Tourism and Heritage: The Paradoxes of a Risky Relationship in the Maghreb

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The main issues in the now-global tourism industry raise many questions related to the role of local populations in touristic development. Mass tourism is usually seen as provoking social and spatial inequalities, due to the economic and political issues that come with it. Paradoxically, some tourism-related economic investments are seen as a possible solution to heritage under threat by supporting its conservation. From the 'Arab Revolutions' emerged recriminations of an activity that is increasingly seen as a serious threat to local identity, rather than as a resource. Although tourism figures large in development processes, the risk is that heritage will be considered in exclusively mercantile terms, casting aside everything related to locality and civic interaction in the process. In such a case, can tourism save heritage? Is the rise in touristic flows compatible with making better use of heritage in the context of sustainable local development?

Keywords: *Maghreb, medina, heritage, identity, tourism*

Introduction

This text conceives of heritage as a social construct that is subject to appropriation and negotiation. It is examined from the perspective of citizen participation and the composition of public space. Additionally, the entry of the heritage of every aspect of social life into the public domain is an invitation to explore heritage as a public space where a public debate is developed and deconstructed by a variety of actors (Dris, 2012). This recent shift disrupts traditional frontiers between heritage's diverse meanings and leads to numerous situations that reveal a public space of mediation. Tangible or intangible, heritage refreshes consideration of the social uses of the civic participation process, and actors' involvement in it.

As a result of intellectual constructs and touristic development measures, heritage is continually being redefined according to social change and new perceptions. With this in mind, we will explore the relationship to heritage by the yardstick of the political and social changes in which civic groups and social movements seem to be a form of democracy-in-act. Heritage gradually evolves into a framework for citizen action and the affirmation of collective values over the long term. This chapter aims to comprehend the complexity of the relationship experienced between tourism and heritage that raises many sociological issues, among them legitimacy, equality, and governance. And yet some consider that the democratization of heritage has engendered both rejection of the value of art and scorn for tourism, ultimately leading heritage

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to become unremarkable. Put another way, heritage understood in terms of proximity is merely the expression of a community's will, hoping to preserve its environment to ensure a desired stability (Noppen, 2003). From this angle, heritage would thus not be a genuine basis for local development, but rather a much-needed excuse for public policy.

This text first defines heritage as an object of tensions and negotiations connected to its history and the identity it carries. It then turns to touristic circulation and its effect on the fate of certain heritage sites, such as the riads of Marrakech. It ends with a discussion of the idea that tourism is an economic development tool, ultimately holding it partly responsible for social and territorial inequalities.

Heritage, between Tension and Negotiation

Some researchers hold that Maghrebian societies conceive of heritage as a protective identity system in face of the Other, and usually confuse it with 'authenticity' (Mechta, 1991) – in other words, ancestral values. From this perspective, heritage would be situated in tension with and in opposition to alterity. This might lead one to thing that heritage dating from different historical periods (especially the colonial period) could be a component of urban identity and a common good. This idea is gaining traction with architects and urbanists, and is increasingly taken as a given. Furthermore, the term 'built heritage' also designates the architectural legacy of a given period. It is thus a complex process in which heritage's position is henceforth framed in terms of its possible interactions with the rest of the world. Consequently, heritage may be a point of contact between different worlds, and as such signify the universality of Maghrebian societies.

The connections between architecture and individuals are essential components of identity. Moreover, citizen mobilisations for heritage preservation and the right to monitor decisions taken in the name of the community contribute to the emergence of feelings of belonging to the concerned places. Indeed, Choay wrote that 'architecture is the only means we have for conserving a living connection with a past to which we are indebted for our identity and that is constituent of our being' (1992, 108). For instance, in the Petit Bayonne neighbourhood in Bayonne (France), over half of the interviewed inhabitants demonstrated a common feeling of belonging to a spatial identity defined by heritage-based points of reference such as Basque houses, St André church, and the Basque language (Di Méo, 1995, 17-26). The ties that residents develop with their living space end up forming a sentiment of belonging to a shared history and identity. Additionally, the genuine appropriation of places is supported by a symbolic appropriation that is charged with meaning.

Around these questions new issues emerge over heritage policies intending to support social and political heterogeneity by favouring the integration of the population. In an urban context marked by social antagonism, might heritage

boast a major uniting role? Can heritagisation implement means of action that are likely to transcend divisions and manage to make tourism into a development activity that benefits local populations?

The development of local power depends on the co-existence of competing systems of actors taking shape in arenas of negotiation and tension (Paulhiac, 2005). It is a matter of putting a new reference for collective action and public policy orientation into practice. Indeed, the tensions raised by the relationship between tourism and heritage place the notion of social and spatial equality at the heart of urban issues. The endeavour consists of questioning the fields of the possible in a context marked by socio-economic problems amplified by the economic crisis. Because of this, might one view heritage and tourism as a path to opening up social and cultural enclaves?

