

World Heritage – Sacramental Experience, Heterotopia, and Sustainable Tourism

1 Heritage tourism – a meaningful experience of the universal outstanding value

In societies striving for modernity, benefit and prosperity, the lives of individuals are often subject to increasingly rigid temporal rules. The ‘high-speed society’ has seemingly turned its back on the promises of autonomy, self-realization, and other freedoms of a deliberative democracy and finds itself trapped in an accelerated circle of constant motion. The forces of globalization and technological acceleration trigger faster social change, thus expediting the pace of life (Rosa 2013). The development of society with its permanently excessive speed leads to a disembedding or separating of space and time (Antony Giddens), to a threefold split of the self – with the society, with the inner nature and with the external nature (Habermas 1976). The transient sense of current life allows fewer and fewer resonance relationships with increasing self-alienation and alienation from the world being the consequences (Rosa 2016).

Contrary to this temporal dictate, tourism and holiday-making seem to be part of the promise of modernity, even if they remain trapped in the societal norms of temporality, which create a shortage of time in late modern societies. It is part of the system in the sense of a repair company, which is unable to escape the time-economic calculus. Nevertheless, it somehow falls out of time, because the extent of disposable (i.e. freely available) time, which is enshrined as a legally stipulated holiday entitlement, gives the individual the freedom to decide how to spend that time. Like an adventure, which experiences its extraordinary status as a foreign body of our existence only in contrast to common, everyday life routines, working hours and vacation time remain inextricably linked.

This exit is particularly accentuated in World Heritage tourism, because in the quasi-sacralized places of *humanity's heritage*, the *travel ego* is able to find a temporary retreat in holiday destinations where it can escape from a world of excessive and unreasonable demands. Tourism habitats can thus be considered as *heterotopias* that are experienced as destinations of desire and places of happiness (Wöhler 2011).

In World Heritage tourism, visitors experience, study and consume basic elements of a culture as well as icons of national identity. They represent *vanished worlds* that can shed light on the history of humanity. When visiting such a site, tourists enter a space that is subject to another era (Luger 2015). Experiencing World Heritage therefore enables the visitor to be a part of that history, to see oneself as part of a larger whole when coming into contact with ancient time periods spanning over centuries. They are “a storage place of previous cultural forms” (Odo Marquard), of superimposed epochs of time. Karlheinz Wöhler (2008) therefore speaks of a *sacramental experience*, for it reveals transcendence. This requires a reasonable respect for certain places, memorial sites, natural monuments, etc., since they are transformed in the secular world, through their exaltation as World Heritage (a recognition of their *outstanding universal value*) and the associated cultural meaning ascription, into something *sacred*. Through this *heritagefication*, they are given a value that can claim validity for all humanity. Because of this *canonization of spaces*, cultural memory is formed, as from a variety of cultural artefacts some are deemed to be memorable. A place, a region is given a permanent code, thus establishing the timeless nature of its meaning.

This experience of the meaningful also constitutes the uniqueness of the World Heritage site, and through this, one becomes aware of its extraordinary and universal value. Therein also lies the great tourist potential of such sites, as there is a great yearning for emotionality and wholeness and the desire to feel at one or in agreement with the world. World Heritage tourists thus take part in a profane pilgrimage. Experiencing the sacred World Heritage sites with their own senses is the main reason why tourists travel thousands of miles and climb hundreds of steps, thereby contributing to the modern phenomenon of *overtourism* (Rolandberger 2018).

While tourism is based on the underlying principle of consumption or usage of landscape and resources, cultural heritage is a fragile, non-renewable resource that requires protection in order to preserve its exceptional character for future generations (Luger 2008). Both material and intangible treasures are threatened, but it is the material, essentially buildings or cultural landscapes, that are at the forefront of consideration. Most endangered is the cultural heritage in developing societies (Timothy and Nyaupane 2009). The reasons behind the endangerment are manifold and tourism can also cause significant disturbances in the cultural fabric. Uncontrolled tourism development is one source of danger among many. To a large extent, the resolution of this fundamental conflict of goals and principles – as seen in reality – can be achieved through quality-oriented cultural tourism. It takes place when there is, firstly, a conceptual discussion dealing with world heritage that provides a meaning-giving or “meaningful experience” (Prentice 2003, 166), and secondly, if a tourism policy based on sustainability and the preservation of heritage is implemented in practice.

