

Chapter 6

The Deep Roots of Fear

ABSTRACT

This chapter can be seen as the corollary of the book. The authors summarize the main findings of an ethnography that took five long years in the main bus stations and airport of the country. The four schools of risk perception were placed under the critical lens of scrutiny because of methodological limitations. The current chapter presents a rich empirical research, which though not statistically represented, helps in the expansion of the current understanding of risk perception. The ways risks are conceived in laypeople and experts notably vary. The authors finally found a clear correlation between trauma and risk aversion in professionals while bad working conditions are the preconditions to perceive further risks in laypeople.

INTRODUCTION

In the previous sections we stressed the limitations of applied research in risk perception fields, at least as they were incorporated in the discipline. Starting from the premise that the economic-based paradigm monopolized a great portion of specialized publications, it is important to think alternative approaches. Hence, ethnography proved to be a useful instrument to be used in topics which otherwise remain inexpugnable to the human understanding. To fulfill this gap, this chapter contains my own fieldworks conducted in the most important airports of Argentina and Bus Stations. The results are contrasted to three stories of life proper of three tour travel agents. The goals of this section orient to validate or reject the previous hypothesis derived

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from the conceptual framework. The ethnography took place from 2009 to 2014 totalizing 10 fieldworks in that period. In post 9/11 context, in these years not only the notion of security but also the fear of terrorism traversed different stages and intensities. The attacks in Paris, Brussels and recently in Sri Lanka show that far from being declining, terrorism is today a real danger for the tourism industry in the world. However, in Latin America –and Argentina- lay-people are certainly concerned by other risks such as local crime. Here two important questions surface, is risk a social construe which is adapted to the national context?, or are risks ideological stereotypes created in the global North to be imposed to the global South?

We select, in basis of the volume of passengers, the domestic Airport Jorge Newbery and the International Airport (Ministro Pistarini), as well as the Port of Buenos Aires (Darsena Norte, Buquebus) and different Bus stations. In view of the fact that qualitative methodology does not look samples which are statistically representative, we –following the snowball method- interviewed –more than two hours- to 15 passengers. The interviews took the room in diverse epochs of the year in order to have a diachronic vision of the problem. It is vital to add that there is no previous relation or familiarity with the interviewees and the interviewer, which ensures more credibility in the answers. The results were compared to the self-ethnography and the observation in the above-mentioned sites. The research is a descriptive approach aimed at confronting the obtained results to the main contributions of risk perception discussed in the earlier chapters of this book. For further understanding, we describe in-depth the different sites separating them as following units of analysis: Retiro Bus Station, Domestic Airport Jorge Newberry, and The Port of Buenos Aires (Buquebus).

RETIRO BUS STATION

At a first glimpse, Retiro is the largest Bus Station of the country, totalizing almost 75 gates and over 100 Argentine companies operating in the site. Located in Buenos Aires city, Retiro is 400 meters in length dispatching hundreds of buses to all Argentina, and neighboring countries as Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. The station is dotted with gift shops, a bar, numerous food concessions, a pharmacy and a Bank of the city of Buenos Aires –to name a few. Our preliminary observations show that Retiro gathers passengers travelling with families and children. The police remind to the passengers all the time they should be careful with the baggage. The

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