Heritage and tourism: Living Conflict

The 'Histoires de Vies' survey, conducted by INSEE in 2006, shows that 29% of the 8400 people surveyed indicate place as a criteria for attachment and identity. Respondents ranked place as the third highest criteria for identity, tied with profession (29%) and behind family (86%) and friends (35%). This result is even more eloquent as contemporary society is characterised by widespread mobility, which would seem to make the attachment to place, family, and friends ancient history. But paradoxically, spatial rooting is concomitant with widespread mobility. If place is still prominent in individual and collective identities, it is primarily a form of resistance to the hegemony of flows that end up in claims to a right to place in the sense of Manuel Castells (1996, 2009), or put another way, to stay where one has always lived and worked, where one's points of reference, social networks, and relationships of proximity are found.

The riads[1] of Marrakesh, symbols of Morocco and major international touristic attractions, are caught up in the confrontation of opposing economic and cultural logics that prompts a re-examination of heritage from the perspective of forms of appropriation, rupture, and paradox. As in all traditional houses of the medinas of the Maghreb, the internal structure of the riad is organized around the courtyard (*wast ed-dar*), sheltered from outside view. Starting in the 1970, while the symbolic boundaries separated two distinct entities (the medina on one side and the new Guéliz district on the other), the riads gradually began to attract foreign people, mainly writers and artists, from a variety of countries. At the same time, wealthy Marrakech families were leaving the medinas for modern houses away from the historic

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[1] Etymologically, 'riad' (plural: *rawda*) means garden. Originally the word was reserved for wealthy homes, but today it is used generically for traditional Moroccan homes. The most meaningful definition to my thinking is the following: 'A riad is a house surrounding an interior courtyard, with no windows to the outside. Large or small, palace or hut, decorated with marvellous tile work or made of humble rammed earth, the riad blinds itself to the outside world and turns in on itself. The exterior is presumed to be foreign, dirty, and hostile. The interior, fief of the family, is the object of great loyalty' (Van der Yeught, 1989).

centre, as also happened in the kasbahs of Alger and Tunis. The historic cities of the Maghreb eventually only housed poor populations, for the most part originally from the country. Difficult living conditions, increasing population density, poor building maintenance sometimes resulting in structural collapse, the breaking up of large homes, and the absence of a preservation dynamic all contributed to the degradation of the built environment and a loss of coherent unity (Dris, 2005). The decrepit condition of the great old cities of the Maghreb contributed to their gradual marginalisation, despite their touristic renown.

The population inversion process in Marrakech's medinas has accelerated and internationalised in recent years, to the point that the city is often declared 'a mandatory stop for the international jet set'. Moroccan observers (journalists, researchers, writers, and ordinary residents) credit a 1998 French television programme presenting riads as accessible to a wide range of people (vacationers, retirees, artists, etc.), launching an influx of real estate developers and foreign investors seeking 'the palaces of the 1001 nights', a simple backdrop that has been 'fictionalised and disconnected from the real' world (Winkin, 1998, 133). The city is only seen through remodelled riads opened up for rental to foreigners, by foreigners. This is the regret of some Moroccan informants; as one of them put it, 'Go look on Google, the top result for Marrakech is riad rentals… as if the whole history of the city was encapsulated in a stay in a riad converted into guest rooms'. In response to this feeling of dispossession, people may take a kind of refuge in recourse to spirits to conjure a curse, symbolised by the ghost of a black servant woman, guardian of the place, watching over the authenticity of the riad.

> A report on the riads of Marrakech thus brings [*Cécile and François*] to this capital that is much celebrated as a holiday spot for Europeans. But since ancient times Marrakech is first of all an eminent religious and cultural centre, and the city that gives its name to the country today. The couple, after searching several days under the guidance of Hmoudane (rechristened Benoît by the pair of Parisians) – a real estate agent and above all a jester whose personal language earthily mixes those coming from his chaotic readings, in Arabic and Tamazigt – find the riad of their dreams, its central patio graced by a Seville orange tree. Cécile sees in this palace the possibility of writing, and immediately starts a novel. Alas! Their first night at home, Cécile and François discover an old black woman, immemorial and mute, in one of the deep rooms. In panic they decide to return to the hotel and seek advice… Mansour passes them a manuscript telling the story of the palace's occupants… dictated by the ghost of Massouda, the black servant.
> (Foued Laroui, *La vieille dame du riad*, Paris, Editions Julliard, 2011)

This is not to support the idea that heritage is immutable and should be preserved under glass – quite the opposite. The intention is to point to an appropriation process that is favourable to the construction of invisible boundaries within the medina itself, between new residents and the

neighbourhood's humble inhabitants. The introduction of new lifestyles leads to a physical transformation of the medina (cutting out windows, modifying the façades, use of open-air terraces, etc.) and a break in its symbolic system. Because such zones of rupture are proliferating, some researchers of the global south advise the promotion of forms of tourism that are respectful of nature and the culture of local peoples (Hilali, 2003).

