LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE STUDIES

Heritage and Tourism

Places, Imageries and the Digital Age

Edited by Linde Egberts
and Maria D. Alvarez

Amsterdam
University
Press

LHS

Heritage and Tourism

Landscape and Heritage Studies

Landscape and Heritage Studies (LHS) is an English-language series about the history, heritage and transformation of the natural and cultural landscape and the built environment. The series aims at the promotion of new directions as well as the rediscovery and exploration of lost tracks in landscape and heritage research. Both theoretically oriented approaches and detailed empirical studies play an important part in the realization of this objective. The series explicitly focuses on:

- the interactions between physical and material aspects of landscapes and landscape experiences, meanings and representations;
- perspectives on the temporality and dynamic of landscape that go beyond traditional concepts of time, dating and chronology;
- the urban-rural nexus in the context of historical and present-day transformations of the landscape and the built environment;
- multidisciplinary, integrative and comparative approaches from geography, spatial, social and natural sciences, history, archaeology and cultural sciences in order to understand the development of human-nature interactions through time and to study the natural, cultural and social values of places and landscapes;
- the conceptualization and musealization of landscape as heritage and the role of 'heritagescapes' in the construction and reproduction of memories and identities;
- the role of heritage practices in the transmission, design and transformation of (hidden) landscapes and the built environment, both past and present;
- the appropriation of and engagement with sites, places, destinations, landscapes, monuments and buildings, and their representation and meaning in distinct cultural contexts.

Heritage and Tourism

Places, Imageries and the Digital Age

Edited by
Linde Egberts and Maria D. Alvarez

Amsterdam University Press

Cover illustration: Tourists visit the Begijnhof in Amsterdam, August 2017
Photograph by Linde Egberts, used with permission

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden
Typesetting: Crius Group, Hulshout

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by the University of Chicago Press.

ISBN 978 94 6298 535 3
e-ISBN 978 90 4853 644 3 (pdf)
DOI 10.5117/9789462985353
NUR 680 / 740

To the memory of Frank M. Go (1948-2017)

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Foreword

Tourism offers the possibility of benefitting from the economic dimension of heritage and harnessing it to help fund cultural and natural conservation. In a resource-constrained world, material and immaterial heritage can be used to support two extremely different narratives concerning development. The neoliberal narrative holds that technological solutions reduce resource use and therefore conserve cultural and natural resources.

Heritage and tourism have become complex phenomena due to their political, economic, social, cultural, aesthetic, and environmental dimensions. A satisfactory balance between tourist expectations and the aspirations of residents to enjoy an undisturbed life in their local community has often proven hard to achieve both in theoretical debates and in practice. One argument is that host communities and local property owners should be involved in planning for tourism and conservation, since the latter enhance natural and cultural-heritage features and these people profit from them economically. However, to what extent does existing research on the subject address this issue? In any case, what research there is has not been widely disseminated enough to be of benefit to practitioners.

Improving heritage tourism practice will ultimately require bringing the academic and practice communities together to conduct research. With this end in mind, the Second Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality International Conference 2015 held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (26-27 November 2015) placed the paradoxical theme "heritage meets innovation" centre stage. Initiated by the Rotterdam School of Business of Erasmus University, Elgin & Co., the research institute CLUE+ of the Vrije University Amsterdam, and the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture of the University of Amsterdam, the conference underscored the urgent need to make strategic decisions concerning the future of the heritage enterprise. Heritage decision makers must find ways of analysing the underlying market structure of their domain, and of questioning whether current trends are somehow interrelated, so that they can better plan for the future. Granted, at the same time, they must acknowledge that a lot in the future is fundamentally uncertain.

The past 25 years have witnessed a profound shift brought about by computing, which has dramatically reduced the time needed to communicate information, easily bridging great distances and producing a new global connectedness. Currently, sensing devices are creating self-organising processes and new relationships that may lead to crucial changes in market structure. As a result, heritage-tourism organisations and destinations will have to answer a key question: "How can they succeed in attracting tourists while simultaneously persuading the relevant stakeholders to contribute to the conservation of tangible and intangible heritage?" These organisations and destinations do not function in isolation; they interact with clients, suppliers and other partners within a systematic framework – a *relational network* – comprised of nodes and resulting from investments of resources and previous interactions with stakeholders over time. How can decision makers become more fully aware of their position and relationships in this network – in the past, present and future?

The editors of this book, Linde Egberts and Maria Alvarez, along with the contributing authors are in search of what we may call a relational heritage tourism, i.e. a pairing of two fields, heritage and tourism, which often operate in isolation from one another, both academically and administratively. One of the reasons for the distance between the two fields may be that defining and valorising heritage tourism is a "tricky" matter. As a field of study heritage tourism can become quite overwhelming due to the multitude of topics, theories, and examples it encompasses. Moreover, it draws on many different disciplines, ranging from anthropology, geography, and history to political science and economics, which adds to its complexity and can easily give rise to conflicting perspectives. While the case study possesses many advantages, its major disadvantage is that it is difficult to generalise about a set of factors that has contributed to success in a given situation, because every historical-cultural context is unique. The HTHIC 2015's response to the lack of a "shared constellation of beliefs, values and techniques… models and examples" was a call for setting a coordinated Common Research and Applications Agenda.

