Visiting Dark Murals: An Ethnographic Approach to the Sustainability of Heritage

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Abstract: Political, war-themed and controversial murals aim to show the history of a community, making the intangible tangible, and, because these events are still recent, they stir people's emotions. Visitors to this type of heritage have a mixture of artistic and dark interests that lead to what we call 'dark mural attractions'. These political murals need a public strategy to be preserved, become better known and attract local economic development funds to make them sustainable. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to analyse how communities could build a co-narrative around murals to generate a sustainable local development. To achieve this goal, an in depth study needs to be performed to establish what kind of narrative will enable political murals to attract dark visitors and examine how communities can build a sustainable co-narrative around a dark mural. As a case study, we analyse the Battle of Cable Street mural in London, located in the non-touristic borough of Tower Hamlets, by means of an ethnographic qualitative approach based on stakeholders' opinions, among other sources. In this case, results show that dark murals have the potential to attract visitors, but they require a public strategy for the sustainability of heritage, based on a narrative of community solidarity for educational and discovery purposes.

1. Introduction

What makes an attraction successful? Why do we decide to visit it? According to Kotler et al., different factors are required to attract visitors to a location, such as its urban design, infrastructure and environment, services offered and even neighbours' hospitality [1]. Moreover, the participation of different actors is important for creating a narrative around the attraction [2], and encouraging local development in the community. On the other hand, motivations can differ depending on the target audience to be attracted [3]. In the literature, we can observe the presence of different murals that have been a resounding success, such as the works by Banksy. However, there are other murals with a rich history behind them that can add an educational element to the visitor experience. For the UNESCO "culture is both an enabler and a driver of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development" [4].

To refer to a particular kind of mural that shows a historical community event, often with political connotations, authors have used terms such as 'walls of expression' [5], 'walls of heritage' and 'walls of pride' [6], 'walls of empowerment' [7], 'walls that speak' [8,9], 'peace walls' [10] or simply 'political murals' [11]. These murals play a major role in showcasing culture and history [12], such as democratic art [13], "often depicting historical and/or religious events, themes, individuals, etc." [14] (p. 477). They "are walls emblazoned with meaning" [5]. They are large paintings whose environment is a public space and they aim to build a message or a political or social narrative of the place. For Campos and Sequeira [15] (p. 5), "urban art is rather a 'large family' that includes graffiti,

street art, muralism, culture, jamming, etc." However, in our opinion, even though they all use the street as their natural environment and means of interpretation, muralism can differ in its legal basis and permanent condition, although even these two 'reverse characteristics' have varied over the last few years in locations where the artworks of recognised artists are preserved and encouraged. In any case, the general public needs to understand the mural to identify with its message [16]. Murals are open museums [17] where people can see history in a more popular setting and young people and children experience new ways to visit a city and study different disciplines [16]. Moreover, they have enabled international artists to reach the general public on a personal level [18] but also for commercial purposes [19].

Examples such as Chemainus in Canada [20,21] and Camden in London [22] have proved that, with a mural art strategy, the community has not only enhanced its identity but has also improved its economic development. For example, mural festivals around the world have enabled the development of marginalised areas in big cities, such as the Festival Muro in Lisbon [23] and the Mural Festival in Berlin [24]. Yet "collaborations with artists and the creative community at an early stage of public realm development can help generate a buzz and make your place more distinctive and ultimately more successful" [25] (p. 56). Campos and Sequeira, in their analysis of Lisbon, defined 'touristification' [15] (p. 7)

> "As the social process that gradually converts something of little or no interest in tourism into a resource with tourism potential. This is a social process where different social actors take part".

Studies have showed how specific locations have used diverse strategies to position mural attractions by working with the community [26]. Through murals, we can understand the history and culture of the population [27]. Mural art is an attractive way to show the history of a city in an easy and visual fashion because it is accessible to everybody, including both residents and visitors. Moreover, the potential of heritage in attracting tourism has been widely proved [28]. In London, for example, the target audience of street art is eclectic, urban arts people (3% English adults). They are mainly young people, the majority of whom are currently in paid work, mostly living in urban areas (a quarter live in London) and are highly educated [29]. Bearing these figures in mind, we ask whether mural art is not as popular as we thought and needs to be promoted more successfully. In this line, Campos and Sequeira proposed the development of a narrative shared by the different agents [15].

