how tourism and imaginary associated with it might shape and reshape cultures and societies. He

presents the elements which may participate, with tourism, in remodelling cultures, while insisting on the importance of the role of the media originating from popular culture: *"The influence of popular culture media forms—the visual and textual content of documentaries and movies; art and museum exhibitions; trade cards, video games, and animation; photographs, slides, video, and postcards; travelogues, blogs, and other websites; guidebooks and tourist brochures; coffee table books and magazines; literature; advertising; and quasi-scientific media like National Geographic—is much bigger"* (2009, p. 51). According to him, the analysis of imaginary could thus allow for a deconstructing of stereotypes and clichés, in a sociocultural, political and ideological perspective (2010, p. 7).

As one can see, whether one is speaking of imaginary in general or of tourist imaginary, several authors agree on the importance of popular culture and of the media associated with it in constructing imaginaries. If there seems to be no doubt that these elements — media, tourist objects, artistic creations, etc. — contribute to modelling these imaginaries, it is also important to observe how these imaginaries shape and influence a tourist destination, but also, as Salazar suggests, societies and cultures in general.

### From war to tourism

In Sarajevo, the Bascarsija neighbourhood, which constitutes the bazaar and the historical centre of the Bosnian capital, has also become the main tourist centre of the country again, since 2005, when a certain number of foreign tourists started returning. In the midst of Ottoman-style constructions, mosques, churches, small shops and souvenir shops stand side by side. Among the material traditionally sold to tourists, certain objects are quite unusual. Among the postcards representing the main sites of interest of the city, onlookers can find other postcards, directly linked to the war of the 1990s. The first card shown here (figure 1) represents a meeting of the Bosnian army staff during the siege, another illustrates the burying of several coffins (figure 2), a third presents four key moments of the History of the city (figure 3): the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the golden age of the Bosnian capital with the organisation of the Olympic Games of Sarajevo in 1984, the five years of siege from 1991 to 1995, and the current period ironically described under the heading: "No problem".



**1992 SARAJEVO 2002**

Figure 1 (Z. Filipovic)



**1992 SARAJEVO 2002**

Figure 2 (Z. Filipovic)



Figure 3 (Z. Jusufovic)

The tourist guides sold in the souvenir shops also offer an interesting analysis. Among the several travel and classic hiking guides on display, one work seems to stand out: *The Sarajevo Survival Guide*. Behind the catchphrase "Greetings from Sunny Sarajevo!", this book is structured like a classic travel guide with different chapters such as: "Getting around", "Sarajevo by night", or "Where to dine". Nonetheless, the chapter "Sarajevo by night" in no way presents the fashionable nightclubs in town, but details the different techniques used

during the time of the siege to produce electricity. In the same way, the chapter on "Transportation", relates the means used by the inhabitants to move around while avoiding snipers and does not offer an inventory of public transportation in the city. This parody of a tourist guide was produced during the siege by an association named FAMA, which included journalists, writers and artists, all of whom were already very committed and critical of the current government even before the war. One thus finds oneself facing a object of memory through the subversion of a tourist object, as testified by the preface of the work: *"The guide book to Sarajevo intends to be a version of Michelin, taking visitors through the city and instructing them on how to survive without transportation, hotels, taxis, telephones, food, shops, heating, water, information, electricity. It is a chronicle, a guide for survival, a part of the future archive which shows the city of Sarajevo not as a victim, but as a place of experiment where it can still achieve victory over terror, the (sur)real, 'The Day After, Contemporary SF, the scene of factual 'Mad Max 5'"* (FAMA, 1993, p. 1). Still, this work is sold in the souvenir shops among the classic tourist guides and post cards. This subversion process can also be observed in the case of tourist maps representing the city of Sarajevo or the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The FAMA association has thus produced a map of the city, on the same model as a tourist map representing all the landmarks except that the highlighted sites are directly linked to the siege, as for example the post office building, the Holiday Inn – a refuge for journalists during the conflict – and even the tobacco factory which never stopped running during the siege, and which is thus described on the back of the map: *"The 'Marlboro' cigarettes produced in the factory under the Philip Morris license was one of the most prized cigarettes brands in former Yugoslavia. There is the cult of the cigarette in Sarajevo. Although a large quantity of the stored tobacco was destroyed, the factory managed to produce small amounts of cigarettes throughout the siege. In spite of their inferior quality they were eagerly bought sometimes at 100 DM (70\$) per carton. Cigarettes were the most valued barter commodity. For a pack of cigarettes one could get several tins of humanitarian food. Due to the lack of paper, cigarettes were rolled into various textbooks, books and official documents. You couldn't read on them warnings about health hazards but you could learn for instance, about the process of producing copper. The citizens were often telling the story about how Sarajevo would have surrendered had the cigarettes disappeared"*<sup>7</sup>. In the same context, FAMA produced a geopolitical map