The rapid transformation of the medina worries heritage specialists because there 'is no longer a context to restore, another style is emerging that has nothing to do with traditional architecture' (as an urbanism official put it). Conflicts between neighbours are multiplying. Terraces manifest the first source of discord due to the installation of swimming pools, the source of all complaints: 'The terraces were inaccessible – no one was allowed to do any work there without the agreement of the neighbours. Today there's a whole world set up on the terraces, with a pool, pergola, tent…' Most often the inhabitants decry behaviours that they consider contrary to the practices and values of Islam (nudity, alcohol, paedophilia…), but tourists' scorn of local populations is an issue as well. It is the same in Fez, where riad owners are organised in an association 'to prevent the city from suffering the same fate as Marrakech'. The city of Marrakech is thought to be a refuge-city, a city where anything is possible, not only by tourists in general but by Moroccan tourists as well, because the city frees them of family and social restraints due to their distance from home. It blurs the visibility of locals that slip into tourist dress among the tourists.

Today the medina appears as a complex space where the Other is both estranged and brought closer. There is an arrangement with alterity where 'the subject, borne by the urban dynamic, enters into interaction with others there as if on a stage where all would simultaneously confirm their affiliations, fulfil them by enacting them, while also evading them by making reference to other roles' (Pellegrino, 2000, 207). And yet the traditional structure of the medina separated the exterior, devoted to the encounter with the outsider, from the interior, the place of intimacy. The violation of this separation, and even more so the disappearance of the 'backstage', results in a 'feeling of oppression', 'a sense of suffocation' due to the weakening control over space resulting from the disappearance of intimacy. Some observers find that 'the vandalism of heritage' (El Faiz, 2002) only gets worse and worse. As a result, the local population expresses a denial of the legitimacy of heritage; some state that 'Soon we'll need a visa to enter the medina'. Conflicts over use are related to the divergence of aims: leisure for some, work and everyday life for others. Beyond the risk of making sites mundane and gradually losing their specificity, the tourism industry ends up 'objectifying' and 'commodifying' heritage by altering the behaviour of both visiting and local populations (begging, prostitution, delinquency, all manner of trafficking).

Heritage is no longer situated in 'this continuous reconstruction of historical linearity' (Noppen, Morisset, 2003, 57). Claims to a local identity are not necessarily limited to heritage in the past; it attributes a new, more alive meaning to it that is thus closer to lived and everyday experience. Can tourism

save heritage, above all if 'the identity put to touristic use now only fits the present: usage alone henceforth seems to vouchsafe this valued "authenticity"' (Ibid.). Heritage is thus formed and reshaped through interactions between the past and present, for a potential association with tourism.

Tourism and Heritage: Between Resources and Social Inequalities

Using heritage for touristic means would thus be a trap. The process through which heritage, cultural resources, and history are valued is identical to that of touristic sacralisation 'with, as a bonus, the fact that commodification rests upon the soul of a people, on its memory, on its inheritance' (La Plante, 2003). The 'touristification' of heritage in developing societies often happens to the detriment of local populations' expectations of opportunities for local development.

The medinas of the Maghreb represent a significant potential for economic development thanks to touristic activity (*Alternatives économiques*, 2005), but the question is whether the increasing flow of tourism is compatible with sustainable local development. The main stakes of what has become a global industry lead to perverse consequences with disastrous repercussions for poor populations. Indeed, 'when little-diversified economies of the global South receive travellers from the North, they must resort to the importation of costly foreign goods (food, beverages, directing and coordinating personnel, etc.)' (Cazes, 2005). Tourism is simultaneously a resource for economic development and a generator of social and regional inequalities. It is thus not devoid of economic and political stakes, favouring large international tourism industries. The growth in the number of tourists generally prompts rising prices, which engenders a great frustration in local populations that can no longer consume their own products (Cazes, 1992). Paradoxically, foreign investments are considered to be a feasible response to the preservation of a weakened heritage and the restoration of entire sections of a city. Indeed, the urban operations in Marrakech that are conducted by tourism-associated promoters go beyond the simple restoration of riads to include neighbourhood development (such as cleaning up neighbourhoods and sanitation, sewer, and lighting work) as well as closer relations with the local population through various actions to help the most impoverished. Should this be seen as a disengagement of public policy, despite the claims of many ministerial studies devoted to heritage preservation in the Maghreb?