2 Tourist value creation from cultural heritage

For tourism, the treasures of culture and nature form the raw material for high-quality products. Without them, tourism would not have become one of the world's fastest growing business sectors. This dynamic can have positive and negative effects on world heritage sites. The inherent contradiction within tourism has led the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris to devote greater importance to the issue of heritage management and sustainable tourism. It is ultimately a question of answering two crucial questions. Firstly – How many tourists can a world heritage site 'carry' without harming the quality of the experience or the site itself? Secondly – How many visitors does it need to create economic benefits for the stakeholders of the world heritage site and to foster preservation of the site?

Tourist value creation will be illustrated in the following examples – the historic city of Salzburg, Austria, and the churches and convents of (Old) Goa, India – by referring to a benchmark pilot study (World Nature Forum 2011).

Few tourism destinations have such an outstanding image like *Salzburg* does, one that is manifestly associated with culture. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the Salzburg Festival (of Classical Music) have significantly contributed to Salzburg's reputation as a "Music capital of the World", while the Hollywood movie "The Sound of Music" – a multiple Oscar and Golden Globe winner in 1966 – underlined the city's musical image and made the city's beauty and the surrounding region famous worldwide. Since 1997, the historic city is a UNESCO world heritage site. The close link between culture and tourism is widely visible in Salzburg, which has become a centre of classical music and a leading destination of value-adding quality tourism. Salzburg owes its distinctive brand image in the popular genre of the entertainment industry to the location placement through the "Sound of Music", the annual "Advent Singing", the Christmas markets and the famous Heimatfilme, sentimental movies in idealized regional settings. The dramatic and impressive urban landscape, the sacral architecture of the former prince-bishopric as well as Mozart and the festivals are also elements that led to Salzburg being accepted on the UNESCO world heritage list. Millions of tourists are attracted by Mozart's birthplace in order to experience the "City of Music" and to visit the house where he was born and the place where he lived. The international prominence of the city, achieved by this "brand", extends far beyond its provincial city character. For the tourism destination, Mozart in connection with the Salzburg Festival is its most important branding and advertising topos. Salzburg's image is best seen in its probably most famous souvenir product, the *Mozartkugel* (chocolate and marzipan balls with Mozart image on the wrapping) (Unesco Chair 2012).

Salzburg's immense tourist popularity results in the exceeding of the carrying capacity during the summer months and the weeks before Christmas. During this time, the number of people in the narrow lanes and passage ways in the historic city creates a sense of density that exceeds the limits of the tolerable. Effective

concepts for visitor guidance in historical old towns or at world heritage sites, which unlike castles or temples do not benefit from a natural visitor guidance system that controls access in the form of walls, rocks or water trenches, have not yet been developed (Arnberger 2015). The problem is that at peak times tourists obviously all seek to find what they are looking for at exactly the same time. Cities such as Florence, Venice or Cesky Krumlov are even more affected than Salzburg and run the risk of being literally crushed by their fans (Rolandberger 2018).

In 2019, Salzburg received two million tourist arrivals creating three million overnight stays in approx. 13 500 beds, almost 60% of them in four-and five-star hotels. The average occupancy rate was around 61 % over the year, with a stay of 1.7 nights (Salzburg Statistics 2018). The attractiveness as a tourist destination is underscored by the approx. 6-9 million daily visitors each year. More than 40 000 coaches unload their passengers near the city centre, congesting the streets and creating discomfort for the local inhabitants (Neuhold 2019). 75% of all Salzburg tourists come from abroad and they consume a total product composed of elements of high and popular culture, the architecture of the Baroque, the culinary arts as well as the intangible Cultural Heritage. The visitors come primarily because of this cultural mix of unique architecture, the “Spirit of Mozart” and the “Sound of Music”, and thus due to reasons mentioned in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Culture shapes Salzburg’s profile and is the core of its unique selling proposition when compared to other cities. The cultural offering as the pivotal factor of this city, in combination with the architectural beauty and uniqueness of the world heritage, thus contributes to its touristic success. A tourism study conducted in 2012 showed the high added-value creation as well as the indirect benefits and value creation that results from cultural tourism in Salzburg (UNESCO Chair 2012).

