

Tourism, conflict and contested heritage in former Yugoslavia

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Patrick Naef, Department of Geography and Environment, University of Geneva, Switzerland

Josef Ploner, Faculty of Education, University of Hull, UK

Although, historically, there have always been travellers crossing the Balkan Peninsula, Todorova (1994) notes that early travellers were usually heading for important centres such as Constantinople or Jerusalem, and considered South-East Europe as a peripheral place where people were just passing through. The region is only really discovered in the 18th century along with an increasing interest in the East. More organised forms of tourism appear at the beginning of the 19th century, emerging first around railway lines and thermal therapy resources, and then expanding towards the coastlines. A large part of these developments took place in Croatia and the ‘Dalmatian Riviera’, but other regions also experienced the arrival of visitors and the first organized trip in Bosnia was proposed by *Thomas Cook & Sons* in 1898.

It is only after the Second World War, during the rule of Marshall Tito, that tourism really flourished particularly in the period between the 1960s and the 1980s, when the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) followed an alternative way of development as the rest of the Eastern Block. A relative openness to the West allowed the arrival of European tourists and led to forms of mass tourism in some parts of the region (Grandits and Taylor, 2010). While communist regimes such as Bulgaria and Romania mainly hosted eastern ‘apparatchiks’ on the Black Sea resorts, Yugoslavia and Greece focused on attracting seaside tourists from Western Europe (Cattaruzza and Sintès, 2012).

Tourism and War in the former Yugoslavia

The wars of the Yugoslav succession during the 1990s had, without any doubt, a disastrous impact on the region's tourism sector. Moreover, some of the most popular tourist destinations were directly targeted; the shelling of Dubrovnik, a UNESCO world heritage site on the south coast of Croatia, in 1991 is certainly a paradigmatic example. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, and many other parts of former Yugoslavia were heavily impacted by different armed conflicts and saw tourist numbers plummeting especially during 1992-1995. While Bosnia-Herzegovina was completely ravaged and saw its tourism brought to a complete halt, some regions of Croatia were spared and tourism did not vanish entirely. Since the end of the wars, the revival of tourism has unfolded in contrasting and asynchronous ways. Countries such as Croatia and Slovenia quickly regained the number of tourists they had before the conflicts, but Bosnia-Herzegovina attained its pre-war tourism market only a few years ago (a market far smaller than its Croatian neighbour).

Nowadays, Croatia, and above all its coastline, certainly represents the epicentre of tourism in the former Yugoslavia and some consider seaside tourism as 'hegemonic' in the region (Pintea, 2011). Other former republics of Yugoslavia are also profiting from tourism. For example, Montenegro promotes its coastline to eastern European tourists – mainly Serbians and Russians – and to a lesser extent to the West. Natural attractions represent the main assets of the non-coastal countries, while the cultural heritage of this region, often described as a 'crossroads between East and West' (Bracewell and Drace-Francis, 2009), constitutes another important touristic resource. In this context, Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina promote their religious heritage extensively; their

numerous mosques and Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches, some of them designated as world heritage sites by UNESCO, constitute important landmarks on the tourism map.

Paradoxically, the wars of the 1990s also contributed to the cultural heritage production in the former Yugoslavia, leading to the touristification of the war memory – a phenomenon sometimes also referred to as ‘war tourism’ – through the construction of war memorials and museums, along with the organization of ‘war tours’ (Naef, 2014). This trend, which draws on both domestic and international tourism markets, is especially present in heavily war-torn places like Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Slavonia, a region in Eastern Croatia.

In Sarajevo, war is now part of the tourism offer, and besides several museums on the topic, some local tour operators offer tailored tours focussing on the remains of the last war. Elsewhere, the Memorial of Srebrenica-Potočari receives more than 100.000 annual visitors, mourners as well as tourists each year, making it one of the most visited sites of Bosnia-Herzegovina today (Naef, 2014). In both contexts, tourism participates in memory conflicts, in a country ruled by three different communities (Bosnians, Croats and Serbs) previously opposed (and sometimes allied) in warfare.