The mural of the Battle of Cable Street is an example of what we call 'dark murals' which show the history of a war or a controversial event in a tangible way. In addition, they constitute an open-air museum where visitors can interpret and re-interpret the history behind them, as well as getting an insight into the neighbourhood where they are located. However, these murals are not always located in trendy zones of cities and have sometimes survived in poor neighborhoods. Therefore, the point is to find a narrative that will be able to preserve their identity and, at the same time, attract visitors to them. Accordingly, can we appeal to dark mural visitors who are interested in dark attractions? What kind of narrative enables places to attract this kind of visitors? How can communities build a sustainable co-narrative to involve different stakeholders?

The mural of the Battle of Cable Street in London has a rich narrative around it that has been kept alive thanks to the endeavours of some of its neighbours. It is an example of how a co-narrative, taking into account different stakeholders, can give sustainability to this kind of murals that are not in trendy city neighbourhoods. The flow of our study will be as follows: First, we will provide a description of the theoretical framework around dark attractions; second, we will present a literature review about co-narratives and dark tourism: Third, we will explain the ethnography methodology applied to this case study; fourth, we aim to describe the history and present and future opportunities for dark murals extracted from the data content analysis; and finally, we will discuss and put forward the conclusions of our analysis.

2. Theoretical Framework

The evolution of the concept of dark tourism has been a popular topic in the last few years [30–34]. Seaton started by referring to the concept under the name of 'thanatourism' [35], whilst Foley and Lennon referred to 'dark tourism' in a wider sense [36]. According to Light, this is a term for any form of tourism that is somehow related to death, suffering, atrocity, tragedy or crime [31]. Seaton divided tourists visiting these places into two types: People attracted by morbid curiosity; and people interested in understanding the history of the site [35]. On the other hand, Stone established four degrees of intensity (devotion, experience, discovery, accident) [37]. However, his most important contribution was the dark tourism spectrum that links places of death and suffering with high political influence, and places associated with death and suffering with low political influence.

However, the reasons why tourists visit these places are confusing. According to Raine, although all the tourists have visited the same place, their motivations for doing so may be different [38]. In turn, Blom explained how tourists look for a different experience from their daily life [39]. However, the category of 'fear destinations' has proved to be controversial over the years because "urban fear can attract as well as repel" [10] (p. 816). While this kind of strategy has been criticised and other attractions have been promoted to position these cities away from their dark past (above all in Belfast), what is often considered a taboo subject has been marketed and it is worth mentioning that "not all cities are called upon so publicly to acknowledge crimes committed in the course of their history". For example in Berlin, they have found "an acceptable way to confront and keep alive the memory of this awful reality" (p. 826). For the United Kingdom, De Miguel and Barrera revealed that the studies on 'dark tourism' are more focused on travel and leisure [40], i.e., there is a demand for dark attractions.

We call murals related to wars, death, confrontations and conflict, 'dark murals' and we position them midway between 'murals as community beautification' and 'murals as a tourist attraction'. The first are undertaken to beautify a building or neighbourhood and, although there is no tourist strategy behind them, they can become tourist attractions by default. Their content includes community events and historical occurrences. 'Dark murals' within this type of murals are the tangible expression of a dark event. The second type of murals are developed and marketed to draw people into the community, to distinguish the community as a unique destination generally following a heritage-based theme. They represent what a group within the local community believes to be local heritage alongside what they believe people want to see [41]. However, cities with dark murals and their residents do not always agree to showcase their location as a 'dark attraction'.

Examples of 'dark mural attractions' include Belfast with its Unionist and Republican Northern Ireland murals [42,43]; Berlin with its East Side Gallery [44]; El Salvador and its controversial Ataco murals [45]; Teheran and its 'anti-enemy' murals [46] and Palestine with its polemic artworks by Banksy and the Walled Off Hotel [47]. These examples reveal that the more recent the event, the greater the controversy.

