1 Introduction

In my travels, I have often visited a town called Lijiang in the south-west of China, not far from Laos, Burma and Vietnam. Like me, millions of tourists from all over the world visit the place, fascinated by its mountain scenery, narrow waterways, traditional architecture and unique ethnic minority culture. After the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) listed Lijiang as a World Heritage Site in 1997, the rapidly growing heritage tourism industry has had a tremendous impact on the social fabric of the town. Heritage tourism has created employment opportunities and provided resources for building restoration and cultural revitalisation. At the same time, the original residents of the town have developed a collective sense of displacement due to spatial transformation, rising living costs and increased commercialisation.

These tourism impacts are representative of the global tourism industry's response to significant changes resulting from global interconnectedness (Timothy and Boyd 2006). As in Lijiang, the conversion of cultural and natural resources into tourism sites and commodities is fuelled by both the private and public sectors' economic interests. The tourism industry generates billions of dollars for the global economy each year. It encompasses an array of fiscal revenues, including employment, site visitation fees, transport, food, accommodation and souvenirs (Timothy and Boyd 2003). Within this context, heritage tourism is one of the fastest-growing aspects of the tourism industry, employing millions of people directly and indirectly.

While the benefits can be substantial, the negative features of this rapid growth and adoption of heritage for tourism purposes can be significant. For Lijiang and numerous other sites around the world, heritage can become used for un(intended) purposes. What concepts and approaches are useful for understanding this global phenomenon? How does global tourism consumption shape the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage? And how can different stakeholders use heritage tourism to ensure a more sustainable future?

This research examines the key political and ethical issues that emerge through heritage tourism as one of the fastest-growing niches of the global tourism industry. It provides critical analysis to explain the multifaceted relationship between heritage and tourism. This approach is situated in the development of critical heritage studies and critical tourism studies, two interdisciplinary fields of academic study that have developed in recent decades.

Drawing from cases all around the world, I address a range of existing approaches and the challenges of empowerment and sustainable development within the heritage tourism context. Heritage tourism should not be taken simply as an economic and management business, but instead should be seen as a global

Figure 1 Mass tourism in Lijiang, China

political and ethical project associated with the power of dominant actors and the hopes of the marginalised. Furthermore, this research seeks to provide a critical account of how communities, international organisations and national and local governments manage heritage tourism as an exercise of co-production. In so doing, heritage tourism can be developed as a social movement to empower dialogue, equity and diversity. These issues become particularly relevant and essential today with the rise of deglobalisation and nationalism.

Definitions: Heritage, Tourism and Heritage Tourism

Defining heritage tourism is not an easy task. Both terms ('heritage' and 'tourism') are value-laden concepts explored by all sorts of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, history, geography, cultural studies, political science and management. Each of them brings particular research methods and theories to study heritage and tourism as separate but sometimes interrelated subjects.

Traditionally, heritage refers to cultural performances, buildings and objects representing an 'authentic' past or environment. In the past decades, scholars have called for a shift in the understanding of heritage from conservation of the past to the politics of the past (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Harrison 2013; Lähdesmäki, Thomas and Zhu 2019). Instead of defining heritage in terms of material objects, recent scholarship sees heritage as a cultural, economic and political resource (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996), a discursive practice (Smith 2006) and a process of acts that engage with the past, present and future (Harvey 2001).

Many scholars have argued for a broadly 'presentist' approach when engaging with heritage (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Harvey 2001). As Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) note, 'the present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future' (6). This statement indicates the complexities of heritage: it is produced in the present for and about our everyday experiences.

While many forms of heritage exist, such as cultural, natural or 'mixed' (both cultural and natural heritage), this research focuses mostly on cultural heritage in both tangible and intangible forms.[1] It includes various material objects associated with historic buildings, monuments, archaeological ruins and museums, or movable objects such as antique collections, handicrafts and arts. Conversely, cultural heritage can also include non-material elements such as music, rituals, festivals, foodways and folklores.

I use the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) (2008) definition of tourism as a 'social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purpose'. Here three key elements exist in the various definitions. Tourism can refer to the human desire to know others and ourselves, an action for people to move away from a known habitat and stay somewhere else, or various sorts of consumption of goods, services and experiences of place (Leiper 1979; Garrod and Fyall 2001).

