

Dear Editor, dear John,

Many thanks for your suggestions on how to address the comments of the referees. We have responded to all the main comments and below you will find in detail a description of how we have addressed them in the text.

We have submitted a revised version of the paper, but we have also added a pdf version where we have kept the track changes for you to see the detail of our amendments.

We sincerely hope that you will find that the paper is now much stronger and that you may consider it for publication.

Many thanks,

The authors

### Responses to the reviewers

| Referee: 1   |   |
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| 1/ The paper is situated in literature on thanatourism, which the author/s survey thoroughly at the beginning of the paper – but how does this new empirical work speak back to that literature? It seems to be an argument for the really vital importance of material/affective encounters in such post-disaster sites – if so, the authors should make this point more strongly throughout the paper, especially in the conclusion which could do more than just precise the paper’s arguments. | <p>We thank the reviewer for this important suggestion. On page 4, we already suggest how the introduction of the geographies of affect in dark tourism/thanatourism studies “may help incorporating novel perspectives on the subjective, often side-lined, elements of those sites: their atmospheres, the subtle political value of affect in designing and interpreting post-disaster landmarks and practices, and the fine-tuning of the visceral, affective cross-cultural resonance that can result in healing processes for both tourists and local communities.”</p> <p>To respond to this suggestion, we have now added in the Conclusion an entirely new part where we discuss more in detail how and why the understanding of affect in dark tourism studies:</p> <p>“Dark and post-disaster tourism studies, we claim, can thus significantly benefit from the incorporation of affect in their analytical frameworks. A profound engagement with questions of affect may in fact allow to interrogate the inherently ambivalent pathos that inevitably characterizes sites and practices of</p> |

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|   | <p>this kind, often triggering unpredictable reactions such as shock and anger, but also wonder and excitement (Martini &amp; Buda, 2018). Sites of death and human sufferance in fact entail, as noted Emma Willis, a complex role of presence and spectatorship, often related to a sense of being at loss, not so “much [because of the] sadness that comes from seeing something profoundly moving, but rather [because of] the unease of not knowing how to respond” (Willis, 2014, 6). Negotiation of painful pasts, ethically problematic situations, politically oriented discourses on memory and heritage (Godis &amp; Nilsson, 2016), can in fact produce ‘strong emotional and affective reactions – such as pain, fear, empathy, catharsis – from locals as well as visitors’ (Martini &amp; Buda, 2018, p. 2). While we recognise all the difficulties in communicating pain and suffering to tourists in a place like Rikuzentakata, and in finding appropriate and respectful ways to memorialise disaster, we would like to argue that only by fully engaging with the importance and the ambivalence of affect in such tourist experiences we may be able to appreciate how such post-disaster landscapes somehow speak, through their multiple narratives and the related materialities, of what is otherwise unspeakable.”</p> |
| <p>2/ relatedly, the engaging opening vignette (and what a great photo!) gets at some of the embodied and sensory aspects of engaging in a commemorative process as the author carves a rakan. This is great stuff, but I wanted to know more about how tourists, tour guides or others experience and make sense of the no doubt unique spatialities and materialities of Rikuzentakata. How is walking, standing, smelling, carving, looking and feeling the site entangled with the narratives that are being constructed and promulgated there? This is important to any argument about affect, but especially ones that are so anchored in particular locations and their empirical specificities.</p> | <p>We have added some more material related to the opening vignette (part on the rakan-carving workshop - page 2, second paragraph), in order to provide a better sense of the atmosphere surrounding the first author while carving her own sculpture. To build a stronger argument on the specificities of affect and the bodily, sensual experiences of our participants, we added more material in different parts of the paper, including a few direct quotes hopefully better illustrating the experience of the tourists and supporting our main argument. We also added more empirical material on the perspective of the survivors and of some local residents in subsection 3, ‘Cross-cultural interpretation of affect’.</p>  |
| <p>3/ this brings me to my third question which is around the notion of performance, and specifically the ‘performance’ of affect. If affect is really being performed (as opposed to</p>   | <p>We thank the reviewer for this very important comment, and for giving us the opportunity to clarify this aspect. We have added in the Conclusion (and a partly in the previous</p>  |