The Croatian region of Slavonia, and especially the town of Vukovar, often heralded as a symbol of both national martyrdom and independence, also experience a form of memorial tourism, in which Croats from all over the country come to pay their respects to this martyred town and region (Naef, this issue). From a tourism and destination planning perspective, the interpretation of the conflict is unilateral. Memorial politics, predominantly in the hands of Croatian war veterans, serve as a base for the

diffusion of a hegemonic discourse on the past war. Furthermore, the symbol of independence associated with Vukovar is often used in nationalistic narratives, in politics and the media, as well as in museums and tourism. Although Vukovar is the focus of tourism associated with war heritage, Croatian tourism authorities have been very active in distancing the rest of the country from its war-torn image. Rivera (2008) speaks about an 'omission' of war, a process that she qualifies as 'covering'. Croatian tourism politics seeks to dissociate the country from its war heritage, but also tries to promote Croatia as 'European', emphasizing Roman or Austro-Hungarian historical elements, instead of Byzantine, socialist or Slavic culture. (Rivera, 2008)

In their touristscapes and memorials (Carr, 2012), where competing memories are at stake, these new countries, and places within them, make different uses of the past. Exploring the management of tourism is thus essential to the comprehension of memorial issues in the former Yugoslavia. Besides, considering the importance of history (and of its instrumentalisation) in the region, an analysis of the impact of memory on tourism seems even more necessary. Since the 1980s, tourism has been identified as a potential instrument of peace by international bodies such as UNESCO, UNWTO or the European Commission. However, as it can be observed in parts of ex-Yugoslavia, tourism can also contribute to increasing memorial tensions.

Contested memories and dissonant heritage in tourism

The mutual and arguably complex relationships between tourism, memory and heritages of war and conflict have been widely explored in tourism studies and generated a wealth of international case studies. These include tourisms associated with the American Civil War (Chronis, 2012), the First and Second World Wars (Cooper, 2006; Scates, 2006, Winter, 2010), Vietnam (Henderson, 2000), Cambodia (Sion, 2011), Rwanda (Friedrich and Johnston, 2013), Sri Lanka (Hyndman and Amarasingam, 2014), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Causevic and Lynch, 2011; Naef, 2014), the Middle East (Milstein, 2013), as well as tours to more recent sites of terrorism (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011). Likewise, authors have developed a wide range of concepts and heuristic ‘labels’ to make sense of tourism practices and representations within potentially contested moral and memorial terrain, such as ‘dark’ or ‘thanatourism’ (Foley and Lennon, 1996; Seaton, 1999; Stone, 2006), ‘battlefield tourism’ (Ryan, 2007, Dunkley et al., 2011), ‘(post-)war’ or ‘post-conflict tourism’, ‘atrocities heritage’ (Ashworth, 2004; Fyall et al. 2006), or alternatively, ‘Phoenix tourism’ (Causevic and Lynch, 2011), ‘reconciliation tourism’ (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2003) as well as ‘peace tourism’ (Moufakkir and Kelly, 2010). The variety of concepts currently in use seems to point towards a certain (moral?) dilemma within tourism studies, which suggests a threefold pattern in the interpretation of sites of war and terror. Firstly, these sites are conceptualised as marketable destinations capitalising on tourists’ peculiar and sometimes voyeuristic fascination with the ‘dark’ and uncanny dimensions of the human condition. Secondly, they are seen as material and emotional sites of personal and collective remembrance (e.g. ancestral/battlefield tourism). And finally, they are approached as arenas in which lasting hostilities and traumas can be

overcome and ‘normalised’ with the help of tourism (e.g. tourism for peace, regenerative tourism, etc.).

