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Places of Cosmopolitan Memory

Diane Barthel-Bouchier and Ming Min Hui

Department of Sociology
Stony Brook University

Abstract: To understand the significance of major global events that transcend national memory, Levy and Sznajder (2002) propose the concept of cosmopolitan memory. Here we examine the extent to which this concept can be applied to places rather than events. Based on a social survey of public attitudes toward World Heritage, we argue that a number of heritage sites have achieved a level of significance that makes them candidates for inclusion in cosmopolitan memories. Experience of the sites is frequently mediated through films, reading, and/or hearsay, although tourism is also an important source of information. While illustrative rather than conclusive, the data support Tomlinson's suggestion (1999) that aesthetic cosmopolitanism may lead to an ethical cosmopolitanism, as these privileged Westerners consider the question of the conservation of outstanding sites in other nations.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, globality, memory, tourism, World Heritage

Heritage, Memory, Globality

(1) While the concept of cosmopolitan memory has previously been applied only to *events* of global significance (Levy and Sznajder 2002), here we consider whether or not *places* also can be said to form part of memories that transcend national borders. Improvements in communication, the rise of tourism as the world's number one industry, and the power of the global media have all encouraged increased awareness of other localities. As part of this process, a heightened significance becomes attached to certain sites, even if it is recognized that the exact content of this significance will vary according to the cultural perspective of the viewer. Ideal candidates for inclusion in a cosmopolitan memory of places would include some of the better known sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List, such as the Taj Mahal or Chartres Cathedral. Here we first review the relevant data on cosmopolitanism and social memory. We then relate this theory to social survey data on public

attitudes toward World Heritage, before discussing more broadly the role of heritage sites in the shaping of cosmopolitan memory and the role of such cosmopolitan sites in furthering globality (Schäfer 2006).

(2) For Levy and Sznajder, cosmopolitanism is “a process of ‘internal globalization’ through which global concerns become part of local experiences of an increasing number of people” (2002: 87). This process of internal globalization implies at least one of the characteristics of globality, or the condition of being global: namely, a global consciousness. The other defining characteristic of globality, that is, a particular state of interconnectedness, may be more specifically tied to networks and structures, rather than states of consciousness *per se*. Part of the burden of this paper, however, is to examine how the specific *structure* of World Heritage has or has not served to encourage global *consciousness*.

(3) Levy and Sznajder raise the questions of how transnational memories are formed and of what they consist. Running against the current of theorizing that equates social memory with national memory (Nora 1996, Smith 1995), they argue that the Holocaust provides a drama of good and evil that has allowed it to transcend national boundaries, even as the drama assumes a particular narrative form and content in each national setting. No specific claims are made, however, that it must have significance in all national settings.

(4) Auschwitz has been preserved and granted the status of World Heritage Site, in part out of sentiments concerning the importance of physical relics, and not simply to counter negationist claims. Rather, as Lowenthal writes, “Memory, history, and relics offer routes to the past best traversed in combination:”

Each route requires the others for the journey to be significant and credible. Relics trigger recollection, which history affirms and extends backward in time. History in isolation is barren and lifeless; relics mean only what history and memory convey (1985: 249).

Figure 1: The Concentration Camp Auschwitz © UNESCO/A. Husarska



(5) Griswold provides a model that helps us understand the variability both in national patterns of cultural reception and in the mnemonic resonance of different sites. Examining the reactions of English, West

Indian, and American critics to the work of West Indian novelist George Lamming, she argues that the novels themselves vary in cultural power, defined as “the capacity of certain works to linger in the mind” (1987: 1105). More specifically, a powerful work “locates itself within a set of conventions that it strains, plays with, perhaps inverts, but does not totally ignore” (ibid). For Griswold, “cultural power drives from the combination of a work’s ability to elicit relative consensus on what it is about plus its ability to sustain a relative divergence of interpretations” (1987: 1106).

(6) The cultural power of monuments and landscapes, in contrast with novels, may have less to do with their fitting neatly into pre-set genres and more to do with their ability to inspire awe, to surpass expectations. These expectations may either relate to a specific genre (Chartres considered within the context of cathedrals, Angkor within the context of temples) or be genre-free. Indeed, part of the cultural power attached to Stonehenge and Machu Picchu derives from the mystery as to their construction and functional purpose.

