

## Scientific Day 28th of November 2018

### Heritage & Tourism

#### Local communities and visitors – sharing responsibilities

#### Introduction

##### Heritage as tourism attraction

Cultural heritage and cultural memory are the ‘shining stars’ in the growing field of cultural tourism. By visiting a historical site, tourists enter a space that is subject to another time. It is connected with past events, which can be located, interpreted and remembered through the examination of its symbolic order. It thus reconstructs a social framework that brings together collective memory and history, generational memory and memory in the sense of a configuration for identity formation. In the case of world heritage tourism the product incorporates elements of national or regional character, as world heritage sites are national flag carriers and major tourism attractions of their country, symbols of national identity, universally recognized.

Cultural artefacts of previous times and generations such as buildings, monuments and memorials, events, rites, works of art and ways of life convey cultural memory. They not only keep the cultural memory alive but also update it beyond the present into the future. The *touristification* of such places of remembrance in the sense of UNESCO World Heritage – a new form of cultural memory (Assmann 2014) – makes these cultural highlights globally accessible; tourism even takes on a mediatory role. What is remembered as world heritage and which cultural phenomena of past epochs end up in cultural memory, therefore, depends on the present forms of society, the media-shaped updates and the marketed tourism products. As a result, it experiences a revaluation, a new anchorage, and if need be, a *recontextualization*. In this respect, it contains new realities that make it possible for the present to be connected, experienced, thereby making heritage repeatable and thus capable of survival (Luger & Wöhler 2008).





## Profane Pilgrimage

In any case, the challenge for tourism providers lies in the tightrope walk between educational mediation and the satisfaction of entertainment needs, whereby the experience exists in the synthesis of service and communication quality and can be considerably augmented by the new information technologies (Egger 2015).

In world heritage tourism visitors learn, study and consume basic elements of a culture or the icons of national identity. Material cultural heritage is based on a deeper concept whose understanding requires some knowledge. These are extinct worlds that can reveal the history of humanity. World heritage experience therefore makes it possible to experience oneself as being a part of the story, to see oneself as part of a larger whole, due to the fact that visitors come into contact with a timeless order. Wöhler (2008) even speaks of a *sacramental experience*. Something transcendent is revealed. It is therefore a question of proper respect for certain places, memorials, natural monuments, etc., because in the profane world they become something *sacred* through their *upvaluation to world heritage*. The history of the human spirit and the manifestations of his virtuosity are classified as being of highest *cultural value*, in a sense *sacralized* – as a contrast to the almost entirely desacralized cosmos in the western world. This gives it a value that can be valid for all of humanity. Wöhler rightly refers to this as a *canonization of spaces*. In this way, cultural memory is formed, since out of the diversity of cultural artefacts, certain artefacts are declared as memorable. A place, a region, a site is given a permanent code and in this manner, its time-transcending significance is enshrined.

This experience of that which is deemed important also creates its uniqueness, one becomes aware of this extraordinary and universal value in a sense. Therein also lies its large-scale tourist potential, because there is a great yearning for emotionality and holistic experience or the desire to feel one with or in agreement with the world.

World heritage tourists are in a sense on a *profane pilgrimage*. Experiencing these



Legal regulations for preservation and protection are a precondition for the responsible use of the architectural heritage, but it does not guarantee, however, that all stakeholders will comply with them. Old towns are highly coveted spaces for value investment and speculation in real estate. Numerous world heritage sites show that the legislative protection of the heritage is insufficient. In Italy, the most valuable testimonies of antiquity and the Renaissance are suffering from decay; in France, there are many for sale and in the United Kingdom, they are to be divided into *heritage cash cows* and *charity objects* (van Oers, 2015). In some cases neither public administration nor politics have any valid instruments or are able to use their official authority to find a balance between careful development and responsible preservation of the most valuable thing the community has (Mc Kercher/du Cros 2002). In order to deal with this problem effectively, it is necessary to have long-term urban planning that extends beyond the world heritage perimeter and the buffer zone.

