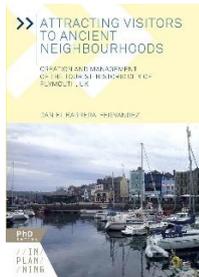


BOOK REVIEW



Attracting visitors to ancient neighbourhoods. Creation and management of the tourist-historic city of Plymouth, UK

Daniel Barrera-Fernández

(2016), PhD Series InPlanning, Groningen, The Netherlands
ISBN 978-94-91937-19-4, 290 pp.

Heritage tourism is a growing phenomenon in many cities that seek to diversify their economy in a context of crisis and obsolescence of industrial activities. Several examples can be found of cities that have renewed their historic areas to attract tourism after having suffered a process of physical displacement and population loss.

This process occurs in all latitudes, but it can be observed especially in Europe and Latin America, where a great number of historic cities have their heritage recognized by national and international protection figures. Nevertheless, common strategies are being equally applied by cities that have a less recognized cultural heritage. Daniel Barrera-Fernández analyses a regeneration process that is being adopted by historic cities to get inserted into the global economy through urban and cultural tourism-related activities.

Daniel Barrera-Fernández is a Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, Autonomous University of Oaxaca “Benito Juárez”. He is a member of the Mexican National Research System. He is the coordinator of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research (ATLAS) in Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean. His research interests focus on urban planning in historic cities, tourist use of built heritage, urban impact of cultural events, and sustainable mobility in heritage contexts.

The book “Attracting visitors to ancient neighbourhoods. Creation and management of the tourist-historic city of Plymouth, UK” was published in 2016 in Groningen, The Netherlands, by InPlanning, the publishing house of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP). The book has got 290 pages. It combines text with a rich diversity of pictures, tables, figures, and plans, which makes it easier for the reader to get the full image of the case study. The book is intended to practitioners, researchers and public servants specialized in the fields of tourism management, urban planning, heritage conservation and cultural policy. The e-issue can be downloaded from the publisher’s website (www.inplanning.eu/publications), where a hard copy can be purchased as well.

The book is structured in seven chapters. In the first of them, the author addresses the importance of heritage through its definition, the evolution of the concept in international doctrine, and its contextualization in the historic city.

In the second chapter, Dr. Daniel Barrera-Fernández presents the characteristics and tourist uses of the historic city in Europe, emphasizing the values of aesthetics and historicity as pillars that characterize the old neighborhoods. In relation to the tourist use of historic cities, he proposes a journey through its evolution, highlighting the growing interest since the 1970s in tourist activities based on cultural heritage.

In the third chapter, the author approaches the case study: the city of Plymouth, located in Devon, England. Thanks to its peculiar location, the city historically constituted a refuge at the entrance of the English Channel from the Atlantic Ocean. This fact made it consolidate over the centuries as a naval base of first order, controlling the Atlantic accesses to the United Kingdom and to the north of Europe. On the other hand, the city hosted several ports of relevance for emigration and commerce. In the tourist field, due to its own resources, the city has been a popular destination since the 19th century.

The fourth chapter shows the protection of urban heritage in the historic city of Plymouth. This chapter is divided into two parts, the first part presents an analysis of the evolution of the historic city's preservation and management. Part two is a study of the current situation regarding the conservation areas, which are the heritage protected areas according to English law. In the first part of the chapter, the prewar situation is addressed, together with the consequences of World War II and reconstruction planning by the Plan for Plymouth (Watson and Abercrombie, 1943). Opposition to the demolition of historic buildings is mentioned following the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris before the start of World War II. An important achievement in that time was the purchase and restoration by public subscription of the Elizabethan House, the first effectively protected building in the city. It is important to mention the context of before the war, when living conditions in Plymouth's old neighborhoods were extremely difficult and the street pattern was not adapted to car traffic, Plymouth being the most congested city in the UK after London. In the second part of the chapter, the author presents the current heritage protection framework in Plymouth's historic city, giving attention to the designation of conservation areas, heritage at risk records, and natural environment protection measures. Nine conservation areas have been designated under the Planning Act (1990) and previous regulations. In addition, there are currently 327 protected buildings.

The fifth chapter covers tourism in Plymouth's historic city. It begins with the history of the tourism sector in Plymouth, emphasizing four stages: the background of the prewar period, damage caused by war, recovery of activity, and changes in strategy from the 1960s to the 1980s. The author mentions that before World War II, Plymouth was a classic spa, attractive for its transoceanic connections and its artificial bathing facilities. Although many of them have become obsolete and degraded today, they constitute an important heritage and landscape attraction.

In the sixth chapter, Dr. Daniel Barrera-Fernández presents the actors and initiatives involved in the management of the tourist-historic city. Four groups of policies are distinguished: tourism, urban planning, cultural heritage, and economic development,

which influences urban regeneration, conservation of built heritage, and tourism promotion policies.

The conclusions are set out in the last chapter, in which the author highlights the contribution of the Plan for Plymouth, which on the one hand meant the replacement of a large part from the city centre but on the other served to create a new heritage, in this case around rationalist architecture.

The book highlights the analysis of the cultural heritage and tourism management frameworks in the city of Plymouth, the key role of all actors directly related to tourism, and the arduous field work carried out in the case study to present the changes brought by new tourist activities, and how these changes directly affect cultural heritage.

The research conducted by Dr. Daniel Barrera-Fernández is focused on tangible heritage in historic cities and how tourist dynamics affect urban heritage. As it was mentioned above, tourism represents nowadays a great source of income for many historic cities. In the case of Plymouth, tourism has been seen as an important resource to recover the city's vitality. The author explains how tourist activities have evolved and how the city adapts to these dynamics.

The book emphasizes the defense and enhancement of urban and architectural heritage and the absence of comprehensive strategic plans for their management, as well as the lack of balance between the actors involved in heritage protection. The book is a great contribution about the importance of historic heritage in tourism-related activities, which must be managed in accordance to heritage protection plans.

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