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Historical Replication Preserves Cultural Heritage

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Abstract:

We propose a radically new approach to deal with major negative effects resulting from overtourism. The major attractions of heavily visited historical sites are to be identically replicated in a new location emphasizing a vivid historical experience supported by modern technology. In the near future, an enormous increase in the number of tourists is predicted due to low flight prices and a great increase of cruise ship passengers. The local populations will be exposed to strong negative external effects, the cultural site will be damaged, and the environment polluted. Under our proposal, tourists will no longer visit the historical sites but will be exposed to Historical Replicas (HIRE) with more intense historical experience achieved through modern technology (such as holograms). Our proposal provides an alternative to today's overcrowded historical sites doomed to destruction by overtourism.

Keywords: Historical Replication, overtourism, overcrowding, cities of culture, impacts of tourism

Overtourism

Mass tourism to Europe and some other locations is predicted to increase strongly over the next few years. According to one estimate, the number of tourists visiting Europe will rise from 449 million in 2005 to 757 million in 2030, i.e. by above 60% in those 20 years. The number of tourists originating from the Asia-Pacific area is expected to increase from 208 to 549 million, i.e. more than double. However, these estimations are apparently quite conservative as already over 484 million arrivals were recorded in Europe in 2010 (Kester, 2016).

The major determinants of this predicted huge increase of tourists are low flight prices, Airbnb lowering the cost of stays, a great increase of cruising trips, and the attention directed to a few prominent locations and sites occurring in the social and classical media, as well as inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List (Frey & Pamini, 2009; Frey & Steiner, 2011; Goodwin, 2017; Koens, 2018).

Tourists Go Home and External Effects

One important consequence is “*overtourism*”, a new term that has been taken up in the media in the summer 2017 (Koens, 2018). It points to the negative consequence of mass tourism for the local population, leading to serious tensions between tourists and locals. The most important external effects not taken into account by the market are the stress produced by packed town centres, long-line-ups at attractions, traffic jams, environmental degradation in terms of water and air quality, higher rents forcing locals out of the city, and noise. Recently, the local population has negatively protested in various places demanding “Tourists Go Home”. The cities most affected in Europe are Barcelona, Amsterdam, Berlin, Florence, Dubrovnik, but the quintessential city is Venice where the ratio between tourists and locals is particularly large (D'Eramo, 2017). Sites outside Europe virtually overflowed by tourists are the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat, Macchu Pichu, or the Great Wall in China (Becker, 2013). The same happens with famous museums such as the Louvre – with about 10.2 million visitors in 2018 and an increase of about 25% to the previous year (Statista, 2019) – Prado, Vatican Museums, or the Uffizi.

These problems have now been recognized. Only little time ago, higher tourist arrivals were most welcome. The greater their number, the better the situation was taken to be. Since then, the following measures have been considered and partly introduced: Regulations with respect to space and time (e.g. museums such as the Uffizi created an additional entry that can only be visited if a reservation is previously made on the internet); restrictions on using apartments for Airbnb (Bellon, 2018); visitor fees (e.g. Venice’s City Council decided to impose an entry fee

between Euro 2.50 and Euro 10 per person in order to curb the number of tourists visiting the city, which amounts to about 30 million persons per year (Giuffrida, 2019); or moral suasion asking the would-be visitors to “travel responsibly” (Goodwin, 2017). It is debatable whether these measures will effectively curb overtourism. In any case, would-be tourists are imposed most of the cost, depriving them at least partly the benefits of visiting famous cities and cultural sites. This can be considered to be unfair especially because many of the sites are part of Human Cultural Heritage as proclaimed by UNESCO.

Historical Replication – HIRE

It is suggested here that a better approach to deal with overtourism is to offer suitable alternatives to tourists, while at the same time reducing the negative external effects of such mass tourism. One possibility is to inform would-be visitors on other sites with similar attractions as the ones overcrowded. In view of the steadily increasing tourist numbers predicted, this is only a short-term solution because these new locations will soon also be overcrowded.