of the whole of the ex-Yugoslav Republics, representing the landmarks of the war (Sarajevo, Vukovar, Mostar, Srebrenica, etc.), the different armies, the refugee camps, or population movements. In the same way as the parody of the tourist guide described above, these "war maps" are sold among the road maps and the hiking maps in shops specially aimed at tourists. After having highlighted these different objects situated between war and tourism, special attention will now be devoted to different practices engaging these war-time and tourist aspects.

#### War and guided tours

In the city of Sarajevo, different tours are offered to the visitors who wish to see the sites of the conflict. The *Times of Misfortune Tour* (figure 4), organised by the Tourist Office of the district of Sarajevo, first offers a short tour of the city in a minibus following the traces of the war. The itinerary ends in a tunnel, which was transformed fifteen years ago into a museum, and which at the time represented the only link between the besieged city and the outer world. These tours include half a dozen participants and are generally conducted by students, who, if they were not present during the war, spent their years of exile abroad and thus speak one or several foreign languages, which allows them to interact with tourists.

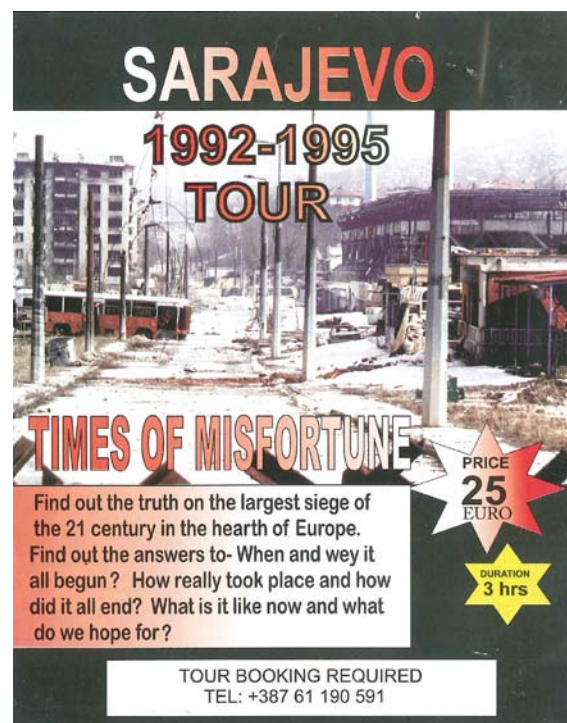


Figure 4 (Sarajevo Tourism Office)

Moreover, the *Mission Impossible Tour*, organised independently by Zijad Jusufovic, offers a wider panorama of the sites related to the conflict “*You see smiling people, nice dresses, happy foreigners. It’s good... But now you are going to see the bad side of Sarajevo. Places that are not on the map. Places that are not recommended. Places that are covered*” (July 2010). These are the introductory words to the tour by this independent guide who will take the visitors through the ruins of the last war. The *Mission Impossible Tour*, besides the tunnel mentioned earlier, proposes in its visit program sites such as the ruins of the antifascist monument, of what he himself calls “the market of the mujahidin” at the bottom of the Mosque of King Fahd<sup>8</sup>, and even the vestiges of the bobsleigh run dating from the 1984 Olympic Games. This guide, who introduces himself as being the first with official accreditation in the post-conflict period, insists on the fact that his speech is unbiased and his words true – as they stem from numerous surveys carried out by himself during the post-war years – as well as on the unique nature of what he is going to present. He does not hesitate to question the information supplied by the Tourist Office guides, claiming a certain freedom of speech, contrary to less independent actors, as in this case where he is speaking about the tunnel of Sarajevo: “*My presentation is a little bit different...They [the guides of the Tourist Office] speak too much...There is too much information without big possibilities to memorize...to rememorize. And nobody will mention the black market for instance...and the other tunnel they started to build very close to this tunnel...for cars...nobody will mention it*” (July 2010). The objective here is not to define who holds the truth among the actors of the tourist sector, but rather to observe the way war enters the the field of tourism and how this tourist development participates in the creation of a certain imaginary linked to this scarred region and its war-time history. Now let us observe this process of tourist development by studying a specific site more in depth.