Dark attractions do not necessarily have a connection with visitors and dark murals are not always included in dark destinations. We need to analyse which narrative is shared by different stakeholders and what could make a dark mural become a dark attraction, especially when it is not located in a tourist neighborhood.

3. Literature Review

The literature around dark tourism and community narrative shows us the relationship between controversial heritage and community engagement. Controversial heritage has positive and negative attributes that need to be taken into account [48], therefore a co-narrative will be successful in creating community-heritage engagement compared to a top-down model [49] which, on occasion, avoids ethical engagement [50] and hides a lack of open public discussion [51–53].

For example, although in Northern Ireland the Belfast City Council strategy has successfully promoted other attractions in the last few years [10], such as locations featured in Titanic and Game of Thrones, the reality is that the political murals attract large numbers of visitors, despite the fact that the Council's strategy has been conditioned by the debate as to whether it is appropriate to market these murals. Conversely, forgetting or brushing an event under the carpet is not always the

best option for taking an educational point of view about our history, accepting that the event happened [10]. However, for Shaw [54], the instrumentalisation of world heritage does not always consider the complex costs that are added when the past is accessed.

Therefore, all the stakeholders must be involved in the narrative of the location [15,31] given that a macabre point of view of an event could provoke disgust among residents, especially if the dark event is a recent one [40].

Yan et al. explored tourists' different understandings of the East Side Gallery in Berlin and their resulting deep or shallow, pleasant or sorrowful experiences [3]. It is clear that the viewpoints of visitors and residents may be totally different [55], and this is why a public strategy is required to minimise the distance between them. Upton et al. [56] highlighted how some tourists have a deeply reflective experience at Vietnam War sites, based on their war narrative, because they include a connection to the dead and a connection to the local people. In turn, Podoshen [57] focused on dark sites that are visited by a group of people with a diasporic identity, such as Jews who visit Holocaust sites.

However, linking the narratives of all the stakeholders is not always an easy task as it depends on the closeness or relevance of the event or site to each stakeholder. Yankholmes and McKercher [58] studied slavery sites in Ghana and identified six key groups of stakeholders involved in the interpretation of slavery heritage, each with their own agenda, including a desire to remember or forget slave memories and a desire to compose different narratives.

The key actors, according to Koskinen–Koivisto and Thomas [59], are the local dark heritage guides because they are 'active agents' "who take part in actions such as conserving, documenting, mapping, and collecting".

From our point of view, an in depth study needs to be performed to establish what kind of narrative will enable political murals to attract dark visitors and examine how communities can build a sustainable co-narrative around a dark mural.

4. Materials and Methods

We chose to perform a qualitative analysis by means of an ethnographic approach to a case study. Case studies are the most common method used in research on dark and mural attractions. However, an ethnographic approach is rare, even though culture is a core element of these attractions. We decided to take an ethnographic approach because ethnography enables us "to observe and analyse how people interact with each other and with their environment in order to understand their culture" [60] (p. 150). Similarly, a "client focus" is possible [61]. For this reason, we chose to focus on the environment around the mural, i.e., the neighbourhood and visitors. First, we identified the political murals that are not located in the centre of London, given that Greater London is a huge area with many pieces of street art implying that it is more difficult to attract tourists to murals that are not centrally located. Out of the seven murals we identified, we selected the Battle of Cable Street in London, as it has an amazing history around it and it is not in a tourist district of the city.

To collect the necessary data for the case study, we applied a triangulation process using multiple data sources to gather as much information as possible [62]. We collected primary and secondary information from six sources: (1) Three in-depth interviews in September 2019 with key informants with comprehensive knowledge of the mural's history; (2) participant observation as visitors to Shadwell (the neighbourhood where the mural is located) from July to September 2019, including informal chats with three mural tour guides, ten international and five British visitors and five neighbours who provide local services; (3) public reports drawn up by the Borough of Tower Hamlets (the borough Cable Street belongs to); (4) articles written by different British journalists; (5) comments on social networks and (6) specialist literature on the mural.