The latter is designed, first, to analyse the areas and tensions that inhibit finding creative and innovative ways to foster the development of academic-business-government relationships that are sufficiently robust to handle the problems now facing heritage tourism. Second, it aims to shape new institutional arrangements suited to nurture productive relationships and lessen the chances of contradictions, tensions and misrepresentation between stakeholders. Third, it seeks to create, where appropriate, the standardised methods and well-defined topics that are essential for casting research in forms that transcend the particular contending points of view, thereby making it possible to promote cultural heritage as a relational asset. The latter, in turn, can serve as a mechanism for joint-value creation and offer a solid foundation for securing a competitive advantage.

Against this backdrop, the editors of this book start by outlining the various factors which contribute to the intricacies of heritage-tourism relationships. What is it that renders these relationships so difficult to understand? Whereas cooperation expresses a willingness to assist or engage in an economic venture, a relationship is more obscure, because it is a connection based on an association existing between social actors within a community or at the intra- and inter-organisational level. The editors reflect on the complexity of relational theory, showing implicitly a concern with the issue of how individuals and organisations behave towards each other. This is relevant considering that in heritage tourism the past (historical-cultural values) and the future (net present value) come together in contexts that must accommodate the profit motives of tourism and hospitality companies, making for some "uneasy" heritage-tourism alliances. The behavioural approach in relationships theory raises the question of how to coexist in such an uneasy coalition within a system characterised by partners whose actions are based primarily either on a belief in extrinsic goals (fame and fortune) or on intrinsic goals (social relationships and personal growth). The heritage-tourism market faces a volatile competitive market, which is taking the form of a worldwide scientific, technological, cultural, and economic race for pre-eminence. The result of this intense rivalry is the emergence of new alliances.

The editors' effort to help readers understand heritage in relationship to tourism is a fruitful point of departure, and it is buttressed by cases illustrating how the management of heritage-tourism organisations and destinations is rapidly changing in post-industrial society. In particular, the new media have made possible numerous technology-mediated interactions that have brought the past and the "original" back to life in previously unimaginable ways. Heritage-tourism stakeholders use the steadily growing interest in history – extending to historical films, adventure games, war commemorations, vintage cars, retro fashion, and music performances on authentic instruments – to satisfy modern consumption demands. Each of these types of experiences however, exploits memories, monuments, relics, and place-associations as "price/quality carriers" to optimise return on heritage as a relational asset.

The intricacy of the relationships involved here derives from their multifaceted nature. In this regard, we can distinguish three significant aspects of heritage-tourism relationships. They can be viewed as devices, as assets, or as problems. The latter arise due to the intricate arrangements that relationships can create due to internal influences (e.g. marketing, financing, management) and external developments (competitors, suppliers, distribution channels, and information and communication technologies). For example, just consider how the rapid expansion of private museums may accelerate the eclipse of public museums, which may face increasing marginality in the future. Disruptive conditions raise the following important questions: What opportunities will arise from device-driven and self-organising processes as they create new relationships between heritage tourism and its (non-) stakeholders? What shared infrastructure do the parties involved need to develop?

The chapters of this book distinguish three analytical perspectives on heritage-tourism relationships: those that emphasise, respectively, pull factors, push factors, and critical issues. “Pull factors” refer to selected organisational characteristics that function as a focal point and “magnet” to attract a particular segment of the tourist market to a destination. By making careful choices, a destination can concentrate its resources and use relationships as a means of efficiently delivering to the tourist segment being targeted value which is perceived as greater than that being offered by its rivals. Some of the chapters in this book present a methodology, concepts, or illustrations for packaging a variety of cultural values in a way that creates a specific and attractive product, or, in other words, a brand – one which is easily presented, say, on a website aimed at a specific audience. In “dark tourism”, for instance, site branding emphasises images of human suffering and trauma. Finally, in heritage-based brand building it is possible to create joint value if multiple stakeholders enter into networked relationships designed to reach and “enrich” (e.g. by way of narrative content) specific cultural markets.

Other chapters highlight “push factors”, which refer to personal, psychological characteristics or needs that push or motivate tourists to participate in heritage tourism. These factors are especially prominent at sites which use technology and augmented-reality applications to enhance tourist experiences; and such applications can be incorporated in a narrative about the heritage site, which may also seek to include the participation of the local community. Other push factors tap into a broader trend of intensifying audience engagement by personalising experiences at heritage sites, for example, through co-creation and customisable 3D-printed souvenirs. Such organisation-to-client relationships serve as a means to attain innovation; for they match up an individual’s own resources and activities with those of organisations or of other individuals, thereby fostering new opportunities for innovation.

A critical study explains how a content analysis of reviews of heritage destinations posted by tourists on the online platform TripAdvisor allows us to gauge the degree of interest in and/or respect they have for selected characteristics of a local community, including local-product offerings, the quality of the environment and the preservation of cultural heritage. Individual tourists, heritage professionals, and experts can agree that these characteristics are significant for anyone involved in designing and implementing practices, such as those, for example, which can contribute to sustainable development. Engagement in relationships can be a means of influencing others if they foster intensive mutual learning and critically informed opinion, thereby building trust and leading, ultimately, to a more integrated stage of institutionalised heritage tourism.

The critical importance of relationships is evident, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly throughout this book. The latter's principal contribution is that it highlights the significance of relationship theory as a systematic framework for the development of heritage tourism, showing how it enables the sharing of memories and place-associations through a variety of means, including social media. The editors' and authors' approach truly reflects the motto of the HTHIC 2015, "Heritage meets innovation", and their work is an encouraging sign that further advances in our understanding of the field will soon be forthcoming.

Frank M. Go (1948-2017), Professor Emeritus Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, the Netherlands