For this research, heritage tourism is defined as tourism experiences related to or derived from historical sites or practices. Broadly, heritage tourism concerns cultural, ethnic and historical aspects of the past that attract tourists and travellers (Chang 1999). As 'heritage and tourism are collaborative industries, heritage [converts] locations into destinations' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 151). In other words, heritage is the use of the past for present sociocultural purposes of tourism (Timothy and Boyd 2003; Palmer and Tivers 2019). Often the term 'heritage tourism' is a marketing device used by tourism operators who create different products that refer to historic towns, archaeological ruins, ancient monuments, religious sites and living culture (Salazar and Zhu 2015, 241).

Critical Approaches in Heritage Tourism

This research is mainly embedded in the critical turn in tourism and heritage studies since the 1990s. This period draws on the earlier movements of post-war recovery in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which saw the development of tourism industries as a business management strategy to increase profitability. Some

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[1] I admit that culture and nature, tangible and intangible should not be treated as simple separate dichotomies. These definitions are used only for this research.

early research in tourism studies during the 1960s and 1970s focused on the business and management of the tourism industry, while the 'negative' perceptions of the sociocultural dimension were ignored (Xiao, Jafari, Cloke and Tribe 2013). Such scholarship was embedded in a professional discourse that legitimised and promoted efficiency, competition and entrepreneurship (Ball 2013). As a result, a large body of literature has been produced regarding policy and industry-based research, including topics on sustainability, technology and carrying capacity (Morgan, Pritchard, Causevic and Minnaert 2018). Influenced by positivist and quantitative approaches, such management-oriented research often focused on product development, strategic marketing, destination images and tourist satisfaction.

Since the late 1960s, a division has been created in academia between tourism as a field of management and tourism as a field of social studies (Tribe 2007). The latter concerns the social, cultural and political perspectives of the tourism industry. Anthropologist Theron Nuñez (1963) studied the interrelation between tourists and local communities by focusing on weekend travel in a Mexican peasant village. His work 'Tourism, Tradition, and Acculturation: *Weekendismo* in a Mexican Village' is often credited as one of the earliest tourism-related articles in American anthropological literature.

Since the 1970s, interest in the social and cultural aspects of tourism has proliferated exponentially. To capture these research interests and developments, whilst supplementing a gap in published material, the *Annals of Tourism Research* was established in 1973 as one of the earliest journals to engage with tourism as a field of social science. Along with the publication of the seminal work *Hosts and Guests* in 1977, sociologists and anthropologists such as Valene Smith, Nelson Graburn, Erick Cohen and Eduard Bruner set a precedent in tourism studies by considering the relationship between tourism and society. While some of them, such as Dennison Nash (1978), proposed tourism as a form of postcolonial imperialism, others viewed tourism as a social and ritualistic practice (see Graburn 1983). Using Foucault's work on the 'gaze', John Urry (1990) illustrated the asymmetrical power relationship between tourists and hosts. Crang (1997) further argued that the study of the tourism industry should not be disconnected from the broader economic and political context where it is situated. A large amount of new scholarship has since been developed along with wider sociological and anthropological thoughts and theories such as embodiment, performance, gender, non-representation, postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism and mobilities.

Since 2000, a further critical approach has been developed to engage the tourism industry, phrased as critical tourism studies (CTS). This trend was witnessed by the establishment of the journals *Tourist Studies* in 2000 and

Tourism and Cultural Change in 2003, and by the organisation of the first Critical Tourism Studies Conference by Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in 2005. These newly established journals and association meetings provided platforms to develop critical scholarship of tourism as a social phenomenon.

The ideas of CTS were influenced by the philosophical and sociological legacies of the Frankfurt school. Arising out of the failure of the left-wing class movement and the rise of fascism and capitalist markets, the Frankfurt school was founded at the Institute for Social Research at Goethe University, Frankfurt, during the Weimar Republic (1918–33). Along with the intellectual contribution by scholars such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas, the Frankfurt school criticised contemporary capitalism and rejected the positivist dichotomy between fact and value, theory and politics (Best and Kellner 1997, 223). Further, they illustrated the limitation of existing social theories such as Marxism due to positivism, materialism and determinism; instead, they established components of alternative social theory that search for the political, economic and societal conditions for social emancipation.

