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URBAN TOURISM AS A SPECIAL TYPE OF CULTURAL TOURISM

Greg Richards

Abstract

Cultural Tourism is a key sector of the global tourism market, accounting for just under 40% of all international travel (UNWTO, 2018). Cities have played a central role in the recent development of the cultural tourism market, particularly as the focus of cultural consumption has shifted from high culture (Culture 1.0) to popular or everyday culture, and from tangible museums and monuments to intangible events and experiences, and from cultural tourism to creative tourism (Culture 4.0). The desire of tourists to experience the everyday life of the local has also driven a shift from distribution systems based on tour operations to collaborative economy platforms for accommodation and the curation of urban experiences. This has stimulated changes in urban space, with growing areas of cities being given over to mass cultural tourism practices. This has arguably led to touristification and gentrification effects, monocultural landscapes and growing penetration of cultural tourists into the interstitial spaces of everyday and private life. In some cities the perception of cultural tourism as a ‘good’ form of tourism is beginning to be eroded by these changes.

Introduction

Cities have always had a special role in cultural tourism. Major urban centres are places often built on a sedimentation of different cultures and their tangible heritage. The traces left by previous generations and the history of society collected in the museums and monuments often dominate urban tourism consumption. Cultural tourism, conceived of as the cultural consumption of tourists, therefore plays a key role in the urban tourism economy, particularly in city centres. For example, in London cultural tourists spend £7.3 billion a year, generating £3.2 billion in expenditure and supporting 80,000 jobs. (Mayor of London, 2017).

In the past, cultural tourism was generally welcomed as a high quality, high spend form of leisure tourism (Richards, 2001). Many cities in Europe and North America built their tourism policies around the development and enhancement of cultural tourism (Smith, 2015). This policy focus was predicted on the high spend of cultural tourists, but also on a belief that the cultural tourism market was growing particularly rapidly. More recently, this very growth has become a problem, as cultural sites in many cities become increasingly overcrowded.

The growth of cultural tourism has also generated a dramatic growth in scholarship and analysis, with the production of academic papers on ‘cultural tourism’ growing from around 100 in 1990 to almost 8000 in 2018 (Richards 2018). There is a strong link to cities and urban tourism in the growing raft of cultural tourism publications. In 1990 about a third of publications dealt with cultural tourism in cities, but by 2018 this had
risen to 43%. In spite of the frequent overlap between cultural tourism and cities, however, there is little integration of theoretical approaches to these two subjects. Tourism scholars are rarely grounded in urban studies, and urbanists only pay attention to (cultural) tourism when it impinges on what they regard as their territory.

As Novy and Colomb (2016) point out, it is becoming increasingly difficult for urban scholars or policymakers to ignore tourism in cities. The touristification of popular districts in cities such as Barcelona, Amsterdam and Berlin makes the effects of tourism more evident, and many of these issues are linked to what might be termed ‘cultural tourism’. Whereas cultural tourists were once seen as the solution, they are increasingly part of the problem. They add to overcrowding in city centres and vie with locals not just for entry to major cultural sites, but also local cafes and restaurants. The re-positioning of cultural tourism is difficult to understand without a grounded analysis of the nature of cultural tourism and how it appropriates the urban fabric.

This chapter considers the changing ways in which cultural tourism intersects with the urban. In doing so it identifies a number of key shifts in the nature of cities and cultural tourism that have caused cultural tourism to take on new roles in urban contexts. We highlight ways in which the consumption, production and intermediation of cultural tourism have been reflected in recent research on cities, and how different urban cultural tourism really is.

Changes in the objects of tourism – from high culture to everyday life

Historically, cultural tourism developed as an elite form of tourism, reflecting the fact that only the rich and well educated could afford to travel. The European Grand Tour was arranged around the cultural highlights of the continent, mainly heritage sites from antiquity or the Renaissance (Towner, 1985). As Richards (1996) describes, the extension of cultural tourism to the middle classes in the 19th century reinforced the primarily urban nature of cultural tourism, as increasing numbers of people visited major cultural sites, delivered to city centres by the expanding railways.