In an influential study, Ashworth and Tunbridge (1996) highlighted the significance of site management and interpretation in relation to what they termed ‘dissonant heritage’. Such heritage is appropriated by different and conflicting groups of stakeholders, including victims or descendants of victims, perpetrators and their descendants, bystanders as well as other groups including tourists, refugees and displaced persons, international NGOs or heritage organisations. Clearly, tourism plays an important part in the interpretation and management of such dissonant heritage and scholars have repeatedly emphasised the ideological influence of tourism in the brokerage of memory and its power to utilise narratives that direct audiences towards certain attitudes and moral judgments (Bendix, 2002; Ploner, 2012). For the region comprising former Yugoslavia, this may relate to well-rehearsed grand narratives mapping out a distinct orientalist Balkan identity (i.e. *Balkanism*, see Todorova, 1997; or *Balkan atavism*, see Herzfeld, 2005), as well as more punctuated recent (hi)stories about war, death and survival (see Naef and Aussems, this issue). For example, Sesic and Mijatovic (2014) describe how tourism and contemporary forms of heritage interpretation reinforce long-established narratives and symbolic geographies of the Balkan region within Europe through politically charged metaphors such as ‘multicultural mosaic’, ‘bridge’, ‘border’, ‘crossroads’, ‘powder keg’, or Europe’s ‘Other’. At a different and more local level, Causevic and Lynch (2011) have demonstrated how individuals such as tour guides in Sarajevo and Mostar negotiate dissonant memories by escaping everyday politicking and by engaging in an empathic personal narrative ‘catharsis’. Such catharsis emerges from the interaction between tour

guide, site and tourist and seeks to present a message of peace going beyond the dominant political discourse and the ‘banalism’ often associated with heritage interpretation in tourism.

Between these local and the greater regional ‘Balkan’ narratives, the renegotiation and reinvention of collective memory and heritage through tourism remains particularly problematic at national levels. Following the wars of the Yugoslav succession and the emergence of six independent states on former Yugoslav territory in the 1990s, tourism has not only been identified as a tool for post-war economic recovery, but has also been instrumental in the politically-motivated reinvention of tradition, the annulment of recent history, and attempts to reorganise national collective memory and structures of feeling. In this context, tourism has been harnessed as a strategic tool within wider national politics of collective amnesia rather than an agent of memory and reconciliation. Considering research evidence to date, this has been particularly the case in Croatia, which has arguably profited most from international tourism since the late 1990s, but continues to conceal and remove any material and narrative traces reminiscent of the recent war (Rivera, 2008; Arnauld in this issue).

The narrative power of tourism in inventing, adapting and obliterating dissonant national historiographies is well recorded in the literature (Pitchford, 2008; Ploner, 2012) and seems particularly momentous in post-war scenarios where myths and nostalgic references to more remote, and hence less problematic pasts are frequently reinvigorated (Boym, 2001). However, as Pavlicic (this issue) shows, medieval sites such as Serbian churches and monasteries in Kosovo are not spared from ongoing ideological battles over heritage interpretation and ownership claims which are inextricably linked to more recent and lived

memories of conflict. Whilst Lennon and Foley's (2000) claim that more recent events are generally 'darker' than those with a longer history may be valid, one has also to acknowledge the symbolic potential of historically remote sites and events in refuelling ongoing political, religious or ethnic tensions.

Deconstructing such ideological and conflicting symbolisms imbued in monuments and heritage sites is a common theme within critical heritage and tourism studies and, to some extent, features in this special issue. However, as Svetlana Boym (2011) argues with reference to Walter Benjamin, memory cannot be reduced to the symbolic realm alone, but is more akin to 'allegorical' ways of interpreting, thinking and feeling. Writing about ruins – more often seen as allegories of romantic nostalgia rather than post-war memorials – Boym makes strong claims for a memory in appreciation of ruins ('ruinophilia') which is less retrospective and restorative of imaginary pasts, but offers prospective views towards "(...) possible futures that never came to be." (Boym, 2011, no pagination). Following this reading, the papers presented in this Special Issue do not only look backward but also point in the direction of utopian and 'nostalgic futures' by highlighting the potential for reconciliation and peace.

