

Collaborative disaster response: deconstructing the rhetoric of and community resilience

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Destination Dynamics



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1. Background

In 2013 Airbnb launched a disaster response initiative aimed at helping Airbnb hosts to provide space for people in need when disasters strike. Then they realized that this program could benefit **more than just local displacement**:

“The goal of the program is to **grow a community of hosts** who believe that offering a welcoming space can help someone rebuild their life”.





From Disaster Response to Open Homes: not just a naming thing...



2. Objectives

- ❖ To unlock Open Homes narrative mechanism, by unfolding the system of actors, actions, relationships and values deployed by the service
- ❖ To interpret Airbnb discourse within the framework of the *communitas/immunitas* concepts as conceptualized by the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito
- ❖ To unravel the process of meaning production triggered by Airbnb humanitarian mission

3. Methodology

Sociosemiotics approach is used to show how “texts” construct realities.

The theoretical point of view is that meaning-making processes are always organized in **narrative forms**. Is not coincidence that Open Homes service is essentially presented and promoted through *real stories*.

In this regard a content analysis of Airbnb website has been conducted with a specific code scheme that borrows from semiotic categories (actorialization and Narrative programs)

4. Results



A host and her neighbors rally to welcome Fode to his new home in Rome

Host stories



Meet Linda, an Open Homes host in Dallas

Host stories

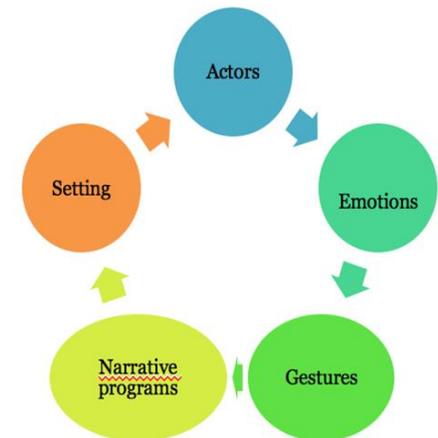


Jorge and Laura in Mexico City

Host stories



- Actorialisation process: union of a syntactic and a semantic feature
- Narrative program: Competence-Performance- Sanction



When Els, a Superhost from Rome, read about the Open Homes program on Airbnb, she was intrigued and decided to sign up. She's welcomed travelers from all over the world to her home, but knew offering refugees a temporary place to stay while they settle into their new communities would be a special hosting experience. When [Refugees Welcome Italia](#) contacted her about hosting Fode, a young man from Mali – who was recently granted the refugees status – she was excited about the opportunity to make a positive impact on someone's life. The experience ended up being transformative for both of them.

Mohammed describes Linda as a mother figure and says that since moving into their own apartment, they regularly see Linda and her family. Their relationship has gone from strangers to family.

5. Discussion: the guest narrative program

Step 1/2. Competence and Performance: making home rituals



5. Discussion: the guest narrative program

Step 3 Sanction: entering the wider Airbnb Community

her. Over the course of Fode's stay, they went from strangers to family. Her neighbors also became part of Fode's life. Just as they took Els in when she first moved from Belgium, they showed the same hospitality and love for Fode. When Els wasn't around, Fode often spent time with the upstairs neighbors, sampling Italian dishes and learning more about each other's culture.

Even after the family settled into their new home, the generosity continued. Through help from many of their friends, enough money was raised to buy the family a car. And again through the generosity of the Temple, their toddler son was invited to attend the preschool. They hosted a brunch so Mohammed and his family and those who helped them get settled could meet each other.

6. Concluding remarks

Communitas/Immunitas

Community as a **property** that belongs to the subjects.

Immunitas as the “organism refractoriness to the danger of contracting a contagious disease” through the inoculation and the consequent **exposure** to the threat itself.

By welcoming global displaced people, Airbnb community attracts the “otherness” in its properties and by doing so exposes itself to the “diversity”.



6. Concluding regards

On the meaning production processes triggered by Airbnb narrative machinery

- Embedded in the cool frame of Airbnb, the humanitarian mission is presented as an ultimate form of experiential tourism
- In a moment in which western governments seem to be totally helpless to global displacements crisis, Airbnb claims to take the initiative and welcome refugees in its community



A new humanitarian aesthetic/anesthetic regime?

Featured Discussions



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Casey And Dane'lle
07-30-2018 01:02 PM



Help boost listing performance with quality photos



ADMIN Airbnb
08-05-2018 11:57 PM

Thanks for your attention!

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