This was also a period that saw a rapid increase in the development of museums, theatres and other cultural facilities, which were initially supported by wealthy patrons. This formed the basis of the early cultural democratisation of cities, or ‘Culture 1.0’, as Pier Luigi Sacco (2011) has termed it. These cultural attractions were a by-product of urban growth, in which economic surpluses were used to develop culture for the edification of the masses.

In the 19th and 20th centuries urban culture was further stimulated by the rise of the nation state. National governments invested in culture in order to boost national identity, and local authorities promoted culture as a form of civic edification and leisure consumption. These facilities also became part of the emerging urban tourism system as mass tourism grew and the economic impact of tourism spending became more evident. Public support for urban culture shifted from consumption externalities to production externalities: cultural attractions generated tourism which supported the economy. This led in the 1990s in particular to a boom in cultural investment, with many cities building new museums and other cultural facilities as an engine for economic growth (Richards, 1996). The cultural sector came to be seen as an ‘industry’, marking a shift from ‘Culture 1.0’ to ‘Culture 2.0’ (Sacco, 2011). The logic of culture as an intrinsically ‘good thing’ for people became a view of culture as a generator of extrinsic value, and an integral part of the economic system. Cities helped to industrialise culture with policies aimed at boosting the cultural and creative
industries and creating cultural districts or quarters (Evans, 2009). Cities were seen as the leading edge of the creative industries in particular, as places that had the atmosphere to attract the mobile ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2002). Urban culture became the source of inspiration for many new creative impulses in music, film, literature, etc, which in turn helped to attract new flows of tourists to cities (Cudny, 2011). A further shift took place as the diversification of cultural taste, the fragmentation of cultural production and access to new technologies and media challenged the monolithic production of culture. In the Culture 3.0 moment, culture also becomes seen as a means of creating identity, stimulating social cohesion and supporting creativity.

Arguably we are now entering an era of Culture 4.0, as digital culture challenges, replaces or enhances traditional forms of cultural production and consumption (Grevtssova and Sibina, 2018). Culture 4.0 integrates the Internet and digital technologies to produce new forms of presentation, interaction and engagement that probe and break the boundaries of traditional institutions. Museums no longer need physical objects – they can present virtual or augmented reality instead.

Urban cultural tourism has undergone a similar trajectory as culture itself. In Culture 1.0, tourists consumed the elite culture that was deemed to be good for them. This model originally developed through the Grand Tour, when the leisured classes saw Italy as the ‘prize’ (Towner, 1985) to be won in completing their cultural education. As the elite were joined by the expanding middle classes, and eventually also by the working class in the 20th century, the Culture 2.0 system, with its expanded provision of museums, monuments and other cultural infrastructure, turned urban culture into an object of mass tourism: “In the past twenty years, the drive to attract more tourists and other mobile consumers has led cities to develop new cultural attractions, leading to what Ritzer (1999) termed the development of the ‘new cathedrals of consumption’” (Richards, 2014: page). This produced a tremendous expansion of the ‘real cultural capital’ of cities, often adding complete new museum districts or quarters that acted as new visitor magnets.

Subsequently, Culture 3.0 (Richards, 2014) provided a more fragmented, flexible and decentralized form of cultural tourism. ‘Cultural tourism’, as a clearly defined market began to disappear in a welter of new niche markets, such as heritage tourism, art tourism, gastronomic tourism and creative tourism (Richards, 2014). Richards and Russo (2016) argue that this fragmentation of the cultural market produced a new touchstone for authenticity: the local. Whereas the traditional markers of authenticity had included concepts of originality, or age or context (Wang, 1999), new notions of existential authenticity facilitated auto-generated authenticity, through the search for ‘local’ culture. This broadened the notion of culture still further, since almost any sign of localness could be considered a cultural artifact worthy of consumption. However, the localization of cultural tourism produced a new challenge – that of coming into contact with the local. This problem was resolved by the growth of new technology and the rise of platforms that could link travellers easily with locals, such as Airbnb.