(7) On the other side of the equation, Griswold urges us to take into account what she calls *societal tenor*, namely the “set of presuppositions, concerns, problems, and associations held by a particular social group in a particular historical and institutional context” (1987: 112). Societal tenor interacts with the cultural power of the object, such that we would expect different reactions from English, American, or Indian visitors to the Houses of Parliament, the Statue of Liberty, or the Taj Mahal, among more obvious examples.

(8) Cosmopolitan memories of remarkable places can be formed by either direct knowledge, whether as a local or a tourist, and/or mediated knowledge. Indeed, Halbwachs (1980) distinguishes between social memories which are shared by those who directly experienced them, and historical memories which are mediated by education, the mass media, or even hearsay. Levy and Sznajder emphasize that the fact of this mediation does not make historical memories in some sense second rate or spurious. They point out that Anderson (1983) in his well-respected work on nations as *imagined communities* “makes it clear that it was precisely the now-lambasted media that produced the requisite solidarity through a constant repetition of images and words” (Levy and Sznajder 2002: 91).

(9) We argue that certain site images widely disseminated by the media have achieved a symbolic importance in global cultural narratives, while other sites, albeit of considerable historic and/or cultural importance, do not figure in this cosmopolitan memory. By greatly expanding the World Heritage List, conservationists are trying to draw the media’s attention to sites largely ignored by the greater public and, in so doing, to broaden and deepen global consciousness. Specific social processes will help determine whether or not the conservationists will be successful in this attempt.

(10) Hutton (1993: xx) views the interplay between *repetition* and *recollection* as key to any consideration of the relationship between history and memory. He defines repetition as “the moment of memory through which we bear forward images of the past that continue to shape our present understanding in unreflective ways.” These moments of memory are like “habits of mind” that are readily associated with collective memories. Recollections, by contrast, involve the conscious, selective reconstruction of the past to suit the needs of the present.

(11) This distinction, while of some heuristic value, nonetheless has the drawback of naturalizing the social processes through which social memories are formed. By speaking of “living traditions” and “habits of mind” that operate in unreflective ways, Hutton downplays the role of

agency. By contrast, Olick and Levy (1997) provide a more subtle approach in viewing social memories as an ongoing process of negotiation through time, with memories neither totally durable nor malleable, but rather subject to the operation of cultural logics. Lowenthal (1985: 206-210) also emphasizes the importance of *revising* as a process associated with social memories, and allows for its unintentional as well as intentional dimension.

(12) Here we argue that cosmopolitan memories are formed through the repetition of images provided by a number of social agencies, including politicians, news media, advertisers, and the tourism industry, among other various political and social actors. Some sites become the habitual televised backdrop for news emanating from a specific nation, with, for example, the Arc de Triomphe appearing as the backdrop for France, or the Houses of Parliament for England. Indeed, specific sites have become metonyms for nation-states or political offices, as when one speaks of the “Kremlin,” “10 Downing Street,” or the “White House.” Other sites provide ready associations of travel (Venice, the Pyramids), public celebration (Times Square, Trafalgar Square), or protest (Tiananmen Square). Individual memories may also share a specific backdrop, as tour buses pull up at the exact same spot so that tourists can photograph themselves in front of Mont St. Michel, or St. Peter’s Basilica.

(13) A process of *foregrounding* occurs as social actors use places of cosmopolitan memory as symbolically-charged backdrops against which they can convey social messages. These messages may be of conquest, as in the famous photograph of the Nazis parading past the Arc de Triomphe, or of victory, as when de Gaulle’s forces repeated the same gesture. Similarly, while the Taj Mahal is a traditional backdrop for photos of loving couples, Princess Diana used it to foreground her message of love betrayed.

(14) Other acts of foregrounding lead to greater controversy, whether they be Willy Brandt’s dramatic fall to his knees in 1970 in front of the monument to the Warsaw Ghetto, or Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi’s pilgrimages to Yasukuni (a sanctuary that includes the remains of Japanese war criminals), symbolic acts which have led to a grave deterioration of relations with both China and South Korea. In Greece, an archaeological council decides on what constitutes allowable foregrounding of Greek monuments. For example, BMW was allowed to use the Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion as a backdrop for its new models. By contrast, the Greek Minister of Culture quickly intervened when a Belgian mobile telephone advertising campaign replaced one of the caryatids supporting the Acropolis’ Temple of Erechtheion with Mannekin Pis, the popular European image, frequently used in fountain statues, of a little boy pissing. Thus if, as Schama (1995) has argued, many of our images of nature have acquired a sacred dimension, the same can be said of specific cultural sites.

