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INTEGRATING THE CONCEPT OF TERRITORIAL HERITAGE IN ANDALUSIAN TOURISM POLICY

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Abstract

This research aims to measure the integration of the concept of territorial heritage, which has been widely supported over the last decades by scholars and international organizations, into tourism policies. This stems from the premise that understanding heritage from an innovative and integral perspective can favour territorial development; as only in this way will it be possible to overcome the continuous disagreements between different sectoral policies, such as those related to tourism and heritage. For this purpose, a methodological proposal is applied in two multi-scale case studies: the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, and the district of Sierra de Cádiz. First and foremost, we report on the current 'state of play' with regard to territorial heritage and development policies. Secondly, a public policies analysis takes place, considering tourism as one of the matters that have a more direct impact on the transformation of assets in resources for territorial development. Subsequently, a semiotic analysis of the tourist promotional image is carried out. The results show that the idea of territorial heritage is basically incorporated to the regional policies at a discursive level, except in the case of promotion, where it is present more explicitly. However, while local administrations don't address the incorporation of this concept in the promotional material, the problem is best solved in practice at this scale, as the territorial perspective has been adopted in programs and strategies. Finally, this research contributes to the consideration of the potential of management of heritage from a territorial perspective, as it supports stronger interrelationship between administrations.

Keywords

Territorial heritage, Heritage management, Tourism policy, Tourist image, Multi-scalar analysis

Introduction

Throughout the last century, the concept of heritage, which is a mutable notion that is understood differently according to each historical-cultural context, has been recently undergoing continuous change based primarily on the integration of new values and a spatial expansion. Profound social, cultural, economic or technological changes have generated the need to redefine the idea of heritage from the valorisation of isolated elements to the so-called cultural heritage, and from this to the recently understanding of the land as an object with heritage interest. During the last decades, academic studies have attempted to analyse this concept and its connotations, especially in southern Europe. In the Spanish-Latin sphere the term territorial heritage has been widely used to refer to the idea of land as an area whose values are determined by the combination of natural and cultural, material and immaterial resources located on it, as well as the relationships among them. At the same time, in a context increasingly conditioned by neoliberal globalization, the enhancing of new values to heritage has resulted in its recognition as a catalyst for economic and social development, which has to be invested in (Coombe, 2013; López et al., 2017; Martínez, 2008; Mulero, 2015; Molina & Pascual, 2016; Castillo, 2009; Rodríguez & Sevilla, 2017; Calderón y García, 2016). In this sense, some authors took note of the meaning of heritage as an economic resource susceptible to exploitation, among others, through tourist activity (Pillet, 2011; Fernández & Guzmán, 2004; Martínez, 2008; Troitiño & Troitiño, 2018). Therefore, the logics of tourism have been present in many academic works on the potential of heritage for territorial development (Prentice, 1993; Prats, 2006). In the administrative field, this process require, however, overcoming the traditional sectoral political perspective and fragmented management existing in the Global North (Castillo, 2009; Calderón & García, 2016; Dahlberg, 2015; Wall-