As John Tribe (2007) summarised, CTS is a critique of the existing positivist, managerial paradigm that is still dominant in some tourism studies literature. With support from the post-structuralist, humanistic, neo-Marxist, critical realist, feminist and postmodern approaches, CTS intends to jump out of the hegemonic trap of tourism that is deeply embedded in Western capitalism and consumerism (Hall 2013; Morgan et al. 2018). Subsequently, the critical turn of tourism studies focuses on 'the forces of domination, hegemony and alienation, the practice and particulars of lived experience, the values and beliefs of the marginalised and unrecognised, and the potential for emancipation' (Bramwell and Lane 2014, 1).

Following the recent critical turn in tourism studies, I identify two research agendas of the critical approaches to studying heritage tourism. The first approach brings Foucauldian thought to challenge hegemonic power in the formation of knowledge production in heritage tourism (Tribe 2007). Recently, there has been a 'discursive turn' in heritage studies that pays close attention to the knowledge effects of heritage and its impact on societies and people. The political work heritage does is particularly evident in heritage policies and institutions that are rooted in discourses dominated by the West (Winter 2014). Using the term *les lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), Pierre Nora (1989) indicated that the promotion of national history and sites of memory facilitates the development of a collective national memory that homogenises local memories in France. Heritage professionals and experts often participate in the constitution of what Laurajane Smith (2006) has called

an 'authorised heritage discourse' – a discourse that 'not only organises the way concepts like heritage are understood, but the ways we act, the social and technical practices we act out, and the way knowledge is constructed and reproduced' (4). As a result, heritage professionals and experts institutionalise their methods of evaluating heritage through state actors, which creates a hegemonic discourse and understanding of heritage (Smith 2006). This discussion focuses not only on the rights of access to knowledge, but also on the power of knowledge production and its impacts on how heritage is managed, presented and understood (Harrison 2013, 109).

This research identifies the power differentials, the central sources and structural marginalisation of certain segments within the heritage tourism context. The critical approach of studying heritage tourism rejects the economic determinism and agendas inherent in structuralism. Instead, it deals with 'the relationship between [tourism] discourses and the diverse forms of capitalist development and territorial logic of state power' (Bianchi 2009, 493). In *Justice and Ethics in Tourism*, Tazim Jamal (2019) explores key issues of tourism ethics, including capacity building, recognition and democracy. Subsequently, heritage tourism is associated not only with consumption and management, but also with various moral and ethical issues such as social inequality, dominance, civil rights and human justice (Jamal 2019). Questions include, but are not limited to, whether heritage tourism legitimates power domination and control or whether it facilitates recognising the rights and needs of different social groups.

The second critical approach of studying heritage tourism calls for de-essentialisation, pluralisation, and emancipation. As Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) argue, all heritage is dissonant and shaped by different opinions and interpretations. Critical studies of heritage tourism consider power in multiple forms and not just in the hands of elites (Tribe 2008). It empowers actors that have been marginalised in the tourism discourse. It respects different forms of cultural interpretation and meanings of the knowledge system, while considering the social context behind those processes.

In the article 'The Critical Turn and Its Implications for Sustainable Tourism Research', Bramwell and Lane (2014) summarise several essential features of CTS, with the keywords of 'empowerment' and 'emancipation'. Here, the idea of emancipation is not about radical social movements, but concerns the way liberalisation and autonomy work to combat constraints on human identity and agency (Bramwell and Lane 2014). In this sense, emancipation seeks out agents for 'dialogue, reflexivity, equality, empowerment and co-created knowledge' (Pritchard and Morgan 2007, 26).

Following these research agendas, this research calls for a critical and more democratic approach to heritage tourism. It examines the relationship between

international organisations, states and experts (usually the providers of know-ledge) and local communities (usually the recipients of knowledge). A key concern is, therefore, the empowerment of local communities to engage with heritage tourism and how their engagement is linked to their well-being and cultural identity (Affleck and Kvan 2008).

