

Preface

Since the controversial success of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao tourism related to contemporary architecture gained importance for national and local economies around the globe. Provoked by the so-called 'Bilbao effect', Frausto and Ockman (2005) organised a conference in 2002 about the interdependencies of tourism and architecture while coining the term "architourism." Consisting of a collection of essays and articles from authors of different professional and academic backgrounds the elaborate conference proceedings were amongst the first volumes concentrating exclusively on the topic. However, although several conference proceedings and a few scientific articles explicitly mentioning architectural tourism demonstrate an upward trend of academic interest, most research is still based on theoretical observation or the authors' personal experiences. Therefore, Ritchie and Crouch (2003) pointed out a large number of destinations seeking transformation, and argued that "anecdotal evidence alone is not sufficient and, indeed, may seem confusing" (p. 10). As a matter of fact, several authors have noted a lack of research in contemporary architectural tourism. In 1993, Gaebe (1993) had already claimed that there was a lack of studies analysing the extent to which contemporary buildings in an urban context were perceived by cultural tourists as an attraction (p. 67). Almost fifteen years later, in his doctoral dissertation about architectural tourism and its influence on urban design, Shaw (2007) still argued that there was little academic research related to architourism outside of Bilbao (p. 77). Grötsch (2006) pointed out the obvious importance of aesthetics as travel motivation and wondered at the lack of research (p. 280). Chang (2010) also asked for more research on architectural tourism (p. 970). With reference to "architourism", Gruen (2006) reasoned that "it is too early to speculate about whether the term sticks, but at the very least, architecture should now be considered a legitimate topic of scholarly inquiry into tourism" (p. 5). On the contrary, Bijlsma, van Dijk and Geerts (2004) believed that "a considerable amount of research has been carried out on architecture and the tourist city... issues such as identity, city branding, heritage, and theories such as the tourist gaze and the generic city come to mind when architecture and tourism are considered in the urban context" (p. 2).

Indeed, reviewing the most recent literature, it becomes clear that it is not the quantity of publications, but the types and the focus areas of the existing research that are the main issue. For instance, literature on urban tourism is vast, and the obvious importance of architecture in an urban context allowed for its reference within most of the publications. However, the majority of statements are based neither on comprehensive field studies, nor on research specifically looking into the phenomenon of architecture as a destination, and even less are on contemporary buildings in an urban context. So far, historical monuments are more likely to meet the interest or expertise of tourism researchers, with the result of a comprehensive number of publications within and without the urban context. On the other hand, the few publications focusing specifically on contemporary architecture as a destination or a tourism attraction mainly deal with special cases or individual architectures. Such are often selected iconic buildings like the Guggenheim Bilbao and the Sydney Opera House, or spectacular ensembles such as the Millennium Architecture of London, the architectures of Disney, or the gambling city of Las Vegas. Yet, few authors showed specific interest in contemporary architectural tourism as a distinct segment of tourism.

Architecture is characterised by an enduring presence that forms our environment and exerts an important impact on a destination's image in the mind of both residents and visitors. Furthermore, architecture always evolves from a local, temporal and cultural context. Where modesty might be suitable for one destination, spectacular architecture could be a transformation catalyst or unique selling point for another. Therefore, project developers need to be aware of the local situation as well as the reciprocal relationship between the modern practice of tourism and the built environment. In the words of Urry (2002), "architects and architectural practices are of major importance in shaping the contemporary tourist gaze" (p. 111).

Given my educational background with studies of architecture, as well as of recreation and tourism science, the importance of the relationship between architecture and tourism seemed to be perfectly evident to me. Yet, it still took me a long time to realise the practical and scientific need of research. During my time as a consultant in the Middle East, from late 2007 until early 2009, I have been involved in a range of projects related

to the development and management of tourism facilities. To my surprise, most of these projects were based on little knowledge about the interdependencies between architecture and tourism, and none of the involved parties appeared to really understand what was attracting tourism and what tourists were expecting from different types and functions of architecture. Instead, all seemed to be a huge intuitive experiment, driven by money and politics, if not testosterone. However, starting to review the literature, there was not much evidence about the mutual interdependencies between architecture and tourism either – in particular regarding contemporary developments. Experts in both tourism and (contemporary) architecture seemed to be reserved towards the “other’s” discipline. Hence, there was limited knowledge to rely on for both scientists and practitioners, such as: potential tourism developers, urban planners, architects and investors. Yet, without fundamental and specific knowledge about the reciprocal relationship between the modern practice of tourism and the built environment, the development of destinations by means of contemporary architecture is left to chance. This is an unsustainable situation considering the enduring impacts of architecture and the vast financial investments required by such projects.

The objective of the present book is to contribute to the knowledge of the mutual interdependencies between tourism and (contemporary) architecture. Interrelating a wide variety of further disciplines, such as urbanism, geography, economics, marketing, sociology and psychology it strives for insights about the role of contemporary architecture in mostly urban tourism destinations. Therefore, following the introductory chapter, the book is organised along four key questions:

- What are the interdependencies between tourism and the built environment? (see Chapter 2)
- How does architectural tourism relate in a spatial and temporal urban context? (see Chapter 3)
- How can contemporary architecture influence the image of an urban destination? (see Chapter 4)
- Why is (contemporary) architectural tourism dominated by spectacle? (see Chapter 5)

Of course, involving at least two different entities relationships are complex per se, and in the present case, there are far more of them (see Stevenson, 2010, p. 1499). Hence, in the face of the dynamic nature and the complexity of the relationships between architecture, tourism and the urban space, one might ask whether conclusive answers are even feasible and whether a constantly growing puzzle of interconnected topics and terms is ever to be finished. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the following chapters aim to bring some light into this tangle, describing types and qualities of some of the most critical relationships. Based on a comprehensive literature review, the role of contemporary architecture in urban tourism destinations will be explored. Architectural tourism will be controversially discussed and set into a broader context, including a wide variety of disciplines and examples from different periods and regions.

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