The challenge for the cultural tourist in search of the local was finding a way of connecting with local places and local people, who were not usually visible in the distribution systems of global tourism. In the past finding the local had required devoted reading of Lonely Planet, or engaging in time-extensive travel modes such as backpacking. From around 2014, however, platforms such as Airbnb began to grow exponentially, providing new was of accessing the local. Airbnb developed local experiences to bring tourists directly in contact with local hosts (who were often missing from the Airbnb accommodation itself). In cultural tourism 4.0, the development of
platforms for local experiences, for attraction tickets (to avoid the queues of mass cultural tourists) and transport became determinant.

In summary, we can see a number of important shifts in the relationship between tourism, culture and the city in recent decades:

- The traditional emphasis on built heritage and the physical legacy of the past in cultural tourism is gradually shifting towards ‘intangible heritage’ (Du Cros, 2012).
- The reframing of ‘culture’ has created a much broader understanding of the legitimate object of cultural tourism, with vaguer boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture, with new forms of culture emerging (such as street art, for example).
- A shift from production to consumption and co-creation.
- The rise of the ‘local’ as the arbiter of authenticity.
- The growth of platforms linking consumers and producers of culture, such as Airbnb (linking tourists and locals) and Culture Trip (linking cultural curators and tourists).

The combination of these shifts in the cultural position of cultural tourism have led to a growth in perceived number of cultural tourists, or people travelling to consume culture. When we combine this with the general growth in city tourism in recent years (Richards and Marques, 2018), then it is clear that urban cultural tourism is a major growth area.

Changes in the distribution system – from tour operators to platforms

In the early phases of cultural tourism development in cities, the market was dominated by small scale specialist companies, often set up by entrepreneurs with a background in art. Following the logic of Bourdieu (1984), these ‘new cultural intermediaries’ had high levels of cultural capital, but often low levels of economic capital (Richards 2001). Producing high quality tours for generally older and more wealthy tourists became an effective way of translating cultural capital into economic capital.

As tourism grew and mass market tour operators looked for new niche markets, cultural tourism was stimulated by short break holidays, often to major urban centres. Specialist travelling guides were replaced by local guides, or the tourists were left to follow the guide book, and later Google Maps, to the major cultural attractions. Cities such as Barcelona, that previously had been on the margins of the cultural tourism market, began to demand a place in the rankings through the development of new attractions and the promotion of new icons, such as Gaudi.

City trips expanded rapidly in the early years of the new millennium; major tour operators discovered city trips as a new travel segment that was also more stable than many beach destinations. Added to this was the rise of budget airlines, who often ferried tourists to smaller cultural cities, such as Girona, Dubrovnik or Oporto.

Although the early pioneers of cultural city trips, such as Studiosus in Germany or SRC Reizen in the Netherlands are still operating, they increasingly have to differentiate themselves from mainstream tour operators with niche destinations and products and events. In this early expansion of urban cultural tourism, the emphasis was on the discovery of new cities, particularly as the expansion of budget airlines made this increasingly cheap and easy. As numbers of tourists grew, however, there was increasing concentration on major sites in the centre of cities, or what Russo (2002) called the ‘vicious cycle’ of cultural tourism.
In recent years the tour operators have come under pressure from disrupters related to the ‘collaborative economy’ (such as Airbnb) and the rise of low-cost airlines. The new airlines not only added to the number of tourists being delivered to major city centres, but they also opened up new, smaller cities to cultural tourism (Richards and Duif, 2018). In some cases, the flow of visitors to smaller secondary cities actually created new gateways to established cultural tourism destinations. This was the case in the Catalan city of Girona, for example. Initially happy with a growth in tourism from the arrival of Ryanair flights, the city increasingly saw visitors disappear in the direction of nearby Barcelona thanks to direct bus and train links.