(15) Indeed, Turner and Turner claim that “A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist.” They continue, “Even when people bring themselves in anonymous crowds on beaches, they are seeking an almost sacred, often symbolic mode of communitas, generally unavailable to them in the structured life of the office, the shop floor, or the mine” (1978: 20). MacCannell develops the parallel by discussing the processes of site sacralization and ritual visitation involved in tourism, and by seeing in the very diversity of sites a certain reflexive contemplation about the human condition.

(16) Even so, not all socially-recognized sites are equally evocative of a spiritual dimension. As French historian Françoise Choay writes, “The Parthenon, Saint Sophia, Borobudur, and Chartres recall the enchantment

of a quest that, in our disenchanted world, is proposed by neither science nor critical analysis” (1996: 183).

(17) The World Heritage label has become a recognized indicator of a site’s significance, and is routinely used as such in tourist promotional material. While few could contest the importance of the sites listed by Choay (1996), all of which bear the World Heritage designation, the majority of other sites on the list are far less known. Does their inclusion degrade the list as a whole? Or will the listing of lesser known natural and cultural sites further the globality of World Heritage sites through the spread of public awareness? Before addressing these questions, we need first examine the rise of World Heritage and then consider public responses to it.

The Rise of World Heritage

(18) The massive destruction of cultural monuments in World War II – the bombing of historic Warsaw, of Coventry cathedral, the retaliatory firebombing of Dresden, among other events – provided the impetus for the UN Conventions associated with World Heritage. Among the best known is the 1955 Hague Convention, meant to protect cultural monuments and sites during times of war. In 1972 another UN convention established the World Heritage List whose purpose was to ensure the conservation of sites of outstanding cultural and/or natural significance. From the first twelve sites listed in 1979, the List has now burgeoned to 830 sites, of which the vast majority are cultural sites (644). Only 24 places are “mixed” cultural and natural sites (Barthel 1996, Barthel-Bouchier 2005, Harrison and Hitchcock 2005).

(19) From the beginning, a universalistic narrative was associated with World Heritage. These outstanding sites “belonged” to the world. Yet contrary to the deterritorialization Tomlinson (1999) finds characteristic of other global phenomena, these sites were firmly situated within national boundaries. They thus reflected a contradiction commonly found within United Nations rhetoric as it vacillates between equating cultural identity with national identity on the one hand and presenting cultural identity as a surface manifestation of an underlying universalism on the other. As Tomlinson writes, “The rhetoric of a universal humanism – which holds that we are all the same at some ‘basic’ level – underwrites the UNESCO commitment to defense of cultural difference” (1991: 71).

(20) Inspired by the environmental movement, a narrative of social scarcity was added to this universalizing discourse. The unique sites nominated for World Heritage status were considered irreplaceable, even though some of them, notably the rebuilt historic center of Warsaw, were in fact reconstructions of earlier cultural sites. In contrast to what Augé (1995) calls the “non-places” of modernity – super highways and shopping malls, for example – World Heritage sites are all definite places, in Nora’s (1996) term, *haut-lieux* (sacred places). While Nora views the commemorative practices associated with such sites as signifying the death of the social patterns that created them, Urbain (2002) is more optimistic in viewing heritage commemoration and the tourism it inspires as helping to revitalize many localities. The current nomination of the Causses and Cevennes region in France as a World Heritage Site (under the rubric of “cultural landscapes”) is seen by its proponents as an opportunity for economic revitalization of the region.

(21) Much has been written about World Heritage as a social phenomenon

(Barthel 1996, 2005; Lowenthal 1998, Harrison and Hitchcock 2005). However, in contrast to specific site surveys of tourist responses, little has been done by way of surveying public attitudes toward World Heritage in general. To remedy this situation, I conducted a social survey of 580 respondents in the greater New York area with Ming Min Hui. The sample was composed of affluent retirees who were well educated and well traveled, and thus representative of a relevant public for World Heritage. While the questionnaire was not directed toward understanding cosmopolitan memory *per se*, we believe that some of the open-ended responses provide illustrative material for further exploration of Levy and Sznajder's hypotheses. Of particular interest is their hypothesis that "In an age of ideological uncertainty, these memories have become a measure for humanist and universal identifications." We will examine the data to see what evidence exists for such identifications that transcend the local and national context, and to what extent these respondents can be said to have a global consciousness.