When compared to Salzburg, the pilot benchmark study mentioned previously shows that the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Goa does not perform as successfully in the fields of regional development and value creation (Nayak 2017). The common opinion of experts was that the low demand for heritage tourism in Goa can be attributed to the fact that it is better known as a beach destination. Although it has a lot of heritage sites and historical monuments, they are only ancillary to the main purpose of visiting Goa, which is leisure and relaxation. Those tourists that do visit the sites are more interested in sightseeing rather than learning more about the colonial history. It is the role of communication and awareness to change this image of Goa, thus improving the tourist’s lack of awareness of (world) heritage. In particular, the world heritage site management needs to target the group of ‘serendipitous cultural tourists’ i.e. travellers who visit cultural sites ‘unintentionally’ as part of the tour to try and convert them into ‘purposeful cultural tourists’ (Herdin 2008).

Numerous shops/stalls near and at the Goa world heritage site selling souvenirs, refreshments, trinkets etc. are small businesses that are run by the local population. Thus, the world heritage does contribute to a certain extent to the regional



The Historic City covered by snow (© Kurt Luger)



Mozart seekers in front of his birthplace (© Kurt Luger)

economic development and local livelihoods by attracting tourists who spend their money at these stalls. However, Goa has much to learn from the other sites in the benchmark study, especially regarding the authenticity/regional signature of the products sold at the site. Like other world heritage sites in the study, the site management could assist local communities in making handicrafts and selling them to the tourists, thus greatly improving income generation opportunities for the local community (World Nature Forum 2011). Indeed, world heritage site conservation often only makes sense to the locals when placed in the context of tourism. Therefore, it is crucial to improve the value creation and economic development resulting from world heritage tourism. The importance of a world heritage site in the eyes of the local community lies in its ability to positively affect regional development, thus providing economic rationale to conserve heritage. Heritage conservation, the overarching goal of the world heritage convention, hence depends to a large extent on world heritage tourism and the income it generates for the local community and heritage and tourism need to be integrated in a sustainable manner for tourism to become a productive form of economic activity that contributes to regional development (Luger 2008).

3 Preservation and promotion of the heritage of mankind

World heritage as a central component of a tourism concept sets positive accents for both – the site itself and the tourism product sides. It requires the development of quality standards that are appropriate to the heritage of mankind i.e. there is a great need for a legal framework to avoid destruction or misuse of the heritage. UNESCO requires that the world heritage site management provides management plans and their implementation, as well as clear ideas and strategies for the development of tourism.

Laws for preservation such as the Salzburg Historic City Conservation Law (*Salzburger Altstadtterhaltungsgesetz*) are regarded as a precondition for the responsible use of the architectural heritage, but they do not guarantee, however, that they will be implemented accordingly. Historic towns are coveted spaces for value investment and speculation in real estate. Numerous world heritage sites show that the legislative protection of the heritage is insufficient. In Italy, the most valuable testimonies of antiquity and the Renaissance are suffering from decay; in France, there are many for sale and in the United Kingdom, they are to be divided into ‘heritage cash cows’ and ‘charity objects’ (van Oers 2016).

There are conflicts almost everywhere – including Salzburg and Goa. Despite the Historic City Conservation Law, a strict protection of historical monuments and the UNESCO world heritage award, Salzburg’s investors are able to impose on the city their fashionable and/or functional aesthetics of new buildings even in the core heritage zone. Neither bureaucracy nor politics have any proper instruments to find the necessary balance between careful development and responsible preser-

vation of the city's treasures. Only a strong civic protest against construction projects planned in the protected core zone, which would have aesthetically challenged and compromised the world heritage ensemble of architecture, put the topic on the public agenda. In order to deal with such a problem, long-term urban planning that extends beyond the world heritage perimeter and buffer zone is needed (Luger/Ferch 2014).