#### *The mystery tunnel*

The tunnel of Sarajevo mentioned previously – also named the “*Tunnel of Hope*” –situated on the outskirts of the city now constitutes one of the most visited attractions of Sarajevo, with several hundred visitors a day. This site is one of the most important symbols of the war, but also of the resistance put up by the Bosnian army. The guides’ speeches in fact always describe the archaic means which led to the building of this tunnel, and at the same time to the heroic resistance put up by the

Bosnian army, which was clearly inferior in terms of numbers and arms. The battle of the Bosnian forces is often compared in fact to the battle of David against Goliath. If the less flattering aspects of the tunnel’s history — the black market, the war profiteers, etc. — are indeed less present in the speeches of the guides hired by the tourist office than in those of a more independent guide like Zijad Jusufovic, it would be wrong however to assert that these elements are totally ignored. One guide, a member of the family which manages this new museum, explicitly described the practices linked to the black market which took place in this tunnel during the war, and this was during a visit organized by the Tourist Office. In fact, a French tourist participating in the *Times of Misfortune Tour*, remarks that: “*France waited forty years before speaking of the existence of a black market during the Second World War*” (July 2010). In any case, it is interesting to note that in a city like Sarajevo, whose cultural heritage was already attracting numerous tourists before the siege, the war-time history now constitutes one of the main reasons for visiting, as underlined by the guide working for the Tourist Office of the Sarajevo district: “*The Times of Misfortune tour is the most demanded of our tours with the Historical tour*”<sup>9</sup> (July 2010). This observation can in fact be supported by certain remarks collected from tourists visiting the scars of the war, as this French woman explains: “*We left for Croatia, and went as far as Mostar and then we finally decided on Sarajevo...We find the people in Bosnia more spontaneous, less “commercially-minded”. And it’s also full of history and very interesting to see a country recovering from its scars*” (July 2010). The two following quotations are taken from the guest book of an exhibition dealing specifically with the siege and being held in the History Museum of the city. Here is what an American tourist writes: “*My time here in the museum and in the city has opened my eyes to a thing I only saw on TV as a young 20 year-old girl*”. Another German tourist remarks: “*I was almost a teenager when I saw pictures of this terrifying war on TV and radio. It was impressive enough to make me want to come [...]*”. The will to understand and to see with one’s own eyes a place traumatized during the 1990s, and which made international headlines is a valid reason for these international visitors touring the Bosnian capital. Thus in the same way as certain films quoted above, media such as CNN or Euronews could be considered as participant agents, if not in constructing one (or several) imaginary/ies, in any case in constructing representations of a place marked by such savagery, that individuals from the whole world visit

it in order to understand. If of course this observation requires to be supported by a more developed empirical work, these few elements enable one to situate the war, or at least some of the elements of heritage which are linked to it, as an essential object linked to the international image of Sarajevo. After this first part presenting several empirical elements, we should now look at the existing literature, as well as at other cases in the world, in order to develop this reflection which puts war, tourism and imaginary into perspective.

### War tourism: imagination, imaginary and aura

As we have seen, almost fifteen years later, the Balkan war is still fully anchored in the images evoked by this region. Following the perspective of a chronological distance, this analysis could be enriched by a survey of the influence that older armed conflicts have on representations on the international level. Victor Alneng has looked into the ties between the tourist sector and the heritage left by the Vietnam War, by studying the comments of backpackers travelling through the country. He does not refer directly to the notion of "imaginary", but introduces that of "phantasm" and of "aura", which, according to him are in great part products of the Hollywood film industry. Thus, the Phantasms of tourists travelling in South-East Asia are mostly shaped by films such as "Platoon" or "Apocalypse Now". He asserts that these Phantasms are the main attraction factors for those backpackers visiting Vietnam, thus giving a particular aura to a country which saw a great part of its heritage disappear during the war: *"Ironically, while the war left most heritage sites otherwise destined for great tourism in ruins, war blessed Vietnam with others sites — the Cu Chi tunnels, The DMZ, My Lai, China Beach, Hamburger Hill, Ke Sanh, The Rex, — with their own seductive and unique aura"* (Alneng, 2002, p. 462). He adds that the fantasized aspect of the representations these tourists have depends on their imagination which he sees as an "elaborate social practice", and that the tourist industry will tend to structure itself in agreement with these Phantasms. The author takes the example of the tunnels of Cu Chi, one of the sites most known for its horror during the conflict and which is now one of the most widely visited tourist attractions in the country. Those who visit this place, the majority of whom are Westerners, are led by a guide through a eucalyptus forest which harbours the remains of these tunnels, a great part of which have been rebuilt. The site is presented like a theme park on war where employees have donned the North-Vietnamese or Vietcong uniforms. The tourists can