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| <p>‘described’, ‘shared’ or even ‘felt’) then what implications does this have for the arguments about the importance and role of affect in tourism? Put differently, if affect is broadly about a set of intensities that relate to how we feel our material and immaterial environments, alone or with others, then how can this be ‘performed’ – when it is not something entirely within our control? I’m suggesting here that affect can’t be performed, but rather stories can be told that are intended to give rise to particular affects (of hope, dread or sadness for example) – but as the authors suggest, affect is excessive and unpredictable, so surely it evades these intentions sometimes.</p>                                | <p>section) a new set of considerations on the nature of these performance and their relationship to affect. We entirely agree with this comment and we hope that the new parts integrated in the Conclusion adequately respond to this point.</p>  |
| <p>This may seem just a question of wording, but I think it is very important for the authors to clarify what kind of affective encounters are taking place here, what enables them, how they are specific to the material, immaterial, representation and more-than-representational conditions of their emergence in this site (see point 2). Pushing further on this point, maybe by way of their research participants’ accounts, would help refine their arguments.</p>  | <p>In order to respond to this comment, we have added more empirical material from our fieldnotes and quotes from our interviews to corroborate and expand on the conditions of such affective encounters.<br/>We also added a few quotes from our interviews with the local residents.</p> |
| <p><b>Referee: 2</b></p>  |   |
| <p>Comments to the Author<br/>This is a very strong, well researched and well written paper. I recommend acceptance with two minor revisions:</p>   | <p>We thank the reviewer for their positive comments. Here below is our answer to the reviewer’s comments.</p>  |
| <p>1) the essay closes with an unnecessarily long sentence. Please split up into two sentences for the reader.</p>  | <p>Thank you for the comment. We have done as suggested, although that sentence is now not the one that closes the paper.</p>   |
| <p>2) the idea of "overcoming", or healing from trauma culminates in the third empirical section, but the point feels a little weak. While evidence of the local community's agency over trauma narratives is well documented in sections 1 &amp;2 (e.g. Miracle Pine and Hiroshima of the North), "overcoming trauma" seems a rather implicit argument, relying heavily, it seems, on one key quote (top of page 12), i.e. 'sharing narratives of trauma with tourists allows locals to heal.' I suggest pulling at this (and other supportive) empirical data a bit further and allowing the residents' voices to re-emerge in this third section, re-establishing the authors' analysis of local agency and local desire to "overcome", or</p> | <p>To address this point we have added new quotes from the residents and the tour guides in the disaster area; hopefully these interventions allow for their views and their voices to emerge more clearly.</p>   |

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| work through trauma, more explicitly.  |   |
| <b>Referee: 3</b>  |   |
| <p>Comments to the Author</p> <p>This article provides an interesting discussion about the affective possibilities for hope and regeneration in the ‘dark tourism’ post-disaster context - an obviously pertinent topic to explore in these times. The article is generally well-written and conveys well the complexity of the overlapping affective contexts at play. The Introduction succeeds in setting up the article fairly well, and there is a great deal of relevant literature discussed in order to make the links not only with ‘dark tourism’ but also affective geographies more broadly.</p> | <p>We thank the reviewer for the feedback on our article and we hope that by addressing the reviewer’s following comments the paper is now stronger.</p>  |
| <p>I would suggest a few revisions to make the article stronger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The discussion of methods could be extended a little to include the methods of analysis – i.e. how the material was analysed and how affect was ‘read’ from it / into it.</li> </ul>   | <p>An entire new paragraph on the data analysis has been added to our methodology section to address in full this point.</p>  |
| <p>Whilst the article is generally well-written it could be somewhat ‘tighter’ throughout, and particularly to allow a clearer ‘purpose’ / argument for the article. Throughout the body of the article, it is not entirely clear as to what it is actually trying to say, or argue, and this culminates in the conclusion section which, as well as introducing new interview material, seems not to hang together as well as it should in terms of providing a coherent ‘so what?’ of the article.</p>   | <p>We have intervened in several parts of the article to make its argument tighter, and in particular in the Conclusion where we recap our argument and try to use this specific case in order to suggest why using affect as analytical framework is key to the understanding of tourist practices in post-disaster sites, and more in general in dark sites. The Conclusion has been largely rewritten with this objective in mind.</p> |
| <p>A new article by Tucker and Shelton (2018) is highly relevant to the discussion and so could be added.</p>  | <p>We are grateful to the reviewer for this suggestion. Indeed, as the mentioned article is very recent, we did not have the opportunity to read it before submitting our own. However, we have now read the article and have taken it into consideration in different passages, including a few direct quotes. (see pp. 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 19). Again, a very helpful suggestion.</p>   |