Airbnb in particular has been responsible for a rapid increase in local accommodation in city centres, which catered to the new ideal of ‘living like a local’ (Russo and Richards, 2016). Growth of Airbnb supply has been particularly marked in cities such as Barcelona, Amsterdam, Paris and Berlin, where the growth of ‘collaborative economy’ accommodation supplemented an already busy cultural tourism market through the offer of Airbnb experiences (Figure 1). Many of these experiences are geared towards arts and culture (Figure 2).

*Figure 1: Airbnb experiences in selected cities, November 2018 and November 2019*
Interestingly, evidence from the WYSE Travel Confederation global youth traveller survey indicates that respondents using collaborative economy accommodation were more likely to visit museums and historic monuments than other travellers. One important reason for this, however, was the longer length of stay in the destination of sharing economy accommodation users.

**Changes in the cultural space of the city**

Changing cultural tourism distribution systems, the arrival of low-cost carriers and greater demand for intangible culture (UNWTO, 2018) produced a shift in the nature of cultural tourism supply in cities. The previous reliance on tangible heritage began to be replaced with a mixed economy of traditional museums, new iconic structures, city tours and cultural experiences.

One marked change was in the role of museums. Although museums continue to be the main type of attraction for cultural tourism consumption, the relationship of museums to the cultural tourism market has changed. Pressures to attract more visitors as a means of generating revenue have forced many museums to pay more attention to the needs of visitors in general, and tourists in particular. Museums large and small have added cafes, restaurants and gift shops, and there is a growing trend towards blockbuster touring exhibitions. These often tour between different museums, allowing them to share the considerable costs of large exhibitions. Museum buildings themselves have also become more iconic, calling on famous ‘starchitects’ to design edifices that will attract media attention and visitors. As well as the growth of these cathedrals of consumption, Richards (2001) identified the growth of a new ‘postmodern’ style of museums, which are smaller, more specialist institutions, who tend to receive less public funding. Such specialist institutions can attract visitors to new cultural tourism hubs away from the established circuits, such as MONA in Hobart (Franklin, 2017) or the Dali Museum in Figueres.

Traditional styles of urban cultural tourism have also been supplemented by ‘creative tourism’. Creative tourism was first defined by Richards and Raymond (2000:18) as:
Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken.

Creative tourism represents a shift on the nature of cultural tourism towards more creative involvement of the tourists, with more space for interpretation of local cultures and co-creation of culture with locals. There are a growing number of creative experiences and workshops being offered to tourists who are tired of just looking or gazing at buildings or paintings, and who would rather be creatively active themselves. Creative tourism programmes have been developed in many cities, including Barcelona, Recife, Bangkok, Medellin, Quito and Valparaiso (Richards, 2018). A growing number of cities are also using creativity as a means of promoting themselves on the global stage, with many seeking the designation of UNESCO Creative City. The UNESCO network includes cities of Film, Literature, Music, Crafts and Folk Arts, Design, Gastronomy and Media Arts. As Marques (2019) shows in the cases of Barcelona and Edinburgh, the UNESCO literature label becomes a means of profiling these cities globally. But such extraction and promotion of specific aspects of a city’s culture may arguably be harmful: “It is too early to say, but it is perceived that the UNESCO stamp emphasizes an aspect of culture, to the detriment of urban complexity.” (Ferreira & Vaz de Oliveira, 2017: 1035).

The attempts of cities to make themselves more attractive for a range of markets, including entrepreneurs, tourists, investors and students is often based on the use of cultural assets. Romão, Kourtit, Neuts and Nijkamp (2019) analysed the attractiveness of 40 global cities for the resident population and international tourists. They found that ‘cultural dynamics’ (Trendsetting potential, cultural resources, facilities for visitors, attractiveness to visitors and international interaction) is the major determinant for attracting new residents and tourists. The efforts of many cities to ‘put themselves on the map’ has included the development of cultural attractions and programmes that have stimulated new flows of cultural tourism, such as the Bilbao Guggenheim (Plaza, 2006) or the Jeroen Bosch 500 programme in the Dutch city of Den Bosch (Richards and Duif, 2018). Traditional ordering of cultural tourism destinations with markers based on high culture is therefore shifting towards a new order determined by a broader mix of factors, which include intangible and everyday culture, as well as general tourist amenities.