also participate in trying period weapons (a bullet shot from an M-16 or an AK-47 costs a dollar), in going through the tunnels, and even in donning period military uniforms. At this point, the guide encourages the visitors "to live the war as if they were soldiers in the guerrilla"<sup>10</sup>. According to Alneng, *"The tunnel tour — dubbed 'Vietnam's answer to Disneyland and Disney and Fellini to Nam's by visitors' — is organized to have tourists make-believe they are heroic Vietcongs; they crawl into the tunnels, eat Vietcong food and join the Vietcong dolls for photos. [...] Some confess to be true GI-wannabes with a hedonistic repertoire of boozing, drugging and whoring. Adding to this their proclivity for war memorabilia, they present themselves as not too far stereotypes of wartime GIs"* (Alneng, 2002, p. 474). For the author, this place is still a war site, the site of a new war: *"A war of ideological napalm and propaganda booby-traps. This new war is a meta-war. A metamorphosis — the death of Vietnam as a country and the resurrection of Vietnam as a war"* (Alneng, 2002, p. 479). Finally, he adds that by promoting these war sites, the tourist sector tends to create the portrait of a country *"bombed back into the Stone Age [...]"* (Alneng, 2002, p. 485). This remark is reminiscent in part of the words of the philosopher Žižek, quoted above on the subject of the Balkans, when he presents the films of Emir Kusturica as the source of a stereotypical vision of a region, caught in the trap of an international imaginary equating the place with arms and bloodshed.

### From war to nightclubs

This presence of a wartime heritage can also be observed in a sector that, if it is still very closely linked to the notion of leisure, is not on the face of it directly related to the tourist industry. In Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, a nightclub well-known to foreign travellers is named "Heart of Darkness"<sup>11</sup>, whereas in certain large cities in Vietnam such as Ho Chi Minh City, Hue or Hanoi, one can find a chain of nightclubs called "Apocalypse Now". First of all, it is no doubt important to specify that these venues are supposed to be open to all, although the prices and the bouncers posted at the entrance mean that most of the locals present during the evening are in general professionals (prostitutes, waiters, etc.). In this line of ideas, one can suppose that the great majority of the public in these places is composed of tourists. In addition, I would uphold that the names of these places as well as their settings are reminiscent of a wartime atmosphere, adding an element of adventure to the imaginary of the

visitors as suggested by these two backpackers' commentaries collected on travellers' blogs<sup>12</sup> and which concern the "Heart of Darkness" nightclub in Phnom Penh:

*"The place itself is nothing special, but the crowd it attracts is amazing. We had an adventure every time we went to that bar."* (August 2009)

*"Music was good and beer reasonable. You must visit! Ignore all the rumours about shootings! - the only shots are behind the bar!"* (October 2005)

The following commentary, which is much more critical, refers to Anleng's analysis on the influence of the Hollywood industry on those backpackers travelling in South Asia: *"Heart of Darkness is OK if you think that clubbing with a bunch of Hollywood Wannabees pretending to be 'Gangstas' is cool. Total pretentious crap"* (December 2009). In fact, Anleng mentions the "Apocalypse Now" nightclubs in his article, noting the "Platoon" and the "Apocalypse Now" posters on the wall, as well as the ceiling fans, reminiscent of the helicopter blades during wartime: *"In movies and phantasms, the war is, among other things, about Vietnamese girls who will 'boom-boom' Western males for a few dollars. Back then the foreigners were American GIs but nowadays the FNGs<sup>13</sup> are tourists sipping B-52 cocktails at Apocalypse Now. Sometimes those two categories merge – an ex-GI with his dog tag gold-mounted, a Vietnamese 'girlfriend-for-rent' in his lap, wearing a fatigue hat sporting the slogan 'My business is death, and business has been good', once honoured Pham Ngu Lao Street with his presence"* (Anleng, 2002, p. 471). We thus see that the scars of the war which marked Vietnam are in fact very present in fields directly or closely linked to the tourist industry. After these remarks related to the Vietnamese context, and to a lesser extent to the Cambodian one, it is now time to return to the context of the Balkans, in order to observe certain sites more precisely and especially the way in which the latter are developed and promoted as tourist sites.