According to Eriksson and Kovalainen, "ethnography that deals with business issues often involves shorter periods of participant observation than the classic ethnographies" [60] (p. 152). Moreover, an open and public space makes it more difficult to interact with people for a long period. Despite this, we followed several guidelines while doing fieldwork (p. 156):

"Collect a variety of information from different perspectives and different sources. Use observation, open interviews, and site documentation, as well as audio-visual materials such as

recordings and photographs. Write field notes that are descriptive and rich in detail. Represent participants in their own terms by using quotations and short stories. Capture participants' views of their own experiences in their own words".

For the interviews, we used the same scripted set of questions based on a semi-structured format to allow respondents to express themselves freely and provide as much information as possible [63]. The interviewees were selected for their in-depth knowledge of the mural. David Rosenberg, an expert in its history, Julian Cole, the owner of the Inn opposite the mural, and Paul Butler, one of its artists and the one who restored it. Every interview took around one hour. Two of them were recorded and the third one was based on virtual correspondence because the informant does not live in London. The main questions were:

1. Do you think this is a controversial mural?
2. Why do you think that not as many people visit this mural compared to Shoreditch street art, for example?
3. In your opinion, what is the future of the mural?
4. Do you think that the Tower Hamlets Borough is committed to its conservation?
5. Do you think that the new ethnical groups (Bangladeshi) living in the area will also get involved?
6. Do you think that the new economic groups (Highway) will also get involved?

We applied a content analysis [62] to their transcriptions, as well as to the rest of the primary information (notes, photos, informal chats) and secondary information (neighbourhood information, local reports, videos, news, virtual comments), in order to answer the following research questions: Can we call these kinds of murals 'dark mural attractions'? Can we appeal to dark mural visitors who are interested in dark attractions? What kind of narrative enables places to attract these kinds of visitors? How can communities build a sustainable co-narrative to involve different stakeholders?

5. Results

5.1. History behind the Battle of Cable Street Mural, London

The first time visitors see the Cable Street mural they are impressed by its colours and a deeper observation leads them to guess that there is a historical event and story behind it. There is a plaque on the gate underneath the mural with a brief explanation of the event. The mural is located on the west wall of St. George's Town Hall in the Borough of Tower Hamlets, which today houses offices belonging to Tower Hamlets Council (Figure 1).

Historically, at the end of the 19th century, this East End of London area was already poor and overcrowded, without basic sanitary conditions. The situation did not improve much at the start of the 20th century when many immigrants moved to this part of London looking for cheap housing, work at the factories or an escape route from war.

"Several smaller council-housing projects, for 60–660 people each, had been completed, the first being Beachcroft Buildings off Cable Street, in 1894, which housed nearly 200 residents" [64] (p. 186).

The neighbourhood was inhabited mainly by Irish Catholic and Jewish residents who worked at the docks or on the railway. David Rosenberg (D.R.), an expert on the battle, explained that:

"Along both sides of the street you would have shops at the ground level. The first two-thirds or three-quarters of the street was almost entirely Jewish and the last third/quarter was Irish".

Figure 1. Mural of the Battle of Cable Street and plaque. Source: Photo taken by authors.

Over the years, many of these businesses have been lost as the Jewish population has moved to other parts of London. Julian Cole (J.C.), a journalist and the owner of the Cable Street Inn, a historical and unusual guesthouse with a privileged location right in front of the mural, has seen the evolution of the neighbourhood over the last 23 years.

He remembers that:

"In the 1970s, the Bangladeshi immigrants started to come. This has always been an area of immigrants for 2000 years".

The battle of 4 October 1936, between the mixed anti-fascist East London community (Jewish, Irish-Catholic Dockers, railway and dock workers) and the police protecting a march by the British Union of Fascists (BUF), led by Oswald Mosley, started because the anti-fascist group built barricades and blocked the streets in order to prevent the fascists from marching through.

"Trade union militants mobilised sweatshop workers—mostly Jewish—and dock and railway workers, many of whom were of Irish heritage" [52] (p. 340).