Public Attitudes Toward World Heritage

(22) Respondents were all members of a group composed largely of retired professionals. Of the 580 questionnaires mailed, 130 were returned, for a response rate of 22.4%. As hypothesized, respondents were overwhelmingly in favor of World Heritage as a concept, viewing it as an important vehicle for conserving outstanding sites. Some explicitly adopted a cosmopolitan perspective, as did one respondent who stated "We need to learn to think of ourselves as citizens of the world as well as citizens of the US." Others agreed that the loss of specific heritage sites, such as occurred with the Taliban's dynamiting of the Bamiyan Buddhas could be considered a loss for humanity in general (Hui 2005: 21).

(23) In addition to the general questions regarding World Heritage, respondents were also provided with short statements identifying twelve cultural sites, ten of which were selected from the World Heritage List to test specific hypotheses concerning, for example, the importance of geographical location and/or historical antiquity in respondents' evaluations. Two sites presented for consideration, namely Hong Kong and Saugus Iron Works (Massachusetts), were not included on the World Heritage List. For the other ten sites accompanying statements were drawn directly from the World Heritage descriptions. Respondents were asked to specify whether they had previously heard of or visited the site, and then to rank the site in terms of whether they thought it was of national, world-regional (that is, European, African), or truly universal significance. Additional space was provided for their comments.

(24) Of the twelve sites, more than fifty percent of respondents had either previously heard of or visited the following: The Great Wall of China (99.2% heard of or visited), the Taj Mahal (99.2), Mesa Verde (95.3), Hong Kong (93.8), Chartres Cathedral (93.1) the city of Liverpool (82.2), and Timbuktu (58.6). By contrast, 43.1% of respondents had previously heard of or visited Bourges Cathedral. Other site scores, in declining order, were as follows: The Petroglyphs of Kazakhstan (27.8%), Saugus Iron Works (23.4), the baroque church at Wies, Germany (15.4), the house and studio of Modernist architect Luis Barragan, in Mexico (7.8), and the Varberg Radio Station, in Sweden (4.6).

(25) Of the first five sites, the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China share the distinction not just of being known to almost all respondents (99.2),

but also of being judged by the vast majority to be of “universal significance” (106 and 107 out of 130 respondents) as opposed to merely “world-regional” or “national.” Some respondents specified that they learned about these sites through the media. Regarding the Taj Mahal:

While I have not visited this work of art, I do hope one day to see it, in person. I have seen pictures, both still and movies, and have heard of its beauty.

69 year old retired librarian

I would love to see it in addition to just films about it.

62 year old retired health care worker

Never visited but have seen many pictures.

70 year old retired lawyer

And the Great Wall:

I’ve learned a good deal about it, though never visited.

71 year old retired art historian

Figure 2: The Taj Mahal © UNESCO/Philippe Leclaire



(26) These comments reflect the importance of media in spreading images of these sites and in communicating their importance. The “lucky few” who had visited the Taj Mahal or the Great Wall incorporated their personal experience in remarks meant to demonstrate insider knowledge: A retired high school administrator who had visited the Taj Mahal commented: “It is breathtaking. One must see it at dawn and at sunset, as well as close up to see the intricate stonework,” and a 67 year old retired professor made it clear that he had visited the Great Wall not once but twice: “I was there in 1980 and walked it quietly and almost alone. In 1985 it was jammed with tourists and T-shirt shops.”

(27) Following Kant’s (1790) discussion of the qualities pertaining to aesthetic judgements, *aesthetic cosmopolitanism* (Tomlinson 1999) can be seen as implying a duty to share with others one’s sense of what makes a heritage site important. Respondents repeatedly stressed the unique quality and beauty of the Taj Mahal:

Its human and artistic value seems unique and transcends

time and place.

69 year old retired librarian

A symbol of India and beauty that has lasted hundreds of years.

64 year old retired teacher

One of the most beautiful buildings I have ever seen — a very special place that conveys the grandeur of what was once Mogul India.

70 year old artist

The Great Wall, by contrast, was valued as a unique structure of historic importance:

An amazing construction that never served its purpose, it remains an architectural wonder.