### **Bosnia-Herzegovina between war and imaginary**

The Balkan war is still very present in people's memories. Admittedly, this conflict has not gone through the legacy process which other conflicts like the Vietnam War have experienced. Sites linked to the war in ex-Yugoslavia have not experienced mechanisms of tourist development comparable to certain Vietnamese examples. The tunnel of Sarajevo represents one of the main tourist

attractions of Sarajevo and of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This site was reconverted when the Bosnian army abandoned the scene at the end of the siege, thus giving back the house which harboured the entrance to the tunnel to its owner, Bajro Kollar. The latter, rather than move back into his place of residence, decided to convert it into a museum. The whole operation was conducted without the slightest support from the government and thus represents a totally private enterprise, and even a family one, since the site is now managed by the owner and his family. The lack of hindsight between the current period and that of the conflict implies that today only a very limited academic reflection exists on the links between tourism and war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in the Balkan region in general. In his dissertation research, Senija Causevic studied the redevelopment of tourism in Bosnia and in Northern Ireland in a post-conflict context. She first studied the reconstruction of the image and the promotion of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination for the international market, showing that it was easier in the end to promote this island as an "unknown land" after a long-term conflict. Following this idea of discovery and adventure, she presented the tunnel of Sarajevo as a "symbol of the unknown": *"Speaking more generically, the tunnel is perceived as secret and mystical, a symbol of the unknown. What is on the other side of the tunnel? The reason for the Sarajevo Tunnel being the most visited site is that the story of the conflict is explained through the ordinary people of Sarajevo, people in every sense similar to the tourists themselves and whose lives were saved thanks to that tunnel. The result is a cathartic moment. People come to those sites because they themselves want to find the meaning of life"* (Causevic, 2008, p. 246). However, according to this author, visiting a place such as the tunnel of Sarajevo is not only limited to its cathartic aspect: *"Backpackers visit Bosnia-Herzegovina to show off to their peers back home they were in a 'war torn' area, and to show off their perceived western superiority over Bosnia, a post-conflict country. Regarding the first, this illustrates superficiality. People want to think that Bosnia-Herzegovina is a war torn country and being there provides an ego boost."* Once again, this observation concurs with Žižek's remarks quoted above, which call into question this obscure and simplistic vision, assimilating Bosnia to the black hole of Europe in a certain way. If the notion of "mystery and unknown" is highlighted and presented as a feature of attraction, the media are also seen as an essential agent participating in international representations of the place. Causevic even

introduces the notion of the “CNN factor”: *“Generally speaking, media has both positive and negative implications in the process of destination re-imaging. [...] The interviewees called those negative media reports, a CNN factor. Whenever there are negative media reports and broadcasting, it has an implication towards the perception of the destination”* (Causevic, 2008, p. 139). In their founding work on “dark tourism”, Lennon and Foley insist on the post-modernist component of this phenomenon by their own demonstration of the importance of the media in the transformation of a war zone into a tourist attraction. According to them, once information and communication technologies have developed (radio, television, Internet), then the international media coverage linked to an event such as war is able to raise public interest and thus give rise to a tourist site associated with the conflict. According to Causevic, Sarajevo has only rarely been presented by the Hollywood film industry; it is mainly information media such as CNN that have propelled the Bosnian capital to the front of the international stage. Although the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia has not given rise to the same film coverage as the Vietnam war, one must nevertheless mention a certain number of local productions which have enjoyed a certain success, such as “No Man’s Land” by Danis Tanovic or “The Perfect Circle” by Ademir Kenovic. In fact, some even speak of a new genre: “the new post-Yugoslav war film”, listing more than three hundred documentary and feature films dealing with the collapse of ex-Yugoslavia<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the Hollywood industry has also contributed with productions such as “Harrison’s Flowers” or “Welcome to Sarejevo” which depict in a very simplistic and stereotypical way the conflict in Vukovar and Sarajevo, in line with the perspective of Western journalists. Of interest also is the strong protest by a women’s association – “The Women Victims of War” – against the latest film project of the American actress Angelina Jolie, leading to the revocation of her permission to shoot in Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Minister of Culture. The association questions the erroneous vision of History reflected in the scenario which relates a love story between a Serbian rapist and his Muslim victim<sup>15</sup>. This is a good illustration of the political dimension which affects the contents of a film associated with a recent conflict. Furthermore, it seems that these productions, whether they be international or local, can be seen as factors participating in the construction of imaginary for an international audience. When one speaks of the “CNN factor” or “Hollywood Factor”, it is more a question of knowing if one has to do with repellent

or attractive factors. It seems very simplistic to limit these factors solely to their repellent aspect, and the social-political stakes linked to these agents — which construct imaginary — should be made obvious, whether they are linked to tourism, cinema, or to the media in general.