The increasing number of illegal constructions in the Goa world heritage site buffer zone pose a great threat to the architectural heritage of Old Goa (Team Herald 2012). Despite the fact that these huts were illegally constructed and despite numerous concerns raised by the authorities at the Bom Jesus Basilica, the local village government seems to be turning a blind eye, especially since the residents of these illegal dwellings represent a potential vote bank for the next election. There are, however, certain legal precautions being taken on a national and regional level. The National Monument Authority of India was created with the explicit aim of strengthening the laws regarding the protection of the buffer zones, with the Goa world heritage site as one of the pilot projects. Although a (proposed) Goa Draft Regional Plan 2021 exists, that clearly defines land use at the Goa world heritage site as well as at the surrounding buffer zones, many heritage homes and buildings of the Portuguese era are missing in this plan (Sharma 2013).

Thus, although all the monuments within the boundaries of the Goa world heritage site are relatively well maintained and preserved with necessary conservation work being carried out, the threats from deforestation of trees as well as uncontrolled real estate speculation, development in the buffer zone are likely to result in damage to the site itself in the coming decades. Although the world heritage management (Archaeological Survey of India/ASI) does coordinate with the state government and the local village panchayats with regards to conservation, it does so only informally. The unbridled construction in the buffer zones shows that the world heritage management has little influence on regional development policies and strategies despite its best efforts. Closer involvement and support of the state government is required with regards to the buffer zone and a formal agreement, embedded in a clearly defined management plan, would help to improve participation and involvement of all the stakeholders in conservation efforts. This is an issue that must be taken up seriously and resolved at the earliest. As seen above, a protected historic city has to communicate with its environment. Only in this way can the districts be merged into a larger working construct. Tourism must also be seen in a broader context. Integrated into a sustainable regional development, sustainable cultural and natural tourism can develop and thus also make a significant contribution to the preservation of the world heritage (Nayak 2017).

Committed to the overarching goal of sustainability, it is therefore necessary to develop indicators for appropriate tourism activities of all participants in world heritage regions. What is valid for tourism in general, applies to the sensitive world

heritage and cultural tourism in a very special way, because the long-term preservation of the existing heritage is at the forefront of all considerations. Tourism is sustainable when it is

- possible in the long term, because resources are developed and utilised sparingly
- culturally compatible, because respect for local conventions and rites is expressed, a renunciation of exploitable commercialising and an adaptation to local standards takes place
- socially balanced, because the benefits and disadvantages are spread equally, regional disparities are avoided and locals are involved in the decision-making
- ecologically viable because of the lowest possible pressure on the environment, the prevention of biodiversity damage and the promotion of environmental awareness
- economically sensible and productive, because it is profitable for the local or national economy and contributes significantly to the creation of income for the local population (Luger 2008, 35).

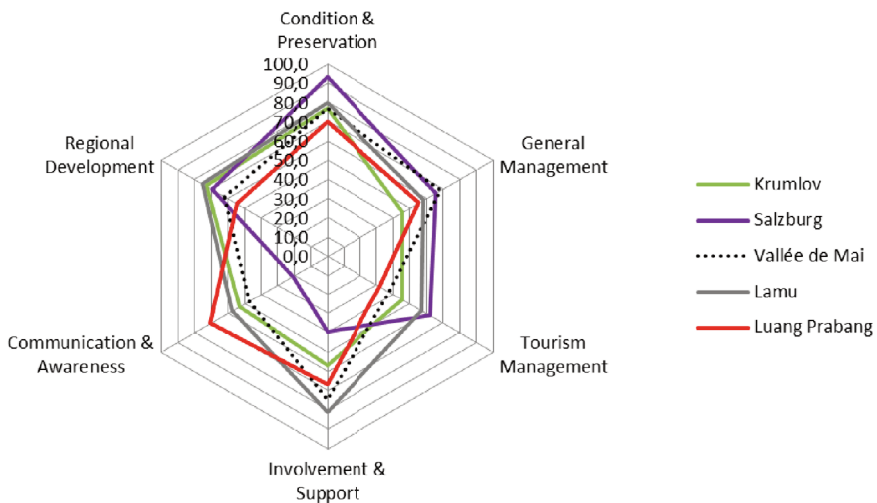
Together with the UNESCO WH Centre, UNWTO has developed this concept of sustainability into a programme. Its overall objectives can be divided into the following five areas:

- Integrate sustainable tourism principles into the mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention.
- Strengthen the enabling environment by advocating policies, strategies, frameworks and tools that support sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.
- Promote broad stakeholder engagement in the planning, development and management of sustainable tourism that follows a destination approach to heritage conservation and focuses on empowering local communities.
- Provide World Heritage stakeholders with the capacity and the tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably based on the local context and needs.
- Promote quality tourism products and services that encourage responsible behaviour among all stakeholders and foster understanding and appreciation of the concept of Outstanding Universal Value and protection of World Heritage. (OS 1)

Assessing tourism and world heritage in order to discover positive synergies in the form of *benchmarks* was objective of the abovementioned benchmark pilot study 2011. In comparison with other UNESCO world heritage sites, Salzburg performs well in terms of architectural preservation and tourism management; however, in terms of its communication achievements, it lags behind the others. A world heritage visitor centre is not available in Salzburg. Since no visitor guidance

system is available, one could critically note that the greatest weakness of the Salzburg world heritage can be seen in the lack of communication with locals and visitors. As mentioned above, until the escalation of the conflict due to new construction projects whose architecture threatened to overshadow the world heritage ensemble, the topic was not present in public at all. Political support is also considerably greater elsewhere, which can be seen by the fact that the title of world heritage is given relatively low importance by the responsible city administration. It took 17 years after Salzburg was recognized by UNESCO as a heritage of mankind for the municipality to nominate an officer responsible for the world heritage site of Salzburg. Among his first tasks was the revision of the management plan, which was requested by UNESCO several times. Given the enormous benefits to the image and economy that the city's world heritage and cultural tourism brings, this is an astonishing finding in every respect. Eight years after publishing this study, the visitor centre remains in planning and the management plan remains under revision. The communication activities have been improved by the municipality. The world heritage is frequently in the media as a widely discussed subject in the context of overtourism, real estate speculation and the traffic problems (Salzburger Nachrichten 2018).

Historic Cities (%)

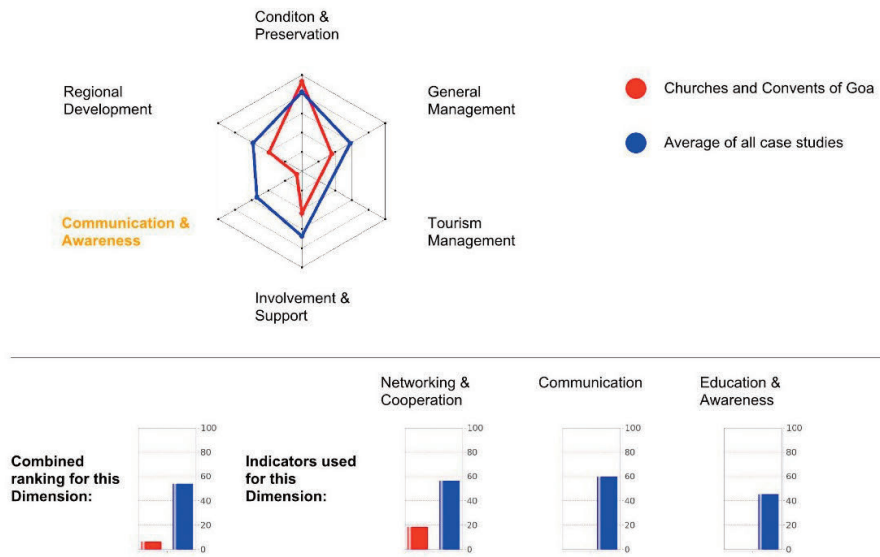


Source: World Nature Forum Switzerland – Internal Final Report Feasibility Study „Benchmarking World Heritage & Tourism”. Naters 2011.