The rise of new styles of cultural tourism also leads to new ways of ‘reading’ the cultural tourist city. The rise of intangible culture and the emphasis on cultural events in cities produces a more rapid turnover of signifiers for cultural tourism. This also drives new selection strategies, replacing the former hegemony of the paper guide book with new cultural intermediaries and taste leaders. One of the most prominent of these strategies is the ‘curation’ of cultural experiences. For example, the UK company Culture Trip provides up-to-date information on cultural experiences in cities worldwide, supplied by a network of local writers, who “create stories that reveal what is unique and special about a place, its people and its culture.” Culture Trip is combining big data to analyse the demand for different cultural forms, and comparing this with the supply of culture as identified by their network. For example, big data analysis indicated a growing demand for street art in major cities. A review of the available content indicated that there was already sufficient supply of street art experiences in London, but that there was less supply in Berlin, identifying an opportunity for market development there. By matching user interest and destinations, the right content can be created to develop new cultural tourism products.
Changing modes of city use for (cultural) tourism

The rise of creative tourism and other new styles of urban tourism coincided with the rise of new platforms such as Airbnb to produce new uses of urban space. During Cultural Tourism 1.0 and 2.0, cultural consumption was concentrated in the centre of the city, and most tourists stayed in hotel clusters in or near the city centre. They tended to use facilities specifically designed for tourist use (or what Edensor 1998 called ‘homogenous spaces’), so there was a function separation between tourism and everyday culture, which enabled Urry (1990) to claim that tourism was the opposite of everyday life. This opposition gradually disappeared as tourists began to penetrate the spaces of the everyday, and local residents and their everyday activities became enlisted into the cultural tourism production process.

As Richards (2017) argues, this integration of tourism and everyday life produced new possibilities for capitalist exploitation of the use value of space. For example, Airbnb enabled local residents to share their homes with tourists following the ‘live like a local’ trend (Russo and Richards, 2016), stimulating the commodification of everyday life in the private spaces of the city. This form of ‘interstitial capitalism’ (Richards, 2017) is supported by emotional labour from local residents, who also play a role as cultural attractions and storytellers of the city. However, Airbnb was also quickly exploited by large scale capitalists and property developers, who used Airbnb as a system for letting large numbers of flats to tourists. The tourists paid considerably higher rents than the previous long-term residents (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019). The resulting displacement of local residents by tourist rentals has been one of the major criticisms of Airbnb, which has tried to sell itself as a neighbourhood friendly company, helping people pay their rent.

Such developments have stimulated debates about processes of touristification (Ollero, Capellán & Pozo, 2019) and gentrification (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019). One of the issues that still needs to be explored in more detail is the tendency for new cultural intermediaries, who make up a disproportionately high percentage of cultural tourists in cities (Richards, 2001) to also be the pioneers of gentrification. As more cities develop 'live, work, visit, invest' promotional strategies (Richards and Duif, 2018), the idea that places that are good to live in are also good to visit for (cultural) tourism is also likely to proliferate. In such cases, the touristification of city centres (often on the basis of cultural and architectural attractiveness) is also likely to go hand in hand with gentrification, even though these processes are conceptually distinct.

One point made in the report on the European Capital of Culture in the Maltese city of Valletta in 2018 was that processes of gentrification have been going on for a relatively long time:

“We speak about gentrification nowadays, but really gentrification had already started in the 1980s, which was when my parents married. At the time, couples getting married would look for new accommodation outside Valletta, both because it would have been more accessible and larger, and also because there was value placed on having a dwelling that was a new building.” (Deguara, Bonello and Magri, 2019 31).