Committed to the overarching goal of sustainability, it is therefore necessary to develop indicators for appropriate tourism activities of all participants in world heritage regions. What is valid for tourism in general, applies to the sensitive world heritage and cultural tourism in a very special way, because the long-term preservation of the existing heritage is at the forefront of all considerations. Tourism is on a sustainable way when it is

- possible in the long term, because resources are developed and utilised sparingly
- culturally compatible, because respect for local conventions and rites is expressed, a renunciation of exploitable commercialising and an adaptation to local standards takes place
- socially balanced, because the benefits and disadvantages are spread equally, regional disparities are avoided and locals are involved in negotiations and decisions
- ecologically viable because of the lowest possible pressure on the environment, the prevention of biodiversity damage and the promotion of environmental awareness

- economically sensible and productive, because it is profitable for the local or national economy and contributes significantly to the creation of income for the local population (Luger 2008).

Together with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, UNWTO has developed his concept of sustainability into a programme. Its overall objectives can be divided into the following five areas:

- Integrate sustainable tourism principles into the mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention.
- Strengthen the enabling environment by advocating policies, strategies, frameworks and tools that support sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.
- Promote broad stakeholder engagement in the planning, development and management of sustainable tourism that follows a destination approach to heritage conservation and focuses on empowering local communities.
- Provide world heritage stakeholders with the capacity and the tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably based on the local context and needs.
- Promote quality tourism products and services that encourage responsible behaviour among all stakeholders and foster understanding and appreciation of the concept of Outstanding Universal Value and protection of world heritage ([whc.unesco.org/en/tourism](http://whc.unesco.org/en/tourism)).

Combining tourism and world heritage and developing positive synergies in the form of *benchmark learning* towards sustainability was the objective of a pilot study carried out by World Nature Forum/Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch and the UNESCO chair at the university of Salzburg (World Nature Forum 2012).

The core indicators, composed of a number of criteria and examined by empirical data studies, were the following:

<b>Condition and Preservation</b>	Condition of world heritage site Status of Protection, Threats to the Site
<b>General Management</b>	Management Plan, Conflict Management Human Resources and Funding
<b>Tourism Management</b>	Visitor Management, Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Products; Transportation
<b>Involvement and Support</b>	Participation; Public and political Support Involvement of Government Involvement of NGOs/Civil Society
<b>Communication and Awareness</b>	Communication with Stakeholders Networking, Cooperation Education and Awareness
<b>Regional Development</b>	Contribution of WH Tourism Promotion of Regional Products Significance for Regional Developmen

Sustainability in this sense might be interpreted as finding a long lasting balance between conservation und the commercial use of heritage by the tourism industry. No two world heritage sites are alike, but all share common challenges such as the need for a reconciliation of opposing views in visitation and conservation. They differ greatly in the degree to which they are threatened and their elasticity with regard to visitor numbers and carrying capacity.

The definition of tangible resource limits (crowding, carrying capacity) is necessary to avoid overuse and destruction. If the host population is benefitting considerably from tourism, its welcoming attitude will show also positive results in visitor satisfaction. Recent developments and the opening of new markets have led to excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer from the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks.

It has enforced permanent changes in their lifestyles, reduced access to amenities and their general well-being. “Balancing the needs of tourists and inhabitants” is a complex issue, highly emotional loaden as it is harming landscape and putting local population and infrastructure under enormous strain, creates physical and visual pollution. Perhaps this balancing is a symptom of the present era of unprecedented affluence and hyper mobility. While the global travel supply chain may prosper (in the case of international cruise industry that delivers thousands of passengers daily to the ports near the historic cities and heritage sites creating tourist-phobia in some places) the residents have to bear the cost of tourism growth, like real estate speculation and rising costs of housing. AirBnB, for example, has been accused of reducing housing affordability and displacing residents. It must be said that world heritage sites historic old cities small in size suffer most from this phenomenon as cultural tourism is naturally focused on such *destinations of desire* like Venice, Dubrovnik, Florence, Angkor, Salzburg, Hallstatt etc. to name just a few prominent ones.