The Goa world heritage site suffers from similar problems as Salzburg with regards to communication and awareness. Indeed, in the Communication & Awareness dimension, Goa saw its worst performance of the benchmarking study. Although a certain amount of coordination/networking takes place between the stake-

holders at the site of Goa – the Catholic Church (Archdiocese of Goa and Daman), which is responsible for the churches/convents and conducts religious services at the site, the state government & local village panchayat – the lack of a formal agreement/management plan that clearly delineates the partners’ roles and responsibilities (Nayak 2017) shows that there is room for improvement. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the governmental body responsible for the conservation and management of the world heritage site, sees its role primarily in preservation. The world heritage site of Goa completely lacks communication and awareness-raising activities as well as a clear communication concept.

Churches and Covents of Goa



Source: “Monitoring and Benchlearning Tool MBT. In: Nayak, M. 2017

4 The dissonant nature of postcolonial world heritage and its communication

What makes the communication and awareness efforts at the UNESCO world heritage site of Goa even more challenging is the dissonant nature of its (postcolonial) heritage. According to Misiura “there is great disdain amongst the general indigenous public for most of that which has been inherited from their colonial past” (2006, 16). This gains greater importance in postcolonial tourism destinations, since these “edifices of colonialism are often left in the hands of the formerly colonized who may be indifferent to the global significance” (Hitchcock 2005, 184). Those formerly colonized share a complicated relationship with these ‘edifices’ as

they view them as symbols of occupation and oppression as well as associating them with a colonizer-colonized power relationship that has been unfair and unequal in the past (Henderson 2007).

However, historic places with a postcolonial past (such as Goa) have not just one but a ‘multiplicity of stories’ that need to be told (Goodey 2002). According to McKercher/du Cros (2015), these multiple, contested histories often share the same physical space at the world heritage site. Deciding whose story to communicate thus becomes a key political decision of heritage communication. As not all aspects of the past can be interpreted and communicated to tourists and locals, a choice must be made as to which aspects of the past will be interpreted and communicated and which will not. This depends on “who is telling the story, who is in a position of power to influence the past...and therefore which stories or versions of those stories are told” (Timothy 2011, 132). Kuutma (2007, 177) speaks in this regard of the “politics of contested representation”. Indeed, “one of the most pervasive political manifestations of heritage and heritage tourism is the intentional disregard (or societal amnesia) of certain elements of the past” (Timothy 2011, 128). Rather than an objective representation (Saretzki 2008), the recalling of the past is more a subjective reconstruction as forgetting/suppressing/distorting are all part and parcel of cultural memory (Schacter 1999 cited in Saretzki 2008, 59). The fact that cultural heritage and thus world heritage is imagined, perceived and remembered differently, lies in its social embeddedness and is determined by social, political and hegemonic processes. Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) refer to this as ‘dissonant heritage’. Despite this dissonant nature of heritage, researchers remain reluctant to include this dissonance as part of heritage, preferring instead to highlight an ideal of heritage that is inherently good. However, it is this dissonant character that is core to understanding the nature of heritage as it involves negotiating multiple, sometimes painful meanings of the past as can be seen in the case of Goa (Nayak 2017, 224).

Located between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats, Goa is famous for its “white sandy seashores...beautiful landscapes dotted with palm trees...Exotic sun-kissed beaches along a crystal clear sea, sparkle like a trove of diamonds under the magic of the smiling sun” (Goa Tourism 2011). However, if one ventures beyond the palm-fringed beaches, there is much to see including numerous “gleaming whitewashed churches with Portuguese-style facades” in Old Goa (Menon 1993, 57) that date back to the 16th century. These churches, along with the surrounding convents and monasteries form the ‘Churches and Convents of Goa’, as the UNESCO world heritage site of Goa is officially known. Goa was proposed as a world heritage site on the basis that the site represented “an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble which illustrates the work of missionaries in Asia” (OS 2).

