Editorial

The Mediterranean Tourist City Reconsidered

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1. Entering the Scene

A man crosses the street holding his donkey by its bridle. In the narrow lanes of the island, he squeezes through a number of parked motorcycles, street furniture and a surge of tourists coming from the opposite direction. He carries fresh fruits and vegetables to be sold in the local market or a makeshift stall. The money he would make is not much but could complement his income, especially from April onwards, when tourist activity is on the rise.

If you contemplate this picture and have visited any small Mediterranean city, you might find it strikingly familiar. Braudel [1] (p. 312) has indeed commented on the shared idiosyncrasies of the Mediterranean cities and laborers diachronically manifesting in everyday life in informal, communal or social ways. If you remove the obstacles from the donkey's path, the image can be placed anywhere in the Mediterranean at any time.

In this Special Issue, we examine the background of our scene and the ways communities of people (residents, returning visitors, tourists and local administration) interact with it, discussing the impact of their actions on the city, its heritage and the landscape. We move forward from the regularly discussed touristification of the Mediterranean city—as natural as flying from any place in gloomy Europe for a few days of sunshine and relaxation—in the form of a meta-analysis, reflecting on the context of the touristified city and the effects of activities and processes, the boundaries of the phenomena and possible approaches to dealing with prominent problems.

2. Rationale and Contributions

Entitled "Re-Inventing the Mediterranean Tourist City", this Special Issue (SI) is devoted to the relationship between heritage management and tourist urban development, focusing on Mediterranean cities.

The triggers for the development of this SI were two sessions chaired by the editors in Rome ("Re-inventing the Mediterranean tourist city in the 20th and 21st centuries", European Association of Urban History Conference, Rome, 29 August–1 September 2018) and Barcelona ("Tourism reflections on archaeology in the Mediterranean", 24th annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, Barcelona, 5–8 September 2018). Papers presented in these sessions focused on a number of cases across the Mediterranean. An open call added to this bundle a couple of extra papers, and the total amount can be now accessed in Heritage under a CC licence.

Tourism has become a critical shaping force for contemporary socioeconomic urban landscapes and a central strategic focus in regeneration policies. Mediterranean cities are currently considerably affected by the tourism industry, having to integrate into the tourist urban development their rich cultural and archaeological heritage—an integral part of their place identity and simultaneously

a powerful incentive for attracting tourists, compared to overseas "ex nihilo" cities created for tourism purposes.

The discussion in the conference sessions brought up issues of heritage interpretation, presentation and conservation management and their key role in Mediterranean cities with special architectural and archaeological value and a high influx of tourism. The aim of this SI was to take these thoughts further and gather high-quality original research on the effects of tourism expansion on cultural heritage in the Mediterranean, addressing challenges arising from this process, and especially on the different preservation strategies employed in the rebranding of heritage for tourist purposes by both the state and private stakeholders. A variety of reflections were presented that analyze distinct sociopolitical and economic circumstances that formed national tourism development policies, discussing the success or failure of the specific approaches to heritage management, including essays dedicated to tourism mobility and its reciprocal relationship with heritage, regional culture and economic growth; essays on the interplay between local and foreign tourist policies and the construction of national identity; essays documenting local heritage perceptions and community attitudes towards tourism; or essays investigating underground built cities and issues of gentrification, ethical conservation and the interpretation/communication of historical functions. Focal points such as the landscape, memory and identity were recurring and explored against a background of territorial transformation and exploding tourist activity within the scope of heritage management. The original scheme was to include submissions from various countries across the Mediterranean, such as Spain, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Portugal, Croatia, Slovenia, etc.; nevertheless, Greece and Italy seem to have become the focal points for the Special Issue, probably reflecting the immediacy of the circumstances due to the ongoing economic recession in both countries since 2010.