Causevic and Anleng both show how the Hollywood industry tends to bring a trivial dimension to war by presenting it *“as a battle between good guys and the evil ones, where good guys always win”* (Causevic, 2008, p. 355). The American film “Harrison’s Flowers”, which describes the descent into hell of a journalist (played by Andie MacDowell) searching for her husband, a photographer who disappeared in Vukovar, is very representative of this simplistic and stereotypical vision of wartime History. The Serbian soldiers are presented as bloodthirsty barbarians, the local population as victims lacking any capacity to act, and the Western photojournalists as true heroes. Furthermore, as with Vietnam in “Apocalypse Now” or the Congo in “Heart of Darkness”, Vukovar and its region are depicted as hell on earth where the protagonists of history sink little by little, with a happy ending at the end. They thus introduce the notions of “trivialization” and of “Disneyfication” of the war through cinema or tourism (Causevic, 2008, Anleng, 2002). As we saw above, Anleng considers the Tunnels of Cu Chi in Vietnam as the Vietnamese response to Disneyland (Anleng, 2002). As for Christina Schwenkel, she has studied the representations of the Vietnam war according to a transnational perspective between the United States and Vietnam. She questions the trivialization and the historical detachment of sites linked to the conflict: *“Despite government efforts to retain its historical and commemorative significance, Vietnamese youth, in particular, have transformed the Cu Chi Tunnels into a site of entertainment that is largely detached from the war”* (Schwenkel, 2009, p. 97). According to her, the way the Cu Chi tunnel site is experienced, mainly by the young Vietnamese, generates anti-memory functions which suggest a detachment and a distance from the traumatic history of the nation. As for Causevic, she compares the Sarajevo tunnel to the tunnels of Cu Chi which she presents as two major tourist attractions, mentioning these processes of “Disneyfication”, and insisting on the fact that such sites must be understood and interpreted in all their historical depth: *“Denial is forbidden because it leads to Disneyfication”* (Causevic, 2008, p. 355). Finally, if this process of “Disneyfication” is much criticized according to a perspective of interpreting History, it can harm the tourist sector itself, in any

case if we are to believe the words of this tourist comparing the city of Mostar to that of Sarajevo: *"I feel better here in Sarajevo. In Mostar, it was very touristy and the tourist aspect slightly spoiled History"* (July 2010). Before concluding, let us take a quick glance at the theoretical framework in relationship with the research field which puts war and tourism into perspective, as well as trauma and tourism in a more general way.

#### **"Dark tourism" or "Hot tourism"?**

As it has been said, this study is part of a research field which is still emerging and the concepts and definitions which are associated with it still require to be well defined. Concerning the existing literature, the tourist development of sites marked by war is often analyzed through the notion of "dark tourism" (Lennon & Foley, 2000, Stone, 2006), and even that of "thanotourism" (Seaton, 1996), in the same way as sites linked to a natural disaster or a terrorist attack. The definition of "dark tourism", according to Lennon and Foley, is linked to the fact of visiting sites *"associated with death, disaster, and atrocity, such as battlefields, graves, accident sites, murder sites, places of assassination and death camps"* (Lennon & Foley, 2000, p. 4). This is also linked to the possible desire of tourists to satisfy a form of morbid curiosity. These authors are often representatives of a field which may be original, but which mainly springs from an Anglo-Saxon academic background and which comes firstly from the hotel industry, management and marketing sectors. Most of them rely on limited definitions and rigid typologies, which are often disconnected from reality, and based on mainly quantitative analyses. Stone (1996, p. 151) for example, tries to highlight the different nuances that "dark" can have on the spectrum going from the "darkest" to the "lightest". According to him, the Auschwitz site would be thus be much darker than the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., which is more disconnected from the genocide. Stone thus defines different categories which he places on a spectrum ranging from the darkest to the lightest. The different nuances of this continuum are determined by dimensions such as leisure and education, authenticity, location, chronological distance, as well as on the degree of tourist development. To understand the dynamics underlying the tourist development of these trauma sites, which in my opinion goes well beyond simple attraction or the exploitation of the macabre as implied by the definition of "dark tourism", more qualitative studies should be conducted and a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach in particular should

