TOURISM AND ARCHITECTURAL SIMULACRA

Edited by
Nelson Graburn, Maria Gravari-Barbas and
Jean-François Staszak

Tourism and Architectural Simulacra

Since its beginnings, tourism has inspired built environments that have suggested reinvented relationships with their original architectural inspirations. Copies, reinterpretations, and simulacra still constitute some of the most familiar and popular tourist attractions in the world.

Some reinterpret archetypes such as the ancient palace, the Renaissance villa, or the Mediterranean village. Others duplicate the cities in which we lived in the past or we still live today. And others realise perceptions of utopias such as Shangri-La, Eden, or Paradise. Replicas – duplitecture – and simulacra can have symbolic meaning for tourists, as merely inspiring an atmosphere or as truly authentic, and their relationship to original functions, for worship, accommodation, leisure, or shopping.

Tourism and Architectural Simulacra questions and rethinks the different environments constructed or adapted both for and by tourism exploring the relationship between the architectural inspiration and its reproduction within the tourist bubble. The wide range of geographical areas, eras, and subjects in this book show that the expositions of simulacra and hyper reality by Baudrillard, Deleuze, and Eco are surpassed by our complex world. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach they offer original insights of the complex relationship between tourism and architecture.

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Nelson Graburn was educated at Cambridge (1958), McGill (1960), and Chicago (PhD, 1963). He has taught at UC Berkeley for 54 years and served as Curator of the Hearst Museum and chair of Tourism Studies. He also taught in Canada, France, UK, Japan, and Brazil and China, and researched Canadian Inuit (1959–2014), Japan (since 1974), and China (since 1991). His work includes *Ethnic and Tourist Arts* (1976), *Japanese Domestic Tourism* (1983), *Anthropology of Tourism* (1983), *Multiculturalism in the New Japan* (2008), *Anthropology in the Age of Tourism* (2009), *Tourism and Glocalization* (2010), *Tourism Imaginaries: Anthropological Approaches* (2014), *Tourism Imaginaries at the Disciplinary Crossroads* (2016), *Tourism in (Post)Socialist Eastern Europe* (2017), and *Cultural Tourism Movements* (2018).

Maria Gravari-Barbas has a degree in Architecture and Urban Design (University of Athens, 1985) and a PhD in Geography and Planning (Paris IV – Sorbonne, 1991). She was Fellow at the Urban Program of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA (1990). She is the

director of the EIREST, a multidisciplinary research team dedicated to tourism studies, with main focus on cultural heritage, development, and urban-tourism evolutions. From 2008 to 2017 she was the director of the Institute for Research and High Studies on Tourism (Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes Supérieures du Tourisme, IREST) of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. Since 2009 she is the director of the UNESCO Chair of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University and the coordinator of the UNITWIN network 'Tourism, Culture, Development'. She is the author of several books and papers related to tourism, culture, and heritage.

Jean-François Staszak received his PhD in Geography at the Sorbonne University. After serving as Associate Professor in the Universities of Amiens (Northern France) and Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris), he became full Professor at the Geography Department of the University of Geneva (Switzerland). His early research focused on the history and epistemology of Geography, and then on economic and cultural Geography. His most recent work addresses geographical imaginaries in the fields of art and tourism, analysing the geographical othering process and especially the exotic. His understanding of the articulation of geographical representations, practices, and realities owes much to deconstructionist theories and to postcolonial and gender studies. Among his recent books: *Quartier réservé. Bousbir, Casablanca Genève,* Georg (2020)*, Simuler le monde. Panoramas, parcs à theme et autres dispositifs immersifs,* Genève, Métispresse (2019), *Frontières en tous genres. Cloisonnement spatial et constructions identitaires*, Rennes, PUR (2017), *Clichés exotiques. Le Tour du Monde en photographies 1860–1890*, Paris, De Monza (2015).