Touristification processes in major cities, on the other hand, have been relatively recently identified and analysed. Much of the recent analysis of touristification has been compounded with the concept of ‘overtourism’, which oversimplifies complex urban economic, social and cultural processes into a function of tourism growth. However, as Jover and Díaz-Parra (2019) point out, touristification can be conceptually separated
from other processes, such as gentrification and transnational gentrification. They identify dialectical processes at work, in which “The concentrated pattern of lifestyle migrants in Seville’s historic district seems to respond to a general search for a better quality of life, manifested in class-based lifestyle choices, modes of consumption and cultural attractions in the city.”

The movement of tourists and transnational lifestyle migrants into city centres (often stimulated by their past tourism practices) brings about changes in the property market and the structure of local services. One of the most visible changes is in the structure of retailing. Businesses orientated towards the needs of long term residents are replaced by shops catering to passing tourists and expats. Research in Amsterdam shows that the number of ice cream shops grew by 460% between 2008 and 2014, cheese shops by 250%, souvenir shops by 80% and bike hire outlets by 130% (Richards and Marques, 2018).

The development of a retail monoculture has produced counter movements in some cities. In Lisbon, for example, the programme Lojas com historia (Shops with History) was launched in response to numerous closures of specialist stores and old local businesses. It seeks to conserve businesses with cultural heritage or particular local significance, by giving rent protection for 5-10 years. By July 2016, 64 businesses, from restaurants to pastry shops, had received the label, and 19 additional shops were recognized in March 2017 (Richards and Marques, 2018).

Although the changes of city use are usually most evident in central districts traditionally associated with (cultural) tourism, the trend towards ‘living like a local’ (Russo and Richards, 2016) has also driven a growth of new tourism hubs in city neighbourhoods. An expansion of cultural tourism to what Maitland has termed ‘New Tourist Areas’, ‘edgy’ and ‘cool’ neighbourhoods attractions sought after by the strategic or creative tourist (Füller & Michel, 2014). This process has been traced in detail by research on new tourism areas in London (Pappalpore, Maitland and Smith, 2014). In areas of East London, such as Hoxton, Shoreditch and London Fields new cultural intermediaries and creative tourists were found to be seeking authenticity in relatively untouristified areas of the inner city. Groups identified as ‘trendsetters’, ‘detached fashion critics’ and ‘cool seekers’ found authenticity in areas that were slightly ‘run-down’ or with a ‘bohemian’ atmosphere. “judgements were made about the area’s authenticity based on the nature of the crowd. For some, a crowd of creative, arty young people is seen as attractive, whereas the presence of mainstream tourists (typical of more central areas) is not.”

Taken together, the shifting modes of cultural tourism consumption and production in cities are beginning to produce a new geography of urban cultural tourism. In the 1990s, it was still possible for cultural tourism to be largely connected to the ‘tourist-historic city’ (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000). This was dominated by tangible, formal heritage attractions with an audience interested in high culture. In Amsterdam, Dahles (1998) also noted the cultural and spatial dichotomy between high spending, older cultural tourists focused on the city’s museums and younger budget travellers seeking out the coffee shops and the Red Light District. With growing interest for intangible culture and the spread of tourism to new areas of the city, these distinctions have tended to fade, producing a new and more fragmented geography of cultural tourism. Figure 3 shows an idealized transition from Ashworth and Tunbridge’s tourist-historic city, through Ashworth and Page’s (2011) typology of urban tourism to the current landscape of Airbnb, living like a local and New Tourist Areas.
Changes in the social position of urban cultural tourism – from good to bad?