We have to take into account that some of these immigrants had already escaped from Fascist Germany, therefore the march was almost a provocation and some Jewish authorities had even asked the London Government to ban it.

While Jewish representatives prevented their people from participating to avoid any conflict, the anti-fascists built barricades and helped sustain the resistance [65]. After several hours, the police ordered Mosley to turn around.

"My dad, Sid Koenick, was at Cable St, he was 10 years old and was on a roof chucking slates at the blackshirts, he also told me about how they threw marbles under the hooves of the police horses, seven years later he lied about his age to join the airforce, he was sent to the Far East and took part in the mutiny that spread across all the forces at the end of the war. When he came back to the East End after being demobbed, walking with my grandparents, someone shouted anti-Semitic abuse at them and my dad knocked him out" (Stella Koenick, Eastendwalks Facebook, 20 April 2018).

The first idea to paint a mural came from `The Basement Writers', a group of intellectuals. From 1974 to 1984, endeavours were made to express the battle on a mural wall, showing the anti-fascism event but also adding new faces, such as the Bangladeshi neighbours. The mural was originally commissioned in 1976. Four different artists worked on it (Dave Binnington, who designed it, Paul Butler, Ray Walker and Desmond Rochford) expressing the realism of the battle along the lines of 'Los Tres Grandes' Mexican muralists, who had painted different murals sponsored by the Mexican revolutionary government claiming for indigenous civil rights. The mural expresses the facts as they were seen by the people who participated in it: Fascists delivering their pamphlets, neighbours

throwing everything they could find at the march (including things from their kitchens), policemen on horses trying to disperse the march.

"Women, from their flats, picked everything in their kitchen to throw" (D.R.)

However, the mural was vandalised on several occasions and was not successfully restored by Paul Butler (P.B.) until 2011. The artist explained that:

"Certainly, the content of the mural is controversial because it is about the conflict between the forces of the far right and those who opposed them. It is also very much about anti-semitism. When I was restoring the mural—after it had been 'paint-bombed' by a far-right group—my car was vandalised and my life publicly threatened by Combat 88".

5.2. Present and Opportunities

The demography of the borough has changed completely in the last 80 years, but the battle is still seen as a mythical event in which people fought together.

"Anti-fascists from far and wide continue to visit it" [64] (p. 361).

"It is a site of pilgrimage because of the significance of the 'Battle of Cable Street' in stopping the rise of Fascism in Britain before the war" (P.B.).

More than a symbol of antifascism, the mural is a meeting place when any relevant event happens in the world.

"When in America there was a massacre in a Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Jewdas (a radical Jewish group) organised a 24-h concentration here" (D.R.).

Nowadays, the Jews are a minority and Christians represent 27.5% of Tower Hamlets' population while Muslims account for 38.4% of citizens [66]. The shops are mainly run by people of Bangladeshi origin. A visit to Watney Market is like travelling to Asia. However, this is nothing new, as the East End has always been a traditional place for immigrants.

"I was assisted by a person of Bangladeshi origin when I restored it in 2011. I hope there continues to be support in the community for the mural—there certainly should be because the issues the mural refers to are relevant to all immigrant communities. The people who resisted Oswald Mosley were Irish, Asian, Jewish and many other ethnicities and nationalities" (P.B.).

Julian Cole remembers the different transformations of the current Brick Lane Mosque:

"The building at Brick Lane was first a Christian Church, then, in the beginning of the 19th century, a Jewish Synagogue and now is a Mosque".

This has led to a local council featuring a broad representation of working class people, though close by, the Highway, is a growing highly fashionable area where high-rise, luxury buildings and offices are springing up.

"This area is quite characterised by these extremes. It has extreme poverty and extreme wealth. And it is very old but also very modern. And that, I think, is part of the character of London actually" (J.C.).

How is the mural viewed in this new reality? An interpretation of the mural certainly reveals scenes of violence on first sight. However, the interviews carried out with people who live in this neighbourhood afforded a broader perspective, including words such as unity, solidarity, life together and integration [67,68], providing a positive lesson. This is the kind of narrative that could be used to attract visitors looking for the educational side of dark murals.