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Contents

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Chapter 6

The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux – a simulacrum of the 1914–1918 war?
Bertram M. Gordon
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Chapter 7

Simulacra architecture in relation to tourism: Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Glasgow and Antoni Gaudi in Barcelona
Yasmin Buchrieser
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Notes on Contributors

Roberto Bartholo, Technology and Social Development Laboratory - LTDS, COPPE/Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Bauer Bernhard, Consultant for socio-economic, cultural and tourism development, Vienna, Austria.

Yasmin Buchrieser, EIREST EA 7337, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France.

Canestrini Duccio, Sociology and Anthropology of Tourism, University Campus of Lucca, Pisa, Italy.

Bertram M. Gordon, Department of History, Mills College, Oakland, CA, USA.

Nelson Graburn, Department of Anthropology, University of Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA.

Maria Gravari-Barbas, IREST, EIREST, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, Paris, France.

Felipe Loureiro, Technology and Social Development Laboratory - LTDS, COPPE/Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Yael Padan, The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, London, UK.

Sandra Guinand, EIREST, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France; Institute of Geography and Regional Research, Vienna University, Vienna, Austria.

Jean-François Staszak, Geography Department of the University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland.

Lu Yue, EIREST, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France.

Introduction

simulacra, architecture, tourism and the Uncanny

Nelson Graburn, Gravari-Barbas Maria and Staszak Jean-François

Introduction

This is the first time in History that the same products are consumed in stores that are all the same, in any large city in the world.
Those architectural copies reflect the questions of our time:
the uprooting of cultures, the virtualization of our lives, marketing applied to heritage …
Such constructions are much more than concrete blocks built just to impress.
They are concrete utopia brought to life. They are the expression of a dream … '
Umberto Eco

Simulacra, architecture and tourism: a system analysis

The topic of this collection of papers builds on the articulation between simulacra, architecture and tourism. It rests squarely on the notion of *simulation* and the more specialized word *simulacra*. Thus, it is concerned with various forms of likeness or similarity, but *not* identity. The case studies presented examine and analyze different kinds of architectural copies, with varying relations to originals, even if the originals are themselves copies of previous originals. In some cases, we know little or nothing of the first in the series. It may even happen that the original did not actually exist.

This topic is therefore highly compatible with, derivative or even part of the history of architecture. Serious works on the history of architecture, as a whole (e.g. Copplestone & Seton, 1963; Renault & Lazé, 2006) or volumes concerned with particular cultural regions, temporal periods or artistic styles, focus on both continuity and creativity. A focus on simulacra concentrates more on the micro-interplay between copies and changes, or more generally, familiarity and alterity.

We can see the direct parallels with tourist motivations. Tourists are also looking for a balance of novelty and similarity, of alterity and familiarity. Tourism, in the European world, started in the seventeenth century with the Grand Tour, in which the upper class (youth) of Northern Europe spent months or a year traveling and visiting more southerly regions and the Mediterranean. This was a qualified alterity: the visitors, with guides or tutors, were visiting related civilizations, but ones strongly connected to their classical Romans and Greek

cultural ancestors, as rediscovered during the Renaissance[1] – which was itself an almost global effort to reconnect with historical and archaeological alterity and hence to build or consolidate identities. Thus the tourists were looking for experiences and landscapes that were different from home, yet familiar through the tourist imaginary built upon their classical education. Even within this purview they might find simulacra, in the many Roman copies of Greek originals, not only in architecture, but in culture and literature.

Since then there has emerged a wide range of kinds of tourists (Cohen, 1979; Graburn, 2017; Smith, 1977), among whom the vast majority are only seeking selected and temporary elements of otherness. As Graburn (1983a, pp. 22–23) pointed in the Introduction to the *Annals of Tourism Research* special issue on Anthropology, if tourism is considered a kind of ritual inversion (cf. Leach, 1961) then most tourists remain within a basically similar life style, and rarely choose to 'invert' more than a few factors, e.g. from a strict to a loose schedule, from formal to informal kinds of dress, or from sexual restraint to promiscuity. Few change their basic identity or sexual orientation, gender, name, religion, or their orientation to home and alterity, with the exception of Cohen's 'existentials' who may become self-exiles or migrants (1979).