Thus, in this SI:

Myrto Stenou deals with the tourism mantra "Live your myth in Greece", promoted ad absurdum in pre- and postcrisis Greece. Myrto revisits the main *topoi* of the tourism focus in Greece, i.e., archaeological sites of classical antiquity, established as a place of interest from the age of the Grand Tour—if not before—and complemented in the 1930s by the scenic island imagery, a landscape of noble savages and light and pure architectural forms. This elitist construct formed the longing mirror and the imagined womb of the European identity's roots and was thus placed in the centre of heritage policy and practice in Greece, developed to fit exactly and promote this image inside and outside the country [2]. It is no wonder that this construct now has its own biography in heritage dialectics, the latest forms being the ruined-Parthenon-plus-euro-coin cartoons or the insulting Aphrodite on the Focus magazine cover.

On the same note, Emilia Athanassiou, Vasiliki Dima, Konstantina Karali and Panayotis Tournikiotis delve deeper into the relationship of the material remains of Greek antiquity to the emerging modernism in Europe, culminating in an alternative, highly contested and inconclusive "southern modernism" manifesting in Greece in the interesting interwar times. The journey to Greece was the main medium of this interaction: the Western intelligentsia, engineers, architects and urban planners visited the country and reflected upon its historical remains and emerging present with awe but also with invigorating ideas originating from the optimism in Europe, a feeling that was not going to last long. This process was fueled by relevant institutions and activities such as travel agencies, tourist cruises and architectural or archaeological conferences and is documented in the pages of printed articles, books, travel accounts, photographs and films. Moving from the theoretical evocations of the "Generation of the 30s" in a more pragmatic scenario, modernism materialized in a multifaceted spectrum of projects ranging from public infrastructure (the Marathon Dam (1928–1931), the electric stations at Piraeus (1926–1929) and Omonoia Square (1928–1930)) to blocks of flats in the center of Athens and the systematic care and commercial appreciation of the monuments (1931 Athens Charter) in an attempt to synchronize with the forward-facing European capitals.

Kalliopi Fouseki and Giorgos Alexopoulos discuss local communities' perceptions of heritage and relationships with the developing tourism on the small island of Antikythera in Greece. In this ethnographic study, the authors discern and study three main communities of locals: a. permanent

residents involved in the local administration, b. permanent residents not involved in the local administration and c. Antikytherians living in big cities but visiting the island for summer vacations and short periods of time. "Official" local views, i.e., those from the first group, organize heritage and interpretation as a tourism product, focusing on the positive impact that the island is bound to have. Their ideas and practices are somehow self-fulfilled by the limited tourists visiting Antikythera to consume the tourism product of the "wild, remote beauty" available. The third group also conforms with the official narratives, sometimes with a wider interest in heritage and a more nostalgic approach to the past times. However, the second group, the locals not engaged with the "official dialectics", is more interested in alternative interpretations following local perceptions and histories, sometimes affected by the dark memories of exile and remoteness lingering on the island, sometimes being dismissive in favor of the heritage of the neighboring Kythera, the sister island a few miles to the north, with its tourists, infrastructure, better connections to the rest of Greece and all. As we have seen elsewhere, the systematic study of value ascription to heritage is an interesting research theme; however, the authors believe that studies like this can affect future decisions on tourism development, requiring a larger frame for integration [3].

Konstantina Nikolopoulou examines the city of Heraklion, looking at grassroots initiatives and the relevant mechanisms turning urban space into heritage in the city of Heraklion on the island of Crete. Heraklion is the fourth most populated city and a major tourist destination in Greece, as it is a popular landing point for charter flights from Europe and the gateway to the rest of the island. Her paper offers fascinating insights of novel and idiosyncratic ways that communities are developing to answer the official attempts that strive to further develop in-city tourism. In Heraklion, local communities' actions are informed by the wider background of the economic crisis narratives in Greece, the imposing neoliberal agenda in public resource management and the proliferation of bottom-up citizens' movements actively shaping the character and fabric of cities in Greece and the rest of Europe over the last few years. It seems that, contrary to the heritagization policies, offering material for immediate tourist consumption, particles of the city are being "mnemeiosised" in diverse, bottom-up and unpredicted ways [4], organizing new meaningful loci of interest and agendas.