72 year old music teacher

A series of walls built during the reigns of several emperors, this is a testament to what humankind can accomplish.

61 year old retired professional

(28) In marked contrast to the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall, which conjured up images in the cosmopolitan memory of virtually all respondents, “Timbuktu” was a site-name that resonated widely, but that went frequently unaccompanied by images (Fig. 3). Some respondents reflexively confessed that they had previously equated it with mythical places such as Shangri-La, as did one 59 year old former teacher who remarked, “Only know the name – Timbuktu, meaning a far off place.” Others commented, “I have heard of Timbuktu, but never that there was anything to preserve!” (69 year old retired librarian), and “I’ve heard of Timbuktu, but not of the mosques” (67 year old retired professional). In all cases, however, these respondents responded to the site description by saying it should be protected and preserved.

Figure 3: Timbuktu: Southern façade of the Sankore mosque, after restoration of its mud layer. © UNESCO/T Joffroy/CRATerre-EAG.



(29) Turning now to an American site, we found that over 95 percent of respondents were familiar with Mesa Verde, the impressive Anasazi

archaeological remains in Colorado. Some readily placed their appreciation of this national heritage site within the cosmopolitan context of other archaeological sites:

It is an early Indian civilization. Has significance in the same way as Mayan, Inca, Aztec, etc.

65 year old retired high school administrator

We climbed the ladders to the upper 'apartments'... It was fascinating! Other nations have their own examples of early civilization in their countries.

60 year old retired, occupation unspecified

(30) Just as they were willing to place important American sites such as Mesa Verde within a broader cosmopolitan context, respondents were also willing to use their cosmopolitan memories to evaluate a site with which the vast majority (72.2 %) were not previously familiar, namely the petroglyphs of Kazakhstan.

I've seen petroglyphs in the southwest United States, but not here. [I] would imagine that this would be even more inspiring and enlightening.

61 year old retired professional

Petroglyphs are essential to our study of the past — There are some wonderful ones found in the Grand Canyon, USA.

59 year old retired teacher

I've seen petroglyphs in the US. I would suspect that they are fairly prevalent worldwide.

67 year old retired professional

(31) Such *aesthetic cosmopolitanism* should not be readily confounded with *ethical cosmopolitanism*. As Tomlinson writes, "there is no guarantee that the lifting of general cultural horizons ... will be followed by any necessary sense of responsibility for the global totality." But he goes on to speculate that "It is perhaps more likely that such a sense will develop obliquely from these popular cultural practices, than that it will be directly cultivated in some sort of abstract global-civic ethic" (1999: 202). Evidence for this speculation can be found among responses to the Third World sites. Respondents were willing to argue for preservation of sites based not simply on the abstract aesthetic and/or cultural importance of the site but also on its importance to the nation-state and its people. Regarding the petroglyphs of Kazakhstan, for example, a retired librarian wrote, "While this clearly is an historical site, it is also within an unstable country with few resources. To label this as a 'World Heritage Site' may help maintain it." A particularly well-traveled respondent commented, "Sometimes such an area needs the strength of world protection. This seems to qualify." Timbuktu was seen as "probably a good example of a national site to be preserved for the pride of a nation" (retired social worker), and the Great Wall was described within its current social context: "In a country plagued by poverty, this is an example of what the common man working together (sic) can accomplish" (63 year old retired professional). The Taj Mahal drew similar responses contrasting its splendor to the socio-economic situation of many Indians:

In a country with much poverty it is important to sustain its heritage as well as to develop vehicles to end poverty.

57 year old retired educator

People in that part of the world are not eating.

(32) Other sites allowed respondents to comment implicitly on new directions taken by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) and the international non-governmental organizations (INGOS) involved in providing expert and decision-making knowledge to the Committee. Over the years, World Heritage has moved from a focus on unique cultural monuments to larger sites of historical significance to even larger cultural landscapes. For example, the city and port of Liverpool was a 2004 addition to the List on the basis of its importance to maritime mercantile culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and for having served as a center for the slave trade. In the social memory of respondents, however, Liverpool was important as the “birthplace of the Beatles.” Compared to all the other historical and cultural sites in Great Britain, it was not considered “worth the detour,” and only 20 out of the 130 total respondents deemed it of “universal significance.”