Authors' contributions

Much has been written in the last twenty years about the atrocious wars in the former Yugoslavia. Tourism, however, remains a largely understudied field, particularly in those Yugoslav succession states which have less profited from international tourist arrivals than others. Furthermore, a paternalist and somewhat condescending attitude toward the region, with the voice of international experts and scholars tending to silence the local discourses, is often criticized. (Torodova, 1997; Tumarkin, 2005) This edition

of the *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* aims to address some of these shortcomings. It is purposefully presented as a ‘young scholars’ issue since the majority of contributors are young/early-career researchers who emanate from the region and, at best, have vague childhood memories of the events that took place during the early 1990s. The criticality, reflexivity, and often bold argumentation brought forward by these emerging ‘post-war’ scholars, add fresh perspectives to the study of tourism in post-conflict settings and equally emphasises the significance of tourism as a key agent for social and cultural change. The authors featured in this collection also draw on a wealth of existing regional and other non-Anglophone scholarship which, so far, has been widely ignored in the mainstream literature and adds more nuanced perspectives to this field of study.

If tourism constitutes the central theme of these articles, all the scholars featured here explore fields going beyond the scope of tourism alone such as art, politics, NGOs, religious heritage, to mention only a few. Likewise, tourism sectors and practices are set in different political and cultural contexts, and their study can reveal tensions, struggles, and potentialities expanding far beyond this industry alone. An interdisciplinary perspective therefore guides this collection of articles contributed by scholars from disciplines as diverse as political sciences, anthropology, art history, museology and geography, and analysing case studies that encompass Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

Although touristic forms of heritage promotion and interpretation in former Yugoslavia often result in complex amalgamations of historically detached sites and events, the papers in this issue follow a ‘historical’ or chronological order.

In the first paper, Jelena Pavlicic, a museologist from Pristina, explores how medieval religious Serbian heritage sites in Kosovo have been gradually rendered inaccessible and neglected by Kosovan-Albanian elites who use heritage tourism as a tool for building a new national identity. Reflecting on both Central European and Anglophone scholarly traditions in museology and heritage interpretation, and drawing on a range of empirical materials (i.e. ethnographic observations, tourist brochures and website narratives), the author diagnoses a latent ‘physical and semantic iconoclasm’ which, paradoxically, emphasises the monuments’ regional and international symbolic value (e.g. as endangered UNESCO world heritage sites). Calling for an ‘active policy of memory’, Pavlicic poses important questions about the ambivalent role of tourism - either as an arena for integrative and sustainable heritage management, or conversely, as an instrument assisting modern iconoclasm.

In the second paper, University of Belgrade-based art historian Vladana Putnik revisits World War II Monuments erected in Yugoslavia between the 1960s and 1980s. Commemorating partisan and civilian martyrdom, and embodying an expressive modernist aesthetic, these often gargantuan structures were popular sites for political pilgrimages and educational tourism celebrating national unity and forging collective history within Tito’s socialist state. Considered as reminders of an unwanted past after the breakup of Yugoslavia, many of these monuments were neglected, forgotten and left to decay, but more recently, have also drawn a new clientele of tourists in the wake of ‘Yugonostalgia’ and through the bohemian appreciation by international artists, filmmakers and photographers. In this study, Putnik guides the reader through a tumultuous history of heritage (re-)interpretation, and poses the interesting question whether the

monuments' artistic value can eventually outstrip ideological narrative and political calculus. In her text, tourism is identified as a powerful means for education and revitalisation which could lead to more 'objective' and dialogic forms of heritage interpretation.

The following article by Guest-Editor Patrick Naef, explores the notion of the 'martyred city', a recurrent memorial designation associated with war-torn cities such as Berlin, Guernica, Hiroshima, Homs and many more. However, rather than dwelling on popular and quasi-religious media discourses of martyrdom, Naef proposes 'martyred city' as a conceptual frame through which to approach the ambivalent ways in which different 'memorial entrepreneurs' negotiate the blurred boundaries between martyrdom and victimhood in the cities of Vukovar (Croatia) and Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina). By inspecting the dynamic post-war geographies of these two cities, Naef maps out contested 'memorialsapes' of martyrdom/victimhood which are marked and animated by everyday (touristic) practices and events such as guided tours, museum exhibitions, film festivals, posters, graffiti, etc. However, whilst the 'martyred city' may be tributary to the everyday (and often creative) socio-cultural organisation of place, the progressing 'touristification' and 'heritagisation' can also mean 'freezing' a place around a particular historical event.