There is little doubt that cultural tourism used to enjoy a privileged position in relation to most other forms of tourism. As Richards (2001) argues, cultural tourism was long perceived as a ‘good’ form of tourism, for example in contrast to ‘mass tourism’. In Barcelona, for example, successive surveys of residents have shown high levels of support for the promotion of cultural tourism, even when the tourism industry as a whole was being criticized for problems related to overcrowding, noise, litter and other problems (Richards, 2016). Slowly, however, the idea of cultural tourism as a good form of tourism has been eroding. Much of this has to do with the high levels of overcrowding experienced in many city centres, especially around major cultural sites. As must-see sites, attractions such as the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona or St Mark’s Square in Venice will tend to be visited, or at least gazed at from the outside, by almost all visitors to the destination. It becomes increasingly hard, under these circumstances, to see any distinction between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ tourists.

The desire of many tourists to penetrate the backstage of the city, and to become part of local life, also changes attitudes of some people to cultural tourists. Tourists taking pictures of each other in public places is one thing, but traipsing over your flower bed to snap a close-up of your living room is another. Such problems have caused areas of some cultural attractions to be closed to visitors. The Begijnhof in Amsterdam, for example, now has barriers marking areas as being for residents only, preventing visitors from getting too close to their houses. In other cases, the problems caused by
cultural tourists wanting to penetrate too far into the local culture are being minimized through programmes designed to increase cultural sensitivity. Advice from the UNWTO, for example, includes learning about local customs, traditions and social conditions, learning a few words of the language and respecting local dress codes (UNWTO, 2017).

**A research agenda for urban cultural tourism**

A number of future research vectors can be gleaned from the foregoing analysis. One of the theoretically most pressing of these is to develop greater articulation between urban theory and the study of tourism in cities. For too long, tourism research has maintained a relatively closed silo labelled ‘urban tourism’, which has done little to make connections with the developing strands of urban studies research. Apart from isolated attempts to link urban theory to the tourist city through multidisciplinary analysis (Judd and Fainstein, 1999) or the application of regulation theory (Hoffman, Fainstein and Judd, 2011), these remain fairly separate fields. Urbanisation, for example, is a key element of urban theory (Hannigan and Richards, 2017), but in terms of tourism this remains largely limited to coastal resorts (e.g. Clave and Wilson, 2017). There is growing evidence to suggest that cultural development strategies are also having major impacts on urbanization in a range of cities, and most notably in smaller cities (Richards and Duif, 2018).

Different types of urban regimes, which can articulate with the development of cultural tourism. This may be a fruitful avenue to explore in the light of the growing articulation between the creative industries and tourism (OECD, 2014). A number of cities have tried to position themselves through creative sectors such as fashion, architecture and design. Cities following such strategies not only need to attract professionals from these fields through the development of creative or cultural clusters (Evans, 2009) or knowledge-based events (Podestà and Richards, 2017), but they also need to attract creative audiences to enlarge the consumption base for these creative sectors. This is evident in cities such as Austin, where the music industry is a major driver for tourism as well as the live music industry and music-related businesses (Wynn, 2016). In such cities, creative sector development is usually supported by a favourable urban regime, which combines public and private sector interests (Stone, 2005). In such cases, the development of cultural tourism may be related to the changing fortunes of different cultural and creative sectors and their fashionability, as well as their perceived economic return. Which types of urban regimes are associated with what styles of cultural tourism development? One might surmise, for example, that a conservationist regime would be linked to an emphasis on traditional high culture and architectural preservation, whereas a development regime might push for leading sectors of the creatives industries, such as fashion or digital art. A progressive regime, on the other hand, might be linked to creative tourism and other strategies designed to support the social as well as the cultural fabric.

In this vein, much value can also be gained from comparative studies of cultural tourism destinations. This is a style of research that has benefitted in the past from European Union funding, which stimulated studies of cultural tourism in different countries and cities (Richards 1996, 2001; Van der Borg and Russo, 2005). The globalization of urban tourism and cultural tourism offer new opportunities for comparisons of different types of cities, ranging from global cities such as London and New York to cities of the global south, such as Johannesburg and Rio de Janeiro (Booyens & Rogerson, 2015). Ideas about the development of urban cultural tourism have often originated in Europe or North America, where particular trajectories of urban
development have a strong influence. New studies in the global south in particular offer the possibility of responding to Storper and Scott’s (2016) call for a ‘worlding’ of urban theorizing. There is already some movement in this direction with studies of cultural tourism in the favelas of Brazil and the townships of South Africa (Ramchander, 2007), but these specific examples could be augmented with more studies of practices of cultural tourism in other major cities, such as Jakarta, Cairo, Mexico City, Hangzhou or Shenzhen.