Giovanna Russo Krauss gives us an illuminating description of the island of Capri's case and the effects of the uncontrolled tourist surge, palpable in major destinations such as Venice and Florence and gradually transforming the urban landscape along with the material and social fabric but often overlooked in smaller places. In the case of Capri, tourism's impact is hidden under large amounts of glitter and luxury tourism. According to Giovanna, Capri went from a fishermen's island in the Gulf of Naples to an increasingly elite destination as early as the 19th c. However, the transformation took off in the 1950s with the cosmopolitan allure of artists, politicians and celebrities, when the island's projected image became the main tourist product, nonetheless featuring its own fashion style, *moda caprese*. As is commonly the case, this "unique iconography" was locally exploited by aspiring developers, resulting in the contemporary problems with unsustainable overtourism: Capri nowadays hosts—among others—59 hotels, 104 rental vacation houses and 93 B&Bs, while the average price of a house sale is 9850 €/m². Recent lawsuits might address some of the most prominent building violations, but fearfully, the effects on the natural and built environment might be too extensive to fix.

Moving to the east, Roberta Varialle discusses the troglodyte village of Sassi in Matera that was systematically inhabited until the end of WWII. The general economic and social decline of the area and the lack of basic infrastructure led to the abandonment of this underground village despite attempts to revitalize and develop it. In the late 1980s, the municipality of Matera gained ownership of the site and has organized a number of activities aiming at the promotion of its tangible and intangible cultural values and its transcription into a tourist destination that progressively led to its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1993. Sassi is today at the core of a network of underground cultural sites (Murgia National Park) promoting the preservation of historical and natural cultural heritage. Cultural tourism features significantly in this context, hosting a number of relevant activities: olive oil production in underground factories, bakeries in underground ovens and vines and cheese in

underground canteens along with residential spaces in the form of (de charme) hotels and B&Bs. Following the increasing interest in the study and utilization of underground spaces, Roberta offers a discussion on a novel methodological tool for classifying and assessing underground built heritage, essentially, cave sites with historical significance, aiming at the preliminary valorization for RE-USE (reinventing, reintroducing and reinterpreting). Roberta then explores the potential of RE-USE in Sassi in an attempt to protect the site from the upcoming signs of gentrification.

3. Looking Forward

Reconsidering the papers included in this Special Issue, written and published in 2019—before this rather dystopian global health crisis we have found ourselves in—it seems that a new research strand is needed to critically engage with the Mediterranean city, tourism, cultural heritage and the pandemic.

Even in this case, the issues discussed in the SI remain topical, as they offer the standpoint from which to raise the question of the legacy of historic places—the preservation, maintenance and reuse of architectural and archaeological sites of interest in accordance with a responsible evaluation of the landscape in environmental and sustainable terms. Indeed, in the context of operational documents, including UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape approach and Sustainable Tourism Programme guidance documents; Sustainable Development Goal Targets 8.9 (devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism) and 11.4 (heritage: driver and enabler of sustainability); the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance, 1999 (under revision); and the ICOMOS/ICAHM (International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management) Salalah Guidelines for the Management of Public Archaeological Sites (adopted in 2017), it is becoming clear that a combined heritage and tourism perspective is vital for a successful sustainability strategy for heritage sites and that the benefits of cultural landscape conservation and valorization can be multidimensional, playing a critical role in the urban sustainable development framework. The exploration of the dynamics and impacts of tourism (whether from "undertourism" or "overtourism") offers analytics on the source, dynamics and impacts of tourist numbers and visitation patterns, tourist access, infrastructure and circulation, whose interpretation can substantially contribute to the amelioration of the implementation of frameworks for participatory cultural heritage management, such as the concept of cultural routes and of the linking of heritage management with the presentation, protection and conservation of both cultural and natural values.

References

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