(33) By contrast, more than double that number (43) considered Hong Kong of universal importance. In contrast to Liverpool, Hong Kong is not presently on the World Heritage List. Here again, however, respondents included both aesthetic and ethical judgments in their comments. A 63 year old retired professional who had visited Hong Kong: “Steeped in history and gorgeous in its location, it’s worth preserving,” while a 62 year old retired health care professional wrote, “I feel our western world needs to do more teaching about and understanding of our ties to our neighbors in the East.” But two other respondents were more critical: “Hong Kong has put the boat people out of sight, out of town” (72 year old retired professional), and “Quite crowded, I have heard” (59 year old retired teacher).

(34) As the World Heritage List has burgeoned to well over 800 sites, both scholars and heritage professionals have begun to question whether all these sites are truly of “universal significance,” and whether the status attached to being on the List is being diluted as the number of sites listed grows by approximately thirty annually. Respondents were, in fact, very restrictive in awarding universal significance to the sites about which they were queried. As mentioned above, only the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall were considered of universal significance by the vast majority of respondents. With other sites, it was clear that respondents were making comparisons among sites of a similar type. For example, approximately half of respondents considered Chartres cathedral of universal significance (63 out of 130), with comments like “You feel the presence of the divine when you go inside,” and “The stained glass windows are as beautiful as its reputation.” Some drew on personal memories to support their judgements, as in one 79 year old retired teacher who wrote, “I was in the Fifth Infantry Division in World War II, and we captured Chartres. The cathedral was one of the highlights of this unique city.”

(35) By contrast, Bourges Cathedral was considered by approximately half as many respondents (32) to be of universal significance. The United Nations description provided on the questionnaire emphasized that, unlike other cathedrals, Bourges had been conceived and constructed as a whole, and was considered of striking beauty with masterly management of space. Respondents, however, placed it within the context of their memories and general knowledge of other cathedrals, with Bourges suffering by comparison:

Saint Denis illustrates the change from Romanesque to Gothic. Chartres ‘defines’ the style. Bourges is one of the finest French examples, but it is of regional not universal significance, except for cathedral lovers.

61 year old retired professional

We have seen many cathedrals in Europe over the years and I feel that its significance is more focused on France.

60 year old retired, occupation unspecified

ABC — after seeing Notre Dame, Chartres, another at Rouen. This becomes Another Blooming Church, as my Aussie comrades would say.

65 year old retired high school administrator

Lots to see in France — yet another cathedral!

59 year old retired teacher

Figure 4: Bourges Cathedral © UNESCO/Anthony Lacoudre



(36) In similar fashion the Wies church in Germany was also seen as *typical* of rococo churches, rather than as *unique*. Despite the fact that the World Heritage Committee has officially adopted a “global strategy” that calls for a form of sampling of “best of type” of every kind of structure and landscape, this lack of uniqueness led to respondent judgments of lower significance. A 60 year old retired attorney commented that “Since there are many rococo churches it is not quite as valuable as sites that are unusual and endangered.” And a 70 year old retired publisher who had visited the Wies church wrote, “It is beautiful but not really unique or of such wide interest as other sites, e.g., St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome.”

(37) One result of the sampling approach of the World Heritage Committee has been the inclusion of more industrial and/or modern sites on the List. Yet respondents placed the examples provided of such sites at the bottom of their scale of significance. Only twelve believed that the Modernist house and studio of Mexican architect Luis Barragan was of universal significance, the same low number that awarded this distinction to the Varberg Radio Station in Sweden. While both the Barragan house and studio and the Varberg Radio Station are on the List, Saugus Iron Works, in Massachusetts, is not. And only seven out of the 130 respondents believe it should be included. Again, people drew on their personal experience of other sites in making these assessments of relatively low significance. This was most notable for the Varberg Radio Station which, despite the fact that it was described as “an exceptionally well-preserved example of a type of telecommunication center

representing the technological achievements of the early 1920s as well as documenting the future development over three decades” was largely dismissed by respondents:

Examples of specific technological advances can be found throughout Europe and North America. Two such sites are found here on Long Island...

57 year old retired educator

I would think there are other examples of such centers. On a personal note, I don't think I'd make a special trip to see it.

65 year old retired teacher

I've been to Sweden and visited many areas, but never heard of this. Never mentioned by guides.