In all cities we are seeing a growth in new forms of culture as objects for tourism. These include the rise of street art (Insch & Walters, 2017), music genres such as hip-hop (Xie, Osumare & Ibrahim, 2007) and cultural scenes such as Goth culture (Spraklen and Spraklen, 2014). As new cultural forms emerge, blossom and die, what impact does this have on cultural tourism in the city? New hubs for tourism can be created by a band or a film, or even a video game. How sustainable are such cultural attractions? The pedestrian crossing used by the Beatles for the cover of Abbey Road is still a site of cultural pilgrimage, half a century after the release of the album. How many of today’s artists will manage this kind of lasting impact, and how many will fade into obscurity after a few years of destination marketing hype? What impact will the new generation of virtual reality museums have on flows of visitors to and within cities? Will the ability to consume culture virtually, combined with pressures to travel less, begin to reduce levels of physical cultural tourism?

New cultural forms will also require a new class of cultural intermediaries. The tour guides of previous decades came to the fore as a result of the limited economic possibilities combined with the growth of tourism demand. Today, a host of new intermediaries is also being pushed to the fore by new cultural forms and the growth of new technologies. The ability to reach a global audience through the Internet has opened up new possibilities for entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors to move into the tourism industry. How will the increasing offer of ‘local’ experiences affect the ways in which cities are represented and consumed? What effect do Airbnb and other collaborative industry platforms have on the development of cultural tourism? Many platforms are now extending their operations into the cultural content of the tourism journey as well. Will queuing for museum tickets be a thing of the past with the growing raft of ‘queue-jump’ websites? What happens to museum marketing and management when everybody is a queue jumper?

A focus on the cultural tourists themselves would also provide interesting material for future research. Cultural tourists are arguably crucial for cities as ‘strategic tourists’ (Wolfram & Burnill-Maier, 2013) who set trends and determine destinations for other (cultural visitors). As social media and the Internet become increasingly important as sources of information, not just on destinations, but also on how to practice tourism, the demonstration effect of such groups may well increase. What role models do contemporary cultural tourists follow? We have seen the influence of key figures before, in the shape of the Beat Generation and Tony and Maureen Wheeler as creators of the Lonely Planet guidebooks. These days, visits to certain websites or social media messages that go viral can have a significant influence on cultural tourism consumption. Big data offer many avenues for research, including the qualitative analysis of the texts produced by cultural tourism practitioners, and the growing information cascade that guides tourists to particular cultural sites in cities. Who are the key influencers? How big are their audiences? What curation strategies do they follow, and how do destinations try to utilize these in their marketing?
We also need to recognize that cultural tourism is political. The long tradition of countries and cities trying to promote a more favourable view of themselves by emphasizing selected elements of their culture has not gone away – it has simply moved onto CNN. Such programmes also serve to highlight conflicts over the authenticity and ‘ownership’ of the culture sold to tourists. At a mundane level, cities dispute the origin of foods such as tiramisu, pizza, chop suey or chicken tikka masala. Higher stakes are evident in the construction of the Acropolis Museum in Athens, designed to accommodate the Elgin Marbles, once these are returned by the British Museum in London. With objects increasingly being exchanged between cultural institutions globally, how much does ownership count for? The political value of the objects of cultural tourism is clear. The protests in favour of Catalan independence in 2019 included a blockade of the Sagrada Familia. This immediately hit the cultural tourism industry, with newspaper reports of a ‘lost week’ of rioting (Burgen, 2019).

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