



World Heritage and Tourism

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EDITORIAL

This issue of *furnace* is the final part of a series of four focused on the meanings and values of World Heritage. The themes have been drawn from the areas of research forming part of the AHRC funded research project 'Communicating World Heritage: Meanings, Values and Practices amongst Communities of Interest' undertaken by PhD researchers in the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage at the University of Birmingham.

The first issue in the series considered Industrial World Heritage, the second World Heritage Education, and the third communities and World Heritage. The final instalment in this series addresses World Heritage and tourism. In this volume we are delighted to present six papers addressing different aspects of this topic and which draw on case studies from Finland, Spain, Greece, Botswana and Japan.

Tourists can be characterised by their mobility - they are people who have travelled to someplace beyond their normal environment. While a traditional view of tourism encompasses both travel for leisure and business this issue focuses on the former, moving the focus away from the practicalities of movement, its infrastructure and economics, and onto the performances and performativity of leisure travel. It is in this context that World Heritage and tourism is discussed, with papers considering what it means for the visitor to learn about a place, travel to it, negotiate its meanings and values, and to return home. The World Heritage Convention only mentions tourism once, and it does so in the context of threats of a magnitude potentially great enough to warrant putting a site on the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger. When tourism is not being discussed as a direct threat to World Heritage sites, it is typically considered in terms of providing appropriate facilities for visitors or with the potential economic benefits that tourism can bring both to individual sites and their surrounding areas. There is a need to consider how tourists engage with and experience World Heritage in broader terms.

In the keynote paper Mike Robinson opens up the issues surrounding not only the challenges of understanding tourism and World Heritage but also the complexity. Tourism and heritage haven been interwoven in many ways over the last century, and

even before. World Heritage designation need not fundamentally alter these well-worn modalities.

Understanding visitor awareness and perceptions of World Heritage is of particular importance for exploring issues of communication and experience. Anna Titova opens up this issue through her presentation of a case study of how World Heritage status is communicated at Suomenlinna, Finland, using it as a way to examine the concept of 'World Heritage Literacy' and the effect that this has on the motivations and experience of visitors to World Heritage Sites. She argues that, while there is growing public awareness of what World Heritage is, something which may affect how people travel, the efficacy of this as a foundation for communication is dependent on subsequent levels of on- and off-site engagement.

Ghislaine van der Ploeg presents three contrasting examples of how site management can influence tourist's experience of space and the consequences for the presentation of Outstanding Universal Value. At the Graeco-Roman theatre sites at Epidaurus (Greece), and Syracuse and Ostia (Italy) modern performances allow visitors to experience something of the spatial aspects of the sites' historical use, even though the shows themselves may not be from that tradition. Further, subtler measures of site management can have a significant effect on how the performances of tourism itself lead to the selective transferral of particular values. In particular van der Ploeg explores how the funnelling of site traffic at Ostia results in tourists focusing on the theatre, largely rebuilt in the 20th century, rather than the more structurally authentic elements of the city itself.

Tshepang Rose Tlatlane also considers the role of staging performances in communicating particular values to tourists. She explores storytelling as a way of portraying intangible cultural values at World Heritage Sites in Botswana. The tourist model for Botswana has been wildlife-focused for many years, and oriented on the Okavango Delta. By broadening the tourist offer to include cultural heritage sites such as the Tsodilo Hills there is potential for growth without necessarily overburdening individual sites. By using traditional storytelling practices to interpret the sites there is the potential both to sustain these practices and create interpretation for tourists which allows them to enter in to some of the more intangible elements of the values of these places.

The ethics of performing tourism in places of great religious significance is an element that Tlatlane touches on, and which Rawan K. Osman considers in detail through his exploration of the management of the Córdoba Mosque-Cathedral in Spain. Recognising that visitors bring with them a multiplicity of religious and cultural knowledge, Osman explores how management best practice should allow room for tourists to demonstrate their own values.

In contrast to Osman's presentation of how site based management can affect the experience of sites for people of different religious backgrounds, Francesca Casey examines what can be learnt about heritage management from the alternative engagements with place demonstrated by Urban Explorers. Using lessons learnt from the Urban Exploring community, Casey argues for an alteration of high level conceptualisations of value and conservation. This is demonstrated through a case

study of Hashima Island in Japan, where conservation discourse comes into conflict with the value of entropic decay.

These papers demonstrate the importance of pursuing research into tourism at World Heritage Sites with a broader purview than just looking at management issues. Tourists are not all the same, they are motivated by a huge range of factors and their experiences of World Heritage are inevitably also incredibly varied. By examining their motivations, practices and spatial performances, as well as putting that in the context of broader management strategies and philosophies, it is possible to formulate new understandings and new questions.