The same question arises in Tunisia, in the same terms. The Tunisian 'revolution' revealed buried remonstrations of an activity increasingly seen not as a resource but as a serious blow to local culture and human dignity. For instance, 'the excessive concentration of touristic investment in coastal areas has led to the occupation of great swathes of the coastline in what are often vulnerable sites, and the degradation of urban and natural environments. This activity is also behind non-negligible sociocultural impacts of equal importance' (El Bekri, 2013). The unequal relationship between tourists and

local populations leads to what are most often disastrous situations, as, for example, in Tozeur (Tunisia), a region that stood out for its self-sufficiency until the tourism industry got the better of it by monopolising regional resources (Llena, 2004). Even if 'Arab Spring' riots were rather sporadic in southern Tunisia, complaints against certain tourism-related behaviours emerged: 'There were practically no riots here. The only trouble we had, there were some residents who went to burn, a few days after January 14, the guest houses known for being key spots for sexual tourism'. We are not concerned here with whether this is a serious behavioural deviation for tourists. We seek to emphasize instead that although heritage and tourism are obviously significant players in the economic development process, it is important that local populations be involved. Public policies for touristic development are criticised for only considering heritage in terms of market value, and side-lining anything to do with local identities and respect for citizens. Here, too, tourism's economic contributions (growth, jobs) are not negligible, but that is indeed the paradox of the heritage/tourism equation, equalling both loss and gain.

As with Marrakech's riads, the loss of an architectural and urban identity runs through all Tunisian heritage discourse. The blue-and-white image of Tunisia projected in advertising posters is a sort of excessive standardisation of the country's image disputed by Tunisians. Some architect-led projects try to bring colour back to Tunisia. In some villages, the colour green has returned to doors and windows. Moreover, touristic routes change the layout of the city. The traditional houses and squares (*rahba*) are subject to transformations that some think are a 'folklorisation' of heritage without any connection to history or local skills (Jeudy, 2011). The establishment of new downtown projects (shopping malls, parks, leisure areas) transform rahbas into parking lots or places for informal trade despite the fact that rahbas play an important role in public sociability. The rahba is a shared space for developing relations, the empty space necessary for social life, meeting, conversation, debate. It is a place of contact, a theatre where people improvise practices and new forms of exchange (Mongin, 2012). In this sense, this disappearance of the square and undesired changes affect social contact and contribute to the transformation of social relations. It should nonetheless be pointed out that the tourism industry is not the sole cause of the decline in public spaces and heritage, as other factors are also involved. City squares in Algeria are suffering the same fate, without any link to tourism. Regardless, tourism can be an exacerbating factor.

As in Morocco, the development of tourism around heritage in Tunisia has in some cases led to its privatisation. The Dar Chraït museum in Tozeur's Ouled El Hadef neighbourhood was Tunisia's first operation privatising heritage (Puig N. 2003, Dhaher N. 2012). The mayor of Tozeur personally founded this museum of folk art, which also happens to occupy a seventeenth-century *maraboutique* structure of symbolic significance to Tozeur residents. As part of the city's tourist route, the *maraboutique* building has thus been transformed from a public good to a private one. This kind of operation leads to paradoxical situations where the commodification of tangible or intangible

heritage results in a stereotypical usage marked by the touristic imaginary. It is a matter of defining the 'regime of historicity' (Hartog, 2003), which is how each society defines its relationship to the past, present, and future.

Conclusion

Heritage as an object of competition is intimately connected to issues of spatial appropriation and thus to conflicts between social groups seeking recognition for their claims or trying to create or control geographical space (Gravari-Barbas, Veschambres, 2004). In short, although it concerns the construction of society, it is clear that divergent interests and actions, and even the common good, may be behind these tensions. It remains to be seen if social movements motivated by heritage concerns will become genuinely established over the long term.

This analysis shows that the relationship between tourism and heritage is essentially paradoxical, to the extent that heritage is valued according to its touristic appeal, while the flow of tourism endangers its preservation in terms of values passed down through time. As Lazzarotti stresses, 'although tourism is often called on to rescue sites, tourists are sometimes presented as undesirable visitors' (2000, 12).

It would be for the best if 'good practices' were to become widespread, as certain scholars recommend. It is a matter of 'developing new behavioural pedagogies for tourism' (Kassous, Demuth, 2012) by insisting on the value of what tourists are visiting and getting tourists to participate in the conservation of the site. The goal is to develop 'an approach to tourism that is increasingly based on 'sight-feeling' (feeling of the site) and less on sight-seeing (seeing the site), which would contribute to maximising the touristic experience and changing consumption behaviours to a more respectful attitude' (Ibid). The relationship between tourism and heritage has yet to be invented and re-invented, since tourism-associated heritage takes an intermediate form, between the affirmation of an attachment to locally situated values and the promotion of a form of local development

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