"The Councillors themselves are very supportive. There is a strong group of independents, among them you have Muslims. Conservatives are a small number" (D.R.).

The local strategy has been to use the mural in the educational field, for example, working with schools [69]. During the summer, the mural is also visited by all the residents who attend the Tower Hamlets Summer Festival, which uses St George Park every year.

"When I was restoring it in 1996 and in 2011 there were many visitors from all over the world" (P.B.).

Up until 2012, the mural was promoted heavily, and this is when Cole started his hospitality business.

"In Tower Hamlets I think this is the only guesthouse" (J.C.).

However, at present, though there are more visits to the mural thanks to the cycle route built for the 2012 Olympic Games (Figure 2), there are few guided tours that factor the mural into their routes.
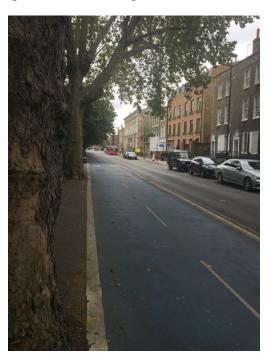

Figure 2. Blue bike route (sponsored by Barclays Bank) crossing Cable Street. Photo taken by authors.

These tours tend to focus on the street art at Shoreditch. In fact, a tour guide told us:

"In a couple of years, Shoreditch will be as touristic as Camden".

The only tour that provides an in-depth explanation of the event is East End Walks, led by Rosenberg, whose tours take visitors "through radical times and places". In 2009–2010, he created the Antifascist Footprints tour and published a guide to cover the 'other historical events' of the East End [64]. Other tours simply give a superficial insight into the event although the number of visitors has increased and some people discover the mural by accident while walking around (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Group of visitors. Source: Photo taken by authors.

Some tourists, even if they like history, do not know anything about the mural. However, we observed that if there is a focus on an educational point of view, these tourists are willing to visit any kind of dark attractions.

"I'm not a fan of dark tourism but I'm interested in political issues. I didn't know the mural" (North-American woman, 30 years old).

"We didn't know the mural but we like both educative and creepy attractions" (British couple, 25 years old).

Opinions made on social media reveal that the majority of comments about the mural are positive (amazing, worthwhile, excellent, impressive) but others stress that the mural is too far from other attractions:

"It does not seem worth taking transportation all the way to this place just to look at a wall painting" (TripAdvisor comment).

On the other hand, according to Cole, the profile of the people who have stayed in accommodation near the mural are people who like culture and history and appreciate being able to stay in a quiet and relaxing part of London. This implies that the mural needs more support and promotion to become more visible.

Local government is working on local development initiatives to transform and improve the borough [70], but they are focused on increasing employment for young people in other areas. Street art is being encouraged more in neighbourhoods such as Shoreditch. Some public initiatives will need to be promoted in the future if the mural is to be conserved, over and above any specific anniversaries or one-off activities.

"The library organises a book festival every year that could help memorialise it. The Council itself could organise tours" (D.R.).

In London [71], international visitors come mainly from the USA, Germany, France, Italy and Spain. With this target in mind, European tourists could be potential consumers for these kinds of 'dark mural attractions' such as the Battle of Cable Street mural. In addition, street art initially targets highly culturally motivated young people, under 35, who are attracted by other cultures [29] (p. 10). While traditional arts are not as attractive to young people, public art seems to be more engaging. However, other groups like local or tourist families may also engage with well-promoted activities (p. 31).

"Visitors mostly don't know about the mural… But generally, people are quite interested in its history. We have also a certain amount of people from the Jewish diaspora coming from the USA and Israel who have family connections to East London. They visit where their ancestors lived… Other people are introduced to a different part of the city" (J.C.).

From our point of view, to increase the number of visitors, it would help to create other attractions and services close by to create value for visitors [72]. Different groups could work together in order to preserve and maintain the mural, and different activities could be organised around it.

"Maybe we could produce an exhibition about antifascism clashes around the country" (D.R.).