be adopted, in order to reflect beyond the sole sector of the tourist industry and the sensationalist remarks of certain media. As has been shown, the political and social implications linked to the tourist development of these sites are decisive in understanding this question well. This is what leads Causevic to say that: *"[...] war tours and general city tours in Sarajevo are very similar. Therefore dark tourism, which deals genuinely with war memorabilia sites, appears to be without meaning. War is a part of every city tour and history is a part of every war tour. Dark tourism as a category does not make any sense"* (Causevic, 2008, p. 355). On the other hand, but still from a critical viewpoint, Mark Piekarz deconstructs the concept of "battlefield tourism" by showing that the implications of such a form of tourism widely differ depending on the degree of resolution of the conflict. This type of "war tourism" or "battlefield tourism" is thus situated on a continuum ranging from hot to cold depending on the nature of the conflict and based on criteria such as the "rawness of the visual aesthetic" and the "degree of tidying up". The first criterion is linked to the removal of the "remains" of the conflict (car wrecks, destroyed buildings, bodies, etc.), whereas the second one is more related to reconstruction (the construction of cemeteries and of memorials, the securing of sites, etc.). The author insists on the fact that, depending on the context, a site can remain "hot" well after the official end of the war: *"For soldiers from the developed world, conflicts can be waged with almost clinical precision, with casualties generally removed from the conflict zone very quickly. For other parts of the world, wars and conflicts can still be fought with a ferocity and rawness familiar to past conflicts, where the sites of conflict can remain hot for years, owing to lack of resources, desire or time to remove the detritus or mess of war, [...]"* (Piekarz, 2007, p. 156). To take the example of Bosnia, certain zones are still infested with antipersonnel mines and as has been said throughout this text, numerous sites are still in ruins. Following Piekarz's reflection, it is thus not that obvious to position a place such as Sarajevo as a war site which is already completely cold. Piekarz thus shows that the concept of "battlefield tourism", understood as an element of "dark tourism", does not account for the diversity of practices that it includes. From tourists seeking strong sensations, to backpackers looking for an "ego boost" (Causevic) and visitors searching for knowledge and enrichment, many different types of tourists rub elbows in a city like Sarajevo. Furthermore, as one sees, it is difficult to posit a clear dividing line between a conflict period and a

post-conflict period, and indirectly a difference between “war tourism”, which would bring into play elements such as adventure, danger, as well as adrenaline, and “post-conflict tourism”, which would be based more on knowledge and closer to a form of cultural, historical or legacy tourism. On the basis of these last comments, if it already seems quite difficult to define practices such as “post-conflict tourism” or “war tourism”, it seems that one can question even more seriously the will to classify sites like the tunnel of Sarajevo, the tunnels of Cu Chi, or other sites like Auschwitz or the Holocaust Museum, following typologies such as those suggested by certain representatives of “dark tourism”.

### Conclusion

The real traces of war, as well as their exploitation by the cinema, are clearly present and used in sectors directly or indirectly linked to tourism. Whether one refers to notions of imagination, imaginary or aura, it seems that these constant references to the war-time history of a country or a region are certain to have an impact on the representations of an international audience. Conversely, visitors’ representations tend to influence the way a conflict can be exploited in the tourist industry, as suggested by Anleng in the case of Vietnam. To return more specifically to the notion of tourist imaginary developed above by Amirou and Salazar, it seems clear enough that imaginary associated with war is present for tourists visiting a city such as Sarajevo. This can be confirmed on the one hand by the numerous references to the conflict given by the tourists when they are interviewed, but also by the large numbers of visitors on certain sites of the conflict, such as the tunnel of Sarajevo. Furthermore, the substantial place granted to the history of the war in the touristic panorama of the city (postcards, guides, theme tours, etc.) shows that this imaginary influences and shapes the tourist destination Sarajevo has become (or is becoming) again. But if the tourist imaginary linked to war has a definite influence on the Bosnian tourist panorama, one may nevertheless question its propensity to influence society as a whole as postulated by Salazar in the case of the Masai society. In any case, if, as asserted by Amirou, images correspond to each place, war could thus represent Sarajevo in the same way as the Eiffel Tower represents Paris or as Auschwitz represents Poland. It is important however not to fall into rigid patterns which would assimilate the whole tourist panorama of a country to the war which left it scarred. Indeed, if a good