72 year old retired physician

Discussion

(38) Walter Benjamin (1969) analyzed how images have become liberated through mechanical reproduction, which freed them from their original context and allowed them to be appropriated by social actors for an endless variety of social ends. Such is the case with well-known cultural sites such as the Statue of Liberty or Tivoli Gardens. Some sites, historic Warsaw or, more recently, the Dresden *Frauenkirche* (James 2005) (Fig. 5) have been rebuilt from the ashes. Other sites have been replicated in bizarre form, for example, Las Vegas versions of Venice, Paris, the pyramids and New York, while miniature versions of Eiffel Towers and Greek temples can be found on suburban coffee tables. Even more frequently, these sites are reproduced in two-dimensions rather than in three, and can as easily appear in an educational film as on the cover of a chocolate box.

Figure 5: Frauenkirche in Dresden, Germany. Only the dark stones are from the original building. Photo Wolf Schäfer, July 16, 2006.



(39) While their images have become free-floating, these cultural sites themselves remain firmly grounded. Their “universal significance” is grounded by their particular geographical location. The importance I earlier assigned to tourism as an important ritual in the social construction of cosmopolitan memories is reflected both implicitly and explicitly in the data. For example, Chartres was considered of universal significance in part because it was “always on a tour,” while someone who had visited Liverpool on tour commented that he was “not terribly impressed.”

(40) In contrast to Liverpool, the many celebrated sites of Paris contribute to making France the world’s most popular tourist destination. As Casanova (1999) claims Paris as the center for her “world republic of letters,” so too it occupies a central position in cosmopolitan memories. Thomas Paine is credited with the frequently-quoted claim that every man belongs to two nations, his own and France, though the sentiment was shared by Thomas Jefferson among many others since. The most well-known sites of Paris (the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, the banks of the Seine) and of the French provinces (Brittany’s Mont St. Michel, Avignon’s Palace of the Popes) function like Proust’s madeleine, calling up cosmopolitan memories. While cosmopolitan memories forged through tourism may have been a primarily Western phenomenon, Chinese tourism to France is growing at such a rapid rate that a new geography of memory is being formed. And, of course, the memories of those from the former French colonies can be expected to rely

on different sets of lens, as, presumably, would those of the former British colonies toward Great Britain.

(41) Tourism used to be seen as a path to personal cultivation and cross-cultural understanding. Today, researchers are more likely to emphasize its role in “distorting” economies and creating power relationships between tourist visitors and locals (Lowenthal 1998, Urry 1990). While sophisticated tourists might prefer to see themselves as individualistic travelers charting their own course, Urbain (2002) speaks up not just for tourism, but mass tourism, as a *way of knowing*:

All engaged to various degrees in the planetary ethnography of our modernity, travelers and tourists participate in a vast movement of observation and reconnaissance. They are carried forward by the same current that ceaselessly feeds and reconstitutes our vision of the world. Tourism is not the degrading massification of travel. Rather, it is the *generalization of a way of knowing* (120, italics in original).

(42) The relatively cosmopolitan respondents in our survey would probably agree with Touraine (2004) when he argues for a new *cultural contract* asserting the right of people to participate in both local culture and global culture. “The right to culture does not signify the right to be different, but the right to be at the same time a participant in the global world and in a culture that is specific, particular, and singular.” While respondents were more restrictive than were heritage professionals in granting universal significance, they did rely on both direct personal experience and media exposure in their construction of a global consciousness that drew upon a well of cosmopolitan memories.

Conclusion

(43) We have suggested that heritage sites can serve as markers in the cognitive mapping of cosmopolitan memories, and that these memories can be seen as part and parcel of the condition of globality. We have also compared the implicit criteria that a sample of affluent Americans used to evaluate significance to the explicit criteria used by UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee. Where the WHC has embarked on a global strategy of sampling the “best in type,” these respondents felt by and large that the sites most worth remembering were the most unique: those whose meaning and significance escaped any attempt at scientific typologies.

(44) As Levy and Sznajder write, “The cosmopolitanization of memory does not mean the end of national perspectives so much as their transformation into more complex entities where different social groups have different relations to globalization” (2002: 92). We might hypothesize that, as sites such as the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall become incorporated within cosmopolitan memories, the cultural narratives attached to such sites will vary by nation-state and level of national development, as well as by personal identifiers such as ethnicity, religion, gender, race, and age. Further research will explore the significance of such variables in plotting the social geography of cosmopolitan memories.

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