How can the Tower Hamlets community build a sustainable co-narrative to involve different stakeholders? Taking into account that the population of the neighbourhood has changed though their desire for solidarity has not, a challenge could involve engaging local residents to explain the mural, leading to benefits for both visitors and community residents [73]. Material related to the mural (printed materials, films, photographs, models and images) are also important tools [74]. Some creative works have already been developed around the mural. For example, Segal won 'The UK Jewish Short Film Fund script competition' and the 'Discovery Channel Best HD film' at DC Shorts with a film about his grandfather [75]. The film is a mixture of animation and HD live action.

The mural would benefit from joint promotion with other attractions that are reasonably close, such as the Tower of London, Whitechapel Gallery, Wilton's Music Hall and the new Tobacco Hall. This point is crucial as the mural is a long way from other attractions. For example, for the 75th anniversary in 2011, many of these cultural attractions, such as Wilton's Music Hall, Whitechapel Gallery, Bishopsgate Institute, Housmans Bookshop and the Jewish Museum, worked together with other stakeholders to schedule a series of events. However, this was a one-off activity and the ideal scenario would be to link other activities on a more frequent or permanent basis.

The cycle route has proved to be a good option and some sources of information, such as social networks, could highlight this when visitors cross-check [76]. It is worth mentioning that a local history museum was going to be created in Cable Street but, in the end, it has only focused on the topic of Jack the Ripper, which caused great disappointment among residents [77].

"The [Jack Ripper] museum is visited by tourists all over the world, British families on holidays, school and university groups" (local woman, 50 years old).

It would be worth exploring other avenues:

"Chinese tourists come in to explore the history of the Chinese Opium market at the end of the 19th century… And another part… is the visit of this area where the famous gangsters, the Kray twins, operated throughout the 1950s–60s" (J.C.).

Over time, it would be highly positive to create an infrastructure of attractive services around the mural (local museum, cafés, shops), perhaps with the support of a BID (Business Improvement Development) grant implemented through a public-private partnership. However, the local government seems to have other priorities at present.

What does the future hold for the mural? Is it sustainable?

"What could affect the mural is what could happen with the building. I presume some social conservation will come around… the local community including the Bengalis are very proud of the mural…But the liveliest areas of the East End like Shoreditch are a long way from here. Now it is mainly residential but very accessible with the cycle route" (D.R.).

This is why the co-narrative around the mural needs to be a very attractive one, because its history is unusual and it is not only a matter of discovering art but also the chance to learn about a part of London's history [78]. Until now, the mural's narrative of solidarity has been positive and this will need to be preserved by encouraging the new groups to re-interpret it.

"I believe there is huge support for the mural because of the reasons given above. I'm sure it will be preserved for many years. Tower Hamlets have been consistently involved in the conservation of the mural. I hope very much they continue to" (P.B.).

6. Discussion

Through murals, people can see history in a more popular setting and young people and children can experience new ways to visit a city and study different disciplines [16]. Can we call these kinds of political murals 'dark mural attractions'? Controversial murals can be seen as 'dark murals' in the sense that they are related to wars and conflictive events. The Belfast murals, for example, give visitors an insight into a part of Northern Ireland's history. However, the category of 'fear destinations' has proved to be controversial [10,48] and this is why it is more appropriate to appeal to dark mural visitors who are interested in the educational side of dark attractions [35]. Can we appeal to dark mural visitors who are interested in dark attractions? The general profile of those visiting this type of attraction are people who like history and are attracted by political events [5,35,37]. This is similar to the street art audience, i.e., people who are mainly in paid work, mostly living in urban areas and are highly educated [29]. In general, prisons and accidents are more closely related to morbid curiosity, while battlefields and wars/terrorism focus on educating society [40].

What kind of narrative enables places to attract this kind of visitors? Controversial heritage has to represent what a group within the local community believes to be local heritage together with what they believe people want to see [41]. Forgetting an event is not always the best option for taking an educational point of view about our history [10]. However, for Shaw [54], the instrumentalisation of world heritage does not always consider the complex costs that are added when the past is accessed. One of the challenges in this area is to help the general public to understand the mural so they identify with its message [16,56].