When the Portuguese colonialists entered the Indian Ocean, they did so in search of ‘Christians and spices’. Having set foot in Goa, Christianization and acculturation (in a eurocentric, colonial framework) became the dominant themes of

their colonial imperialism, which were characterized by “conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict” (Pratt 2008, 6). The local Goan population experienced numerous traumas as a result, including the destruction of temples, the transformation of the socio-religious patterns of its village communities and religious persecution. While the locals suffered from violent proselytization, given the ‘choice’ to either leave Goa, face discrimination or convert to the new religion. Unfortunately, it were the converts who suffered most from one of the most infamous periods in colonial Portuguese history – the Goan Inquisition, known also as the ‘Terrible Tribunal for the East’ that took place between 1560 and 1820. Despite adopting the same lifestyle as their colonial masters, converts continued to be judged by the colour of their skin with discrimination taking place concerning social position, marriage and exclusion from highest-level posts in the local administration. The new converts were also forced to leave their old cultural ways and adapt to the Lusitanian way of life as part of colonial attempts to de-structure the local culture and replace it with a model that promoted colonial interests (Nayak 2017).

Although Goa had a proud cultural heritage dating back before the arrival of the colonialists, during these 450 years of colonial rule, the colonial masters had managed to inscribe their colonial selves onto the body and space of the Goan Other. While Goa has gained freedom from its colonial rulers, the process of historical reconstruction highlights the pervasive effects of colonialism on the psyche of the Goan. Till date, historical works on Goa usually avoid a critical discourse, preferring instead to focus on what De Souza (1994) refers to as ‘tourist brochure history’. While this recollection of the colonial past might be painful, it is crucial that a community is educated about it if it is ever to come to terms with its own history. “If such memories are not remembered then they will haunt the social imagination and disrupt the present” (Morrison 1988 cited in Hall 1996, 66) with Bhabha referring to this process as a “putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (1994, 63).

By and large, all the parties so far have remained quiet and a “fanciful doctrine of convenient inaction has come to prevail” (Afonso 2008, xxxv). However, there is a moral imperative to re-examine old wounds and search for a lasting cure as to “construe superficial conviviality and...bonhomie as deep rooted communal harmony is just fooling ourselves” (Afonso 2008, ii). Delaying the healing of old wounds and divisions could pose a serious threat to Goa’s current peaceful state as demands by right wing nationalists for a return to a ‘pre-colonial reality’, which although understandable given the brutal and unequal nature of the relationship between colonizer and colonized, is impossible as this ‘original’ past cannot be recovered since it has undergone a transformation and thus no longer exists in its original form.



The Basilica of Bom Jesus is considered to be one of the best examples of Portuguese colonial architecture in India. (© Mihir Najak)



The Se Cathedral was built to commemorate the victory of the Portuguese under Afonso de Albuquerque and the beginning of Portuguese colonial rule in Goa. (© Mihir Najak)

Despite the increasing number of controversial attempts to stir up communal disharmony, there are still those who question the need to highlight the dissonant aspects of heritage as long as the tensions are not openly visible. Indeed, the mere absence of conflict does not necessarily mean that communal disharmony is not a threat. The colonial scars are merely simmering below the surface and can be easily reopened by right-wing nationalists wishing to sanitize Goa's colonial (heritage and) past (Nayak 2017). Thus, although the region might currently lack open conflicts, the potential for tensions to flare up remains a constant threat unless intercultural dialogue is established and (mental) decolonization completed. True peace will only be possible once the dissonant issues of the past are openly discussed rather than swept under the carpet (Dann and Seaton, 2001).

Tilden (1977) postulates the goal of heritage communication and interpretation should be to offer a holistic version of the story, instead of merely restricting itself to a particular part. Details of a conflict-laden history thus need not be avoided during the process of interpretation (Nayak 2017) and visitor communication at the world heritage site need not be limited to a nostalgic perspective, but instead include a constructive yet critical dialogue on the more controversial aspects of the site's history (Rodrian 2011). Indeed, dissonant heritage interpretation offers a great opportunity to deal with conflict by trying to locate common ground with Merkel even referring to it as being a "beautiful learning challenge" (2002, 148).