In particular, heritage tourism dynamics refers to the power relation between the local and the global, especially within the context of recognition and repre-sentation of indigenous communities within a nation (Theodossopoulos 2013). Hollinshead (1992) asks how it is possible to escape from the discourse of ethnocentric Western portrayals of indigenous North Americans. Does tourism still serve as a powerful instrument for postcolonial imperialism? Or does tourism function as a mechanism of decolonisation and empowerment through self-knowledge and self-governance based upon communities' determinations (Bunten and Graburn 2018, 249)? Further, can tourism offer indigenous people new avenues to 'reach out to the world in search of new allies and supportive connections' and develop self-awareness and cultural identity (Theodossopoulos 2018, 99)?

There are no simple answers to the questions of both research agendas, as they go back to the debates of power and agency. However, the key issue here is that critical approaches to heritage tourism do not limit themselves to critiquing economic, political and sociocultural tourism-related issues. Instead, they encourage transformations and changes that could improve social justice, which often occurs alongside other social movements such as the civil rights, Black Lives Matter and Me Too movements (Jamal 2019).

Outline

Instead of asking how we can better manage heritage tourism, this research examines what heritage tourism does to societies and the ways heritage tourism can be developed for a better future. This research considers several pertinent topics in this area: the hegemonic power of global systems in heritage tourism and its consequences, the spectre of nationalism and colonialism in heritage-making, particularly for minorities and indigenous people, and the paradox of heritage tourism's role in combatting these issues.

After introducing a brief history of heritage tourism in Section 2, I provide an intellectual background on the impact of global tourism on heritage sites and their associated communities. Section 3 investigates the politics of heritage tourism and its influence on our everyday lives. Power is a central issue here, as heritage tourism is not merely a modern form of consumption; instead, it should be treated as a political, social and cultural discourse situated in the postcolonial

and globalisation context. As Western ideologies provide a global system of values and beliefs, heritage tourism becomes a channel to appropriate these ideologies in other regions of the world. The global industry facilitates the establishment of social relations and practices that legitimise the ways we understand the world and our past.

Discovering the power relations and the influences of Western ideologies on societies is only the first step in unpacking these issues. In Section 4, I further explore how individuals and social groups increase their capacity to determine their values and belief systems in the heritage tourism industry. This section focuses on helping local communities exert control over social, economic and political factors that affect their lives in the heritage tourism industry. Through various ways of recognising local culture, such as cultural landscapes, intangible heritage and ecomuseums, heritage tourism can be used as a tool to empower local communities for social cohesion and well-being. However, the actual practices do not always serve the needs for emancipation. The challenges of policy implementation are still situated in the existing asymmetrical relationship between those in/with authority and those without.

In Section 5, I seek out possible ways to achieve emancipation by suggesting an approach to heritage tourism that I refer to as 'co-production': a community-centred mechanism of collaborative work associated with planning, design and management. Here, the idea of co-production should not be another marketing cliché or cultural policy driven by international organisations. By examining the mechanisms of local collaborative governance, recognition and heritage interpretation, I illustrate that heritage tourism should be based on dialogical principles linking researchers, planners and communities on the local scale. The success of co-production is not only associated with sufficient funding and management resources, but also relies on local social capital such as trust, empathy and social resilience.

As shown in the concluding section, this research offers broader implications for the ways we engage with critical global issues in the humanities and social sciences. It seeks to illustrate some navigational markers for studying heritage tourism, especially in the context of new challenges and trends in the world such as the emergence of online media and new technologies, mass migrations and displacement through exile, and the global climate and pandemic crises. The field of heritage tourism is vast, and this research cannot cover all the challenges. I intend to avoid a Western-dominated view by opening an inclusive conversation and sharing stories and cases from all around the world. I also hope to offer some useful insights or provide a starting point for pluralistic, dialectical and reflective conversations around the future of heritage and tourism studies.

Now let us begin with a journey into the history of heritage tourism.

2 A Brief History

Although mass tourism to heritage sites is a modern phenomenon, the interaction between people and their past can be traced back to much earlier times. Romans were interested in and visited the ruins of Greece to embrace their ancient spirit (Lowenthal 2015). Chinese literati and scholars travelled to mountains and forests to pursue spiritual self-nourishment in the Imperial era.