We therefore propose a more radical alternative: The major attractions of the most visited places are to be replicated in a suitable place easy to reach by tourists and having few negative effects on locals. In the case of Venice, for example, the Doge Palace, the Saint Marcus Church, the Tower on the Piazza San Marco as well as the square itself, and the Rialto Bridge would be exactly replicated and placed somewhere more suitable on the Italian or Balkan coast. These monuments are the major reason why most tourists want to visit Venice, and it is expected that many tourists would accept the offer, especially as the replicated sites are to be installed with the most modern technology, e.g. having Doodles, and other historical inhabitants, walking around by using holograms. At the same time the replicated sites would offer convenient restaurants and shopping opportunities which tourists value (Yüksel, 2007). The visitors are, of course, aware that they are not in “historical” Venice but this feeling is overcompensated by a more intense historical experience. The replicas suggested can also combine various cities and sites. An example would be “Historical North Italian City States” which could combine the major attractions of cities such as Siena, Pisa, Parma or Piacenza but strongly reducing transportation requirements for visitors engaging in cultural city tourism.

Such technologically modernized replicas have major advantages over today’s overtourism. First of all, they offer tourists a valuable alternative to visiting the originals, which are saved from the negative external effects mentioned. At the same time, the replicas offer the local tourist industry new opportunities for working places and profits. The replications are efficient

from the point of view of tourists as they provide a “genuine” historical experience at low cost and little stress, and care for shopping opportunities. Tension between locals and tourists is avoided because only those locals are present in the replicated sites who materially profit from the tourists as employees or entrepreneurs.

This proposal seems to be outlandish at first. However, there is indeed a number of instances in which replicas have been used for tourist purposes:

- Altamira and Lascaux feature prehistoric paintings on the wall of their caves. They had to be closed because the mass of visitors severely damaged the paintings. Today, tourists visit replicas of the caves and identical paintings in nearby artificial caves (Kaminski, 2014).
- In 1869, the castle *Neuschwanstein* in Bavaria was built totally new as an imitation of a medieval castle. While the visitors are certainly aware of this imitation, on average 6.000 persons per day, or 1.2 million per year persons cram into the building (Steinecke, 2010).
- In Berlin, the *Stadtschloss*, which was built in 1442, was totally destroyed by the Communist Regime in 1950, and newly erected beginning June 2013. Only the front copies the old castle, the structures behind are modern.
- After World War II many German cities strongly, and sometime almost totally, destroyed by bombing, were reconstructed. Examples are Nuremberg (95% of whose old town was destroyed), or Berlin (70 % of the city’s buildings were completely destroyed). In 2018, medieval parts in Frankfurt am Main which no longer existed after the war, were completely reconstructed (Pietersen, 2006).
- In Luxor, Egypt, an exact replication of the tomb of Tutankhamen was opened to the public in close proximity to the original in 2014. The threat of deterioration of wall paintings in the original tomb became severe, justifying replications of the paintings. Similar to our proposed concept of HIRE, new technological means such as 3D-scanning were applied to copy the original tomb in order to achieve an authentic experience for the visitor (Wong & Quintero, 2019).

Conclusion

The proposal here advanced resembles partly the Disneylands or the Europapark in Rust, Germany, the imitations of the Venetian Gran Canale in Las Vegas and more recently in Macau, and the many copies of Eiffel Towers in Chinese resorts. However, these replications are only

partial, do not replicate the original in size and quality, and make no serious effort to put them into historical context.

The proposal to replicate sites of overtourism can, of course, not be applied everywhere and for all tourist attractions. Thus, it may be impossible to find a suitable place to site the replicas, or it may be impossible to produce an adequate experience reflecting the glory of the original. But in many cases, the replicas suggested should be taken as a serious alternative to today's overcrowded historical sites and their dooming destruction.

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