Despite divergent perspectives on its symbolic significance, the different communities at the Goa world heritage site must participate in sharing meaning together for intercultural understanding to take place. Stakeholder participation that involves all the local communities in decisions regarding their cultural heritage is a crucial element of successful heritage interpretation and communication. Participatory mechanisms at world heritage sites that encourage communication and dialogue between various local stakeholders also fulfil the aim of the world heritage programme, i.e. to promote intercultural understanding by transforming world heritage sites into spaces of intercultural encounters and thus, intercultural dialogue. Given their universal relevance, world heritage sites such as Goa have the potential to transcend cultural boundaries and become spaces of dialogue where cultural differences regarding the significance and meaning of cultural heritage can be resolved. If interpreted and communicated properly, world heritage sites such as Goa can help the local population appreciate the intercultural aspects of their history, thus enabling them to have a better understanding and tolerance for the intercultural aspect of their present (Harrison 2005).

5 Learning from history and intercultural understanding

The cultural heritage of a site provides a 'history generated unique selling proposition' and is a key advantage over other destinations in the increasingly competitive global tourism market (Luger 2015a). Colonial heritage spaces are not merely a

symbol of imperialism and oppression but also tourist magnets, as they are often specifically angled towards and made more relevant/compelling for foreign tourist visitors (Hitchcock 2005, 184) in order to boost tourist numbers. By enabling local communities to meaningfully participate and contribute to the heritage attribution and communication process, it is possible to deflect Harrison's (2005a) criticism, that destinations designate colonial architecture as heritage only in order to attract international tourists from the ex-colonizing countries.

The objective of world heritage tourism is, on the one hand, to preserve the world heritage site, while on the other hand, to make cultural heritage accessible. The cultural task of comprehensive information formulated in the world heritage convention also includes the promotion of understanding for other cultural orders, ways of thinking and life forms. Dialogue skills and the understanding of other cultures are not only developed by visiting a cultural site that has been prepared for tourism and intercultural encounters require more than the mere entering of and curiously gazing at a foreign space (Rössler 2005).

World heritage tourism can be an outstanding intercultural medium (Saretzki/May 2012). The whole site or the entire region becomes a world stage, an open-air auditorium, every world heritage site can be considered a huge educational platform. Cultural tourism enables insights and understanding, reduces cultural confusion (Hottola 2004) and enables intercultural learning and understanding, without the need to establish a typical learning situation. Many tourists come highly motivated to make sense out of the site's history and do not need any classroom-like didactics – the world heritage site is an open-air classroom! However, unless an immersion in the complex meaning systems and meaning worlds takes place, a cultural system cannot be understood or comprehended.

To experience means to first see, then comprehend and understand its meaning. The task of cultural mediation both opens the eyes of the inhabitants of a region to their past as well as explains to the visitors from abroad what shaped the peculiarity of living patterns in the past and perhaps what still influences them today. The quality of the mediation, which must keep up with the extraordinary importance of the world heritage, is therefore crucial for cultural and heritage tourism. The quality lies in the presentation or in the history which is told – in storytelling, in the atmospheric experience character and thus also in the overall tourism product. Ultimately, it is the combination of service and price, of importance and appreciation that determines whether the visitors are able to take with them a positive experience as a result of a successful sojourn in a previously unknown configuration of space and time. The profane pilgrimage to sites of world heritage thus corresponds to a collective process of emotional appropriation of a space. This *place making* can be interpreted as an expression of the highest esteem for the extraordinary achievements and the cultural heritage of a place as well as its bygone and current residents (Luger 2019).

Cultural heritage becomes a creative and communicative learning space for cultural tourists in their leisure time. Using a non-school didactic, visitors come closer to that what is often unspecifically referred to as “broadening the horizon” (Lauterbach 2011). In this manner, as individual treasure seekers, they may reach a goal that was already referred to in the 16th century by the travelling scholar Theodor Zwinger in his *Methodus Academicus*. In the same way that valuable goods were shipped from all over the world to the important trading towns and further distributed from there, the “treasures of wisdom and of virtue” spread over the globe, were gathered as a result of trade-related intercultural encounters in these towns, becoming centres of knowledge and exchange. It is up to institutions like trans-confessional churches or academies in the sense Platon had in mind to then process these treasures into instructions for daily life by means of clear thinking. Picked up and experienced by visitors, one can say that travelling in this sense will be of importance for any form of living (Stagl 2002, 158).

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