Researchers offer various explanations of the roots of heritage tourism in Europe. Some scholars believe heritage tourism might have originated from pilgrimage in the medieval period as a way of 'discovering the world' (Light 2015). An example of medieval literature describing such pilgrimage activities, albeit in a narrative frame, is Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400). Within this narrative, Chaucer described pilgrims' motivations for travelling as a mixture of religious and spiritual movements to Canterbury Cathedral, along with drinking, sex and merrymaking (Franklin 2003).

Heritage tourism in Europe can also be traced back to the grand tour of wealthy European elites in the seventeenth century. In this period, the children of aristocrats and gentry were sent on an extended tour of Europe to visit the remains of antiquity, explore cosmopolitan centres abroad and make politically important contacts. In addition to diplomatic and military excursions, the grand tour is the earliest example of cultural – as opposed to religious or spiritual – tours in Europe (Timothy 2011, 3). The travel itinerary often included Western Europe via Paris, Milan, Venice, Florence and Rome and then a return to the UK (Towner 1985, 301). These tours mainly served educational purposes: travellers would learn European languages, art, history and architecture while enjoying the scenery. The tour was regarded as a mark of prestige, a way for youths to testify to their families that they were grown up and a foundation for their cosmopolitan professions. Such educational trips were often costly; therefore, they were exclusive to members of the European upper middle class.

Like in Europe, early travel activities in Asia did not only involve religious pilgrimages derived from Hinduism, Buddhism and other ancient philosophies, but also included government or diplomatic affairs. In Imperial China (221 BC–AD 1912), emperors often went on journeys to inspect their land while officials conducted essential missions. Emperor Taizong dispatched the Buddhist monk Xuan Zang (602–64) to India to collect religious books. Similarly, the Chinese explorer and diplomat Zheng He (1371–1433) was sent by Emperor Yongle around Asia and Africa during the early fifteenth century. Chinese literati often wrote poems about their official and personal journeys visiting temples and climbing mountains with family and friends (Nyíri 2006). Others travelled to natural areas to conduct scientific research or escape from political control.

These travels were influenced by Chinese philosophy, especially the ideas of Taoism that emphasised travel as the best way to engage with nature.

Similar to Imperial China, early travel in Japan was populated by officials, literati and intellectuals. Diplomatic and trade travel can be traced back to the seventh century when the imperial Japanese court sent royal family members (*kuge*) and monks to China, Korea and India to advance their culture, economy and science. In 1643, a well-known neo-Confucian philosopher and writer, Hayashi Gahō, published an early form of travel guide, *Three Views of Japan*. The book described Japan's most scenic historical areas, including Itsukushima, which was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. Following in Hayashi Gahō's footsteps, forty years later, another poet, Matsuo Bashō, travelled to the far north of Japan and wrote one of the most significant texts of Japanese literature, *Oku no Hosomichi* (*The Narrow Road to the Deep North*). Early forms of tourism in Japan, especially in the Edo period (1603–1868), were almost exclusively confined to the Japanese islands due to isolationist policies. Following the Meiji Reform (1868–1912), the country gradually opened up to foreigners, enabling more accessible and flexible travel conditions.

The Industrial Revolution coming out of the UK in the early nineteenth century played a significant role in shaping the landscape for travelling. On one hand, people treated rapid industrialisation as a threat to civilisation that led to a certain degree of heritage or memory 'crisis'. Efforts to consolidate and record threatened civilisations, cultural groups and assets became a priority. On the other hand, the invention of ships, steam trains and photography and the establishment of rail networks stimulated travel among members of the middle class.

In 1846, the German publisher Karl Baedeker (1801–59) introduced the star rating system in his travel handbooks to evaluate tourism destinations. The Verlag Karl Baedeker later became a pioneer in travel literature and one of the most successful travel guide publishing houses in the world. Nineteen years later, in 1865, the English businessman Thomas Cook established one of the first tourism agencies and started the era of package tourism.[2] As the father of modern travel agents and tour operations, Cook offered ship- and train-based tours, testing his programme first in Italy and later expanding to Europe. The itineraries of his packaged tours were mainly heritage-based such as the Great Pyramids in Egypt and the Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields in the USA (Timothy 2011, 3). His inventions, which included tourism currency, travel coupons and holiday train tickets, significantly raised public interest in packaged cultural tourism (Franklin 2003, 31).

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[2] Other early travel agencies include Cox & Kings in 1758 and the Abreu Agency in Porto in 1840.