Title	Creating 'Heritage' in Theme Parks : The Case of Newly Constructed Ancient Towns in China [an abstract of dissertation and a summary of dissertation review]
Author(s)	,
Citation	. ( ) 15338
Issue Date	2023-03-23
Doc URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2115/89366
Rights(URL)	https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Type	theses (doctoral - abstract and summary of review)
Additional Information	There are other files related to this item in HUSCAP. Check the above URL.
File Information	Wang_Chujun_abstract.pdf ( )

Instructions for use

学位論文内容の要旨

博士の専攻分野の名称：博士（観光学）　　　　　氏名：王　楚君

学位論文題名

Creating 'Heritage' in Theme Parks:
The Case of Newly Constructed Ancient Towns in China
(テーマパークにおける「遺産」の創造：中国の新築古鎮を例に)

　　This thesis examines the how heritage is 'created', exemplified in the case of a theme park in China. The paradigm chosen for the thesis can be found in a critical realist view of authenticity. The thesis proposes a stratified ontological view of authenticity in the case of newly constructed ancient towns.
The case examined in this thesis is the Gubei Water Town (GBWT), located in northern Beijing, China, and the data examines the perspective of different actors, including authorities, visitors, employees, and residents. The data is collected through multiple sources; official documents, interviews in news media, textual and visual data from social media sites, and observation and interview data collected in situ. The analysis of policy documents also contributes the perspective of different levels of governance and tourism development agencies. The study shows how the authenticating and de-authenticating practices of these different actors have 'created' a heritage site from a newly built theme park.

　　In general, this thesis can be evaluated as one a top-quality students' achievement. The topic is intriguing because it is related with convergence and unification of theme parks and heritage, which may represent typical features of the current condition of society and culture. Secondly, a satisfactorily comprehensive review of previous literature is conducted, in terms of both theoretical and practical studies. Thirdly, there is dense accumulation of field work data provided to persuasively support the argument. Lastly, one of the factors for the force of this thesis is that it is based on the author's private experience of the newly constructed ancient towns (hereafter NCATs), honestly acknowledging the touristic attraction and impact of the themed heritage sites, and reflexively analyzing and criticizing the phenomenon surrounding the NCATs from various aspects.

　　The thesis is fluently written, and it gives the reader rationale for each section along the way, signposting and summarizing the different themes investigated. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the thesis, and it locates the need for the work both academically and personally for the candidate. Chapters 2 and 3 lays the theoretical foundation for the work by discussing firstly heritage, and secondly theme parks, and finally by combining the two in the light of NCATs. The chapters present epistemological thoughts around heritage and theming, with the inevitable division between so called 'real' and 'fake' being discussed. However, the analysis is also enlightened by critical heritage studies that shows how all heritage is selected by, in many cases dominant interests in societies, and how a more democratic understanding of heritage could be needed. The candidate uses Baudrillard's triad of counterfeit / production / simulation as a way investigating different types of NCATs before locating the own study.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the thesis' paradigmatic, theoretical, and methodological assumptions. These three separate chapters, which in a 'classic five chapter' thesis, all would have made up one whole constitute the thesis strongest sections. Dichotomies such as 'real and fake', 'official and unofficial', or 'local and visitor', are all building on modernist epistemologies that presume that the social world act in the same way as natural sciences does. By adopting a critical realist paradigm these dichotomies are unraveled, and the reader is instead presented with a stratified ontology that consists of an empirical domain (events that can be experienced), an actual domain (events that are generated by mechanisms), and a real domain (mechanisms and structures with endearing properties). This lays the foundation for a new way of investigating authenticity by locating emergent properties in top-down, and bottom-up authentication. The reader is finally presented with critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis as the methodologies chosen to suit the case and the paradigm.

Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 represent the thesis' results and discussion, conveniently divided into different chapters to focus in order from the most powerful stakeholder, to the least powerful. Chapter 7 presents how authorities have defined and re-defined heritage through the past 50 years in China, and how this have created the foundation for NCATs to be perceived as heritage. Chapter 8 presents how the local authorities and the corporation building GBWT gradually have changed their discourse from presenting the site as a theme park to slowly referring to it as a heritage site. Chapter 9 investigates how bloggers are influencing popular perception of the site in a seemingly bottom-up manner, whereas it in many cases is also orchestrated in a top-down fashion. Finally, chapter 10 explores how tourists and locals perceive GBWT, and how their voices have been marginalized, and co-opted into following official discourses.

The thesis demonstrates a deep theoretical engagement with concepts such as ontology and epistemology, while it also shows an effort to integrate axiology. This is an important contribution, since heritage (and also authenticity) have been often discussed in ether objective or subjective terms. The willingness to engage with critical realism shows that phenomena that are apparently constructed can instead envisage strong bases in a realist approach. The author reflects on their viewpoint and role in the text and exemplifies complicated concepts with multiple visual examples.

The academic contribution of the thesis in the scientific field of tourism is that it succeeds in presenting new materials by combining critical heritage studies and theming. Findings that highlight the different interrelated domains of reality that constitute what previously has been seen as something 'black and white'. And finally in developing original theories where authenticity and authentication are considerably updated from previous understandings.

Regarding the public significance, it can be positioned as high-quality research that has added new knowledge to the study of heritage tourism and authenticity, which are well-researched and relatively large areas of research. Despite this, the author of this dissertation succeeds in adding new knowledge. As previously mentioned, this area of research tends to be dominated by subjective conceptualizations, which end up reducing the agency of local populations and other stakeholders. Realist interpretations, especially the ones based on critical realism, shed an important light on the necessity of approaches that acknowledge a common reality and structures exercising powers on people.

As for demonstration, this doctoral thesis shows that from a basis of qualitative and highly textual data, interpreted through a very complicated theoretical perspective, concrete recommendations, and practical implications can be made.

This work is quite extensive and needs a clear structure to guide the reader. The text is well written and easy to read, but there are some weak points that necessitate revision. The place of axiology in this dissertation is unclear and seems to be placed in the argument without really belonging there. It seems that axiology does not receive as much attention as epistemology and ontology. Furthermore, there is some confusion surrounding "discourse." The concept is not really defined when the term is first introduced. The author talks about discourse as if it were a well-known concept. Discourse is also said to be part of the intransitive dimension of reality, which locates it into the domain of the real.