number of major tourist attractions in countries such as Vietnam or Bosnia are directly associated with the war, they certainly do not represent all of the sites. This leads me to partly question Anleng’s remark which asserts that *“if Vietnam is a war, then all visitors are war tourists, like it or not”* (2002, p. 485). Indeed, it seems a little simplistic to limit the Vietnamese heritage, and indirectly its tourist potential, to the sole scars of war. If the traces of the conflict, whether in Vietnam, in Cambodia, or in Bosnia, undeniably represent a motivation for tourists to visit, the legacy of the war does not always represent the only attraction factor for these visitors. Salazar also adds that the agents who produce imaginary are not companies, but individuals: *“A given group of tourists, for example, can participate in shared practices and can be exposed to discourses and symbols that evoke conflicting meanings, but tourists’ subjectivities are not completely expressed by collective imaginaries and have to be understood in their particularity”* (2010, p. 7). In any case, if one refers to Amirou’s concept, it is interesting to note that if the tourist imaginary linked to the war is integrated into this transitional area, paradoxically it is the legacy of war which will facilitate the adjustment of the tourist to the Bosnian unknown.

Finally, limiting this form of tourism to voyeurism or to attraction to the macabre, as suggested by certain partisans of “dark tourism” or by some general media, seems a little simplistic. As we have seen, tourists who visit such places often express a desire for knowledge or personal development. In the same way, it also seems very limited to present the exploitation of the macabre and of the suffering of victims for purely economic gains, as the main motivating factor of these agents who include war in tourism in one way or another. Examples linked to the FAMA association or to certain guides clearly demonstrate the will to express oneself on a delicate subject and within a nationalist context in which it is not easy to make oneself heard, and which goes well beyond the sole process of “Disneyfication of the past” posited by “dark tourism”. Causevic insists for that matter on the fact that the tunnel of Sarajevo cannot be explained according to the imaginary of “dark tourism”, as a “Disneyfication of the past”: *“It still too early and to disrespectful to do that”* (2008, p. 355). Between the will to exploit this recent conflict as a (potential) driving force behind tourism and the wish to forget the past and concentrate on a more traditional form of tourism, different forces are competing in a city and State which are in the process of stabilisation. In a country trying to regain a place on

the European tourist circuit, certain observers, whether they are linked to the tourist industry or

not, have already warned against the tendency of seeing Bosnia trapped in its obscure past.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the Ernst and Lucie Schmidheiny Foundation and the Swiss Academy of the Humanities and Social Sciences (Académie Suisse des Sciences Humaines et Sociales or ASSH) for their support.
- <sup>2</sup> Bure Baruta in Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian.
- <sup>3</sup> Gori vatra in Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian.
- <sup>4</sup> The term “Bosnian” is used with reference to the concept of citizenship. Thus all the inhabitants of Bosnia — Bosnians, Croats, Serbs — are included in this designation. Moreover, the term “Bosnian” is used in reference to national and religious belonging. It designates the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina of the Bosnian community, affiliated with the Muslim religion.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://www.euronews.net/2008/09/12/euronews-talks-films-and-balkans-with-slavoj-zizek/>
- <sup>6</sup> A cartography of imaginary, interview with Gilbert Durand, Sciences Humaines, 90, 1999.
- <sup>7</sup> FAMA, 1992-1995 Sarajevo, 2009
- <sup>8</sup> Kralj Fahd Džamija in Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian.
- <sup>9</sup> The Historical Tour of Sarajevo takes tourists to visit the cultural and historical landmarks of the city.
- <sup>10</sup> “Now it’s time to live the war as a guerrilla soldier” according to the expression of the guide I had the opportunity to follow in 2009.
- <sup>11</sup> “Heart of Darkness” is the novel written in 1902 by Joseph Conrad and which was a source of inspiration for the film “Apocalypse Now”, directed in 1979 by Francis Ford Coppola.
- <sup>12</sup> “Virtual tourist” and “Trip Advisor”.
- <sup>13</sup> FNG (Fucking New Guy) was a term used for newly-arrived GIs in time of war.
- <sup>14</sup> Nevena Dakovic, La guerre sur grand écran : filmographie de l’éclatement yougoslave, Vreme, 31 March 2004, translated by Jasna Andjelic.
- <sup>15</sup> Angelina Jolie prevented from filming in Bosnia, BBC News, 14 October 2010.

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