Other examples have shown that a combination of an educational and economic model is possible [79]. Murals have also been used for commercial purposes [19–22], for example, for the development of marginalised areas in big cities [23,24]. With a mural art strategy, the community not only enhances its identity but also improves its economic development.

How can communities build a sustainable co-narrative around dark murals that involves different stakeholders? Few studies have strongly focused on the co-narrative of dark mural attractions. However, a dark mural narrative needs to be figured out by local governments who need to co-create this narrative with residents [31] and other agents [15]. In line with Seaton, 'thanatouristic patrimony' is not only the heritage but also the narrative around it [2]. Places such as Belfast and Berlin have defined a clear strategy to promote their murals [31,41] with the narrative of 'walls of peace', even though local residents do not always agree with it [10,40]. However, it is crucial to take a common point of view into the community on how to promote a dark mural attraction [80].

However, motivations differ depending on the target audience to be attracted [3,55,57], and a public strategy is required to minimise the distance between them. Linking the narratives of all the stakeholders is not always an easy task because it depends on the closeness or relevance of the event or site to each stakeholder [58]. If a co-narrative needs to be built with local people, then giving them the opportunity to explain dark heritage to visitors is likely to be more successful [15]. These local dark heritage guides are referred as 'active agents' [59]. In the case of Belfast, the narrative of its 'dark murals' is provided by local guides/residents who explain both sides of the conflict.

In any case, a co-narrative will enable community-heritage engagement [49] and, therefore, warrant its sustainability, as opposed to a top-down model that tries to avoid ethical engagement [50] and hides a lack of open public discussion [51–53].

7. Conclusions and Limitations

'Dark mural attractions' are a good way to attract people interested in educational and historical issues [5,29,35,37,40], such as the Battle of Cable Street. The point in the case of the mural under study is to change any accidental visits to a discovery or experience. In this case, the mural has high political influence: Education, history, authenticity, a short time scale since the event occurred and high ideological significance on the darkest side [37,58]. Yet a historical viewpoint is necessary to give value to visitors [12,16,27]. Accordingly, local guides could join the event to provide more narrative [59]. David Rosenberg is an example of this type of actors, in the case of the mural of the Battle of Cable Street.

According to the literature, we can say that the mural had a co-narrative [2,80] which has been preserved until now. However, this co-narrative should be re-interpreted according to its new reality. Therefore, a co-creation model will help to build a shared narrative with the participation of all the stakeholders [15,31]: Businesses, public attractions, neighbours, visitors, council, artists, groups related to its identity, the event's contemporaries, schools and universities [3,55,57,59]. This has been emphasised as the value of community-heritage engagement instead of a top-down model, especially as far as controversial heritage is concerned [50,58].

Moreover, from a managerial perspective, building a co-narrative to involve different stakeholders could provide sustainability for dark murals [4]. Given that these types of murals are sometimes not located in the city centre, it is essential to strengthen their promotion and add extra attractions in the surrounding areas for visitors who are interested in history. Murals have enabled the development of marginalised areas in large cities [23,24]. Cycle routes have also proved to be a successful option in promoting visits to them when they are a long way from the city centre. In this case, results show that a dark mural has the potential to attract visitors in an economic and culturally sustainable way as long as there is an appropriate co-narrative [15,26]. Policymakers and local government should therefore give value to this type of mural art in order to enhance it as a tourist attraction, conserve the identity of their neighbourhoods [40], construct a sense of community and explore new sectors, such as the creative industries.

In this paper, we have analysed how communities can build a co-narrative around dark murals to achieve sustainable local development. An ethnographic qualitative approach has been shown to add more value regarding the stakeholders' opinions. Results show that dark murals can attract visitors when their co-narrative is based on solidarity for educational and discovery purposes and also improves community engagement.

The limitations of this analysis are related to the case study methodology, as this makes it difficult to generalise our results. However, our aim was to carry out an in-depth study of a dark mural in order to understand the narrative it uses to attract visitors and improve community engagement. For this reason, we have used an ethnographic approach. In the future, we aim to study other dark murals to add more case studies and compare them.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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