Emilie Aussems' paper 'Cross-community tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina – a path to reconciliation?' looks at the challenging work of two NGOs, which organise tours to civil and military memorials for former soldiers and other members of the Serbian, Croat and Muslim communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Identifying four dimensions of reconciliation-through-tourism (economic, educational, therapeutic and leisure), Aussems presents some powerful narratives of tour participants which range between grief, denial,

guilt, empathy and catharsis. Whilst these cross-community tours represent an overall positive bottom-up approach to post-war reconciliation processes, the author also refers to wider contextual and societal issues impacting on the success or failure of these tours such as the lack of trust, the varying symbolic connotations of memorial sites, as well as the risk of volunteers and tour participants being exposed to pressures coming from politicians and members within their own (ethnic, national or religious) communities.

Important questions about the management of dissonant heritage sites are also addressed in the paper by Kamber, Karafotias and Tsitoura: 'Dark Heritage Tourism and the Sarajevo Siege'. Drawing on the concept of 'dark heritage', and presenting findings from a survey conducted with tourists visiting the so-called 'Tunnel of Hope' (Sarajevo's lifeline during the siege years 1992-1995), the authors identify a range of motivations of tourists visiting the sites as well as experiences gained during their visits. Among other interesting insights, the findings suggest that the 'Tunnel of Hope' tour particularly appeals to young and well educated Western tourists who seek to establish 'authentic' and 'tangible' connections to the everyday struggles for survival in the besieged city, but are also driven by curiosity and educational motivations. The authors conclude that, whilst the 'Tunnel of Hope' represents an overall well-managed 'alternative' heritage site, more far-reaching national tourism and heritage policies contributing to social renewal and reconciliation still remain widely underdeveloped.

The final paper in this special issue is presented by Fanny Arnauld and is based on her PhD research on tourism and memory formation in Croatia. Critically analysing current tourism marketing strategies in Croatia, Arnauld shows how national elites and tourism policy makers continue to hide away contested war memories under a glossy surface of

unspoilt natural beauty, historically remote heritage, as well as an idyllic imagery of sun, sand and sea. While Croatia's active role in the war of the 1990s is ideologically redressed in narratives of victimhood and defence against aggressive neighbours, current tourism representations follow (and support) a wider strategy of 'de-Balkanisation' in that the country is internationally refashioned as a 'novel' holiday option on par with, yet distinct from, well-established Mediterranean destinations. Challenging this national reinvention of tradition through tourism, Arnauld calls for more active and engaged national policies of memory which reaches out to both local and international publics.

Although this special issue addresses a broad range of critical issues gravitating around the interpretation of heritage and memory in post-Yugoslavian tourism contexts, there is much scope for future research in this field. For example, scholars could look more closely at national case studies in tourism development, heritage discourses and policies which, for various reasons, have received fairly modest attention in academic writing, such as Serbia, Montenegro and to some extent, Macedonia and Slovenia. Likewise, scholars interested in reconciliatory and pro-peace forms of tourism, could engage more vigorously in longitudinal projects exploring the success or failure of different initiatives at local, regional, national and international levels.

The special issue presented here is strong proof that, some twenty years after the end of the wars in Yugoslavia, an emerging generation of interdisciplinary international researchers continue to challenge one-dimensional heritage formations and interpretations, and try to make sense of unwanted, repressed or otherwise contested pasts. Whilst tourism is but one element in these complex processes of meaning-making, it is also a valuable

conceptual and empirical frame through which to gain insight into the multifaceted practices and politics of memory and forgetting.

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