Overcrowding is a visual sign of uncontrolled tourism resulting in traffic jams, pedestrian congestion in narrow city lanes and suboptimal experience of the high quality tourism product. A strict visitor management and entrance limitations to the city centres for cars and coaches may mitigate the problem. The almost unlimited individual mobility has pushed tourism industry into a fast growing market. City administrators and destination managers must acknowledge that there are definite limits to growth. Prioritizing the welfare of local residents above the needs of the global tourism supply chain is vital. Prime consideration must be given to ensuring that the level of visitation fits within a destination’s capacity. The tourism industry bears a major responsibility and has to ensure that product development achieves a balance between the optimal tourist experience and a commensurate local benefit. Tourists must also play their part by making travel choices that are sensitive to the places they visit and those who live in and around them. Therefore, tourism – in line with the Historic Urban Landscape-approach – is part of the wider destination

management system, which must also consider transport and mobility, the preservation of spaces, the local economy and housing, among other aspects of daily life. It goes without saying that carefully planned and managed tourism can make a major contribution towards the World Heritage Convention goals, preserving cultural and natural heritage, intercultural respect and appreciation.

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## Scientific Day

In order to achieve a dense description of the current situation in the OWHC-heritage sites and to make use of best and good experiences, these topics/questions dealing with “Heritage & Tourism” should be answered and addressed in the workshops.

Examples we can learn from are most welcome.

For the morning session we are expecting short presentations – maximum ten minutes for each of your projects. In order to make best use out of them we would like to ask you to follow this structure:

- 1 Scope or specific problem you wanted to address
- 2 Short description of your project – overarching and specific goals
- 3 Activities planned and implemented, following which strategy
- 4 Achievements – positive and less successful results, obstacles
- 5 Lessons learnt – relevance for a sustainable future

For the afternoon session we will continue our deliberations in three workshops focusing on these topics: General management/tourism management, Regional management/destination management, Communication and awareness.

The group discussions will address as many points as possible written down in the workshop agenda.

## **Workshop topics**

### ***#1 General management – tourism management***

Tourism is playing a constantly growing role in many world heritage sites. Carefully planned tourism can bring enormous positive effects, uncontrolled tourism development has a negative impact on the visitor experience as well as for the wellbeing of the local residents and the environment. Defining the right balance

between the different forms of usage of a world heritage site has become a major task in heritage management.

- Tourism situation in general – under control/facing which problems/positive effects?
- Mission statement/strategy/management. Plan existing, implemented – most relevant challenges and how they are addressed, problems mitigated by which means?
- Heritage management and civil society collaborate with the tourism supply chain?
- Accommodation – number of beds/occupancy rate in hotel business/Is AirBnB a problem? If yes, which measures are taken to solve them? Taxation/fines?
- Visitor management/regulations – good examples
- Tourism product development – is the heritage management involved or is it entirely done by private market? Any partnerships/projects?
- Overtourism - an issue?
- To which extent tourism is included in the HUL-approach – experiences?
- Introduction of monitoring systems, like the European Tourism Indicator System for sustainable destination management?
- Climate change/waste management
- Is tourism/heritage tourism on the sustainable trail?

## ***#2 Regional development/destination management***

Good governance of world heritage sites requests to think outside the box and to see the bigger picture. In a wider context careful zoning and traffic planning are elements to manage a site in a sustainable way. Aiming at commensurate benefit visitors and local residents are both target groups of management activities.

- Transportation and traffic situation
- Regulation of traffic
- Promotion of regional products
- Benefits of heritage tourism for the wider region
- Zoning/city planning – HUL-agenda addressed?

### ***#3 Communication and awareness***

To give somebody an understanding for the outstanding universal value of a world heritage site is a challenge and needs professional competence. Local inhabitants as well as visitors from near and far need proper interpretation of the meanings walking a tightrope between educational mediation and the satisfaction of entertainment needs. New information technology is not a panacea but can be a tool for better understanding of the visible and invisible components of culture.

- World Heritage centre and tourism – is a centre important for agenda setting in sustainable World Heritage tourism?
- Utilisation of new information technology in heritage and tourism communication management– Apps, guides, story telling etc.
- Involvement of local population/civil society action groups
- Media partnerships/like minded journalists/PR
- Joint activities in the field of heritage marketing/tourism marketing/events and city marketing