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World Heritage, Tourism and Identity: Inscription and Co-production. Ashgate Publishing Limited. xii+277pp. (figures, tables, contributors, index). ISBN: 9781409470588. (Hardback).

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Undoubtedly, tourism – its development, management and impacts – plays an important role at World Heritage sites throughout the world, despite not being specifically emphasised in the 1972 “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” (UNESCO 1972). WH designation is generally motivated by the aim to promote a destination, to establish a distinctive image, or to directly increase tourism demand; and even if the heritage preservation aspects were more important than the tourism promotional objectives, facing challenges brought about by the development of tourism and the increased presence of tourists generally becomes the constant reality of being a WH site. World Heritage sites represent a conversion of localities into heritage of universal value, where national heritage values are protected but the World Heritage status is promoted. This nexus between local and global raises certainly

interesting research questions, having attracted the attention of investigators from a wide range of disciplines during the last decades. Still, maybe due its complexity, the topic has remained somewhat under-researched in tourism studies, thus this new edited volume on World Heritage, tourism and identity is a very welcome addition to the existing knowledge in this field.

When looking back at previous studies on the relationship of tourism and World Heritage, two major works stand out. Leask and Fyall (2006) in their edited volume combined academic research on the issues related to overall World Heritage management and the role of tourism activity with practical results from individual properties around the world. Di Giovine (2009) in his monograph approached the topic from the perspective of the tourists, managers, experts and politicians, examining the meaning-making processes in heritage as well as in tourism production, at sites located

in Italy, Cambodia and Vietnam. In his understanding, through the designation of WH sites UNESCO creates a heritage-scape, a mental construct based on tangible monuments, highlighting values with the aim to reconceptualise the world and to rearrange the existing geopolitical landscape.

Looking at the subject from a different angle, this new publication edited by Laurent Bourdeau, Maria Gravari-Barbas and Mike Robinson focuses on the impacts and the implications of being nominated as well as being designated as World Heritage. Using a great variety of methodological approaches on a geographically and culturally widespread list of sites, the 18 chapters of the book provide detailed research and generally critical reflection on the realities of being recognised as outstanding universal value, mainly from the local residents' point of view, but also extending the examination to the tourists' experience. The introductory chapter written by the editors raises timely and relevant questions concerning the entanglements between tourism and World Heritage, and the transcendental value of being designated as WH, and provides a good overview of the key issues further elaborated in the individual research papers.

Although each chapter adds a different perspective to this rich collection, certain studies are particularly noteworthy, due to the nature of the applied methodology, the novelty of the approach, the complexity of the issues discussed, or the quality of the analysis.

Richard Shieldhouse examines the statistical relationship between WH status and international tourism demand in seven Mexican World Heritage cities, with special emphasis on picturesque Guanajuato. Although the statistical analysis confirms a positive impact of the WH inscription on international arrivals, his results also suggest that public policy, consistent local management practices, and the development of infrastructure and tourism facilities play a significant role in the long-term success of

WH sites. In addition, this chapter underlines the need for valid longitudinal data, the lack of which is a recurring problem both in the studies of the volume and in tourism research in general.

Sarah Ellen Shortliffe introduces a rather neglected factor into the research of World Heritage: gender. Following a brief overview of UNESCO's achievements in integrating gender equality into heritage conservation, the chapter identifies various problems resulting from gender blindness or a superficial application of gender neutrality. The author's thoughts and suggestions on the role of gender in representing and interpreting WH values are particularly important for living heritage sites where the construction of a suitable gender analysis framework might significantly – and positively – influence the local community's identity.

Inclusion and exclusion are also the key topics of Ann Reed's study on Ghana's Elmina and Cape Coast Castles, although from a different perspective. The chapter offers thought-provoking ideas on a number of issues: the construction of identity and meaning at heritage sites, the role of memories in creating often contradictory narratives, or the nexus between spirituality and commodification in tourism development and heritage preservation.

Several chapters of the book deal with the impacts of World Heritage designation on the life of local residents. Although the core theme is the same in all these cases, the approaches are rather different. In their study of Taishan and Taiqian (China), Yixiao Xiang and Geoffrey Wall present the changes brought about in the affected local communities' livelihoods by Mount Taishan's inscription on the WH list, without once truly questioning the ruling Chinese conservation policy that requires that local residents be relocated from WH sites. Although both the villagers' negative and the village administrators' positive perceptions concerning the relocation are included in the chapter, a critical analysis of the political-

conservationist background of the relocation policy would have enriched the case study. Oppositely, Akbar Keshodkar's study of the consequences of WH designation on Zanzibar Stone Town directly questions the benefits of the World Heritage status for the local population, based on the argument that UNESCO's preservation guidelines and the local heritage regulations lead to unequal development, and require residents to cope with the tourist gaze in a destination slowly turning into a living museum.

Luna Khirfan's comparative analysis of the heritage management plans of Aleppo (Syria) and Acre (Israel), two relatively similar Middle Eastern WH cities, illustrates well the important role that planning and management can play in sustaining the distinctive qualities of a heritage site while simultaneously balancing the often conflicting needs of visitors and the local community. Although the city of Aleppo has suffered major destruction since the outbreak of the war in Syria, and the priorities of heritage management have undoubtedly changed, the model of assessing place experience proposed in the chapter offers a useful general framework for planning and management decisions that also take into consideration the non-physical constructs of a World Heritage site.

Altogether, in addition to presenting valuable theoretical concepts and empirical research findings, the authors of the chapters also formulate new research questions, thus inspiring further studies in the field of World Heritage and tourism. Due to the variety of topics, sites and approaches, the volume may be recommended both for researchers and students representing the field of tourism, cultural studies, heritage studies or social sciences in general, and for decision-makers in heritage management searching for a better understanding of the potential impacts of World Heritage designation on tourism development and local identity. However, the generally well written and easy-to-read book would have deserved better proofreading, in order to avoid the too-frequent typographical errors.

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