The point here is that the tourists' conscious focus might be on obvious novelty or distinctions – of climate, food, leisure style, most of their orientations, like architectural simulations, remain within the realm of the familiar. Tourist photography, for instance, is a combination of recording the iconic distinctive features[2] of the environment or destination, as well 'the familiar out there' in the family or group photo, *kinen shashin*[3] and of course, 'selfies'.

Architecture: degrees of familiarity and strangeness

The cases described and analysed in this volume represent a whole range of 'copies,' that is the relationship between the buildings observed and some real or mythical original. Just as the meaning of simulacra has been subject to a wide range of interpretations in the literature, even Baudrillard (1981) considers four major types of relations between truth and hyperreality: (1) Basic reflections of reality, counterfeits, obvious fakes that draw attention away from reality (2) Perversions of reality, where there is multiple production of false images, differentiation is between signs, not signs and reality (3) Pretenses of reality, where there is no known original, and there we stop expecting to differentiate reality from fiction (4) Simulacra which bears no relation to reality – it is an invention *sui generis*; such 'copies' pretend to 'be reality' to build a false world view e.g. we know that Disneyland is not a 'real place' but it fools us into thinking that the rest of America is 'real.' So hyperreality is more real than real, in that it contains its own origin myth which does not/cannot be checked 'against reality.' Though Baudrillard focuses on Hollywood and American productions, we could read the same lessons from the Old World plethora of Santa Clauses or Crucifixes which embody the mythology that there was an original which is impossible to check. Applied to architectural situations, these layers or alternate ways of copying stretch our imagination on the variety of simulations and the nature of their alterities.

Baudrillard's and Eco's (1986) critiques of Disney theme parks and of the USA as the land of simulacra express a very European point of view, which might be suspected of

showing some elitist and Americanophobic bias. On the one hand and as we just mentioned, simulacra are the monopoly neither of the USA nor of postmodernity. On the other hand, they are important landmarks, visited by billions of people and much significant in popular culture (Gottdiener, 2001; Lukas, 2013, 2016). Visitors of theme parks and themed shopping malls genuinely enjoy these places as such. More attention (and respect?) should be paid to the visitors' motivations, pleasure and performance. Tourism studies have argued that the tourists should stop being seen as the 'idiot du voyage' (Urbain, 1991): accordingly, places that tourists love to visit should be taken seriously and not be reduced to and discredited because their alleged fakery.

The papers in this collection present examples of different kinds of 'copies' whereby a building, usually in or even central to a tourist destination, is knowingly some kind of copy of another building or architectural design usually elsewhere. The range of relationships of these buildings to their 'originals' far outspans the imagination and consideration of Baudrillard and others. Most of the planners of these destinations or the creators of these iconic buildings choose to construct them because the 'original' building or design is well known, and a tourist attraction in its right and presumably will lend 'fame,' an aura (Benjamin, 1936) and drawing power to the new destination. However, there are variations within this simple plan and some cases go well beyond this model.

The complexity of 'buildings as copies' becomes apparent where we begin to examine the nature of each of the components in the above model. The building or set of buildings under consideration are said to be copies of another building (or design). But the different dimensions of 'copies' should be analyzed in relation with the scope or the goal of the produced counterfeits, reinterpretations, pretenses of reality or pure creations (simulacra).

One simple dimension is *scale* – is the 'copy' under consideration the same size as the original, a miniature or a gigantic reproduction? Scale plays a major role indeed and the uncountable number of Eiffel towers around the world, from key holders to 'real' tourist attractions, may illustrate the different parallel lives of a major tourist icon.

Another dimension is the *nature of the copy*: an 'exact' replica, a copy that 'looks like' the original but differs on close inspection, a copy that is 'in the style or tradition of' the original, trending into a stereotype or caricature, often a commoditized model of some famous original. And here we have to ask, *who* would know or care about how exact or similar the copy is – the creators, the destination planners, the tourists from elsewhere or from the region of the original, or the locals in the destination?

Our task is extended by some of the examples in this collection and other possibilities. When a copy-building, called Duplitecture in one of the papers, actually *does not have an existing original*. It might be copied after a photograph or a painting of a building, a detailed description of it, a set of drawing or designs, a memory, a dream, a (historical) myth, a story or even just a name! And again we must ask, which of the many stakeholders know or think or believe in the similarity – and what do they think of it? The 'Haussmannian' buildings in Tianduncheng (China) are not 'copies' of any existing Haussmannian building in Paris but their quintessential reinterpretations. The fact they are *not* exact copies does not prevent the visitors from having 'real' impressions of being in a Parisian-style setting.

Again, we may focus on the *nature of the original*. Is it a unique original building, at least at the time it was copied, or it is a known kind of original, such as an English medieval castle or a triumphal arch? Even where there is a known unique original building, there

are debates about *what should be copied*; if a building changes or evolves over time, as most do, what is the 'real' original to be copied? In Japan there has been a debate about the preservation or copying of traditional *minka*, farm houses, whether the best pre-served example or copy should resemble the pure original design or the latest version with all the excrescences such as a car garage, TV antennae, electrification or so on (Ehrentraut, 1989, 1993).

And in our cases and others, the original may have been *unique but may no longer exist*, having been destroyed by nature (earthquakes, landslides, the sea), by enemy action or by modernization schemes. The nature and ability to copy depends on how long ago the building disappeared, was it copied or modeled, are there plans, or paintings or photo-graphs or good literary descriptions, or perhaps memories? Most of these latter questions are unanswerable only in the scope of experts and may be full of guesses.

And of course, a simulacrum does *not* need to refer to an original. The 'medieval' castle of Guédelon, in Burgundy, build with 'authentic' material according to the medieval ways of building, in a place in which a medieval castle could have been eventually built, does not refer to any precise castle. It summarizes the archetypal features of a mediaeval castle and succeeds into conveying a message that a ruined 'authentic' castle could not.

The role of tourism in the production of simulacra

It appears that copies, reinterpretations and simulacra are the essence of architecture. Architecture historians showed that the buildings of the antiquity, medieval or classic times have been, and still are, an endless inspiration for architects. What interests us here is however the role tourism played in this reinvention, as a modern phenomenon which interferes with architecture. From its beginnings, in the industrial revolution, an era that heralded the rapid urbanization of Western Europe, the phenomenon of mass tourism inspired built environments that have a constitutive, and sometimes problematic, relationship with the architectural references from which the draw their inspiration. On the one hand, such environments reinterpret architectural and urban archetypes such as the ancient palace, the Renaissance villa, or the Mediterranean village. On the other hand, they spatialize perceptions of utopia: among them, pristine environments, Shangri-La, El Dorado, Eden, and Paradise. In most cases these two situations occur simultaneously, creating idealized places inspired by dreamed or utopian ideas.

The analysis of Las Vegas hotels (Gravari-Barbas, 2001) offers an almost complete range of the source of inspirations – not only in

> Las Vegas, but as more general references of tourism settings. We found the most emblematic tourist cities (Paris (Hotel Paris Las Vegas), Venice (Hotel The Venetian), New York (Hotel New York, New York), Monte Carlo (hotel Monte Carlo); historical and geographical periods such as antique Rome (hotel Caesar's) or ancient Egypt (Hotel Luxor); 'exotic' worlds such as the Caribbean (hotel Treasure Island) or fairy worlds (Hotel Excalibur).

Tourists are not only the 'consumers' of these idealized worlds; they also co-produce and they constantly re-interpret them through their imaginaries and their practices. Non-Western practices of tourism are similarly inspired to build their simulacra based on their imaginaries of both the 'traditional Western world' (e.g. Shenzen, Windows on the World) and their virtual worlds (e.g. Hindu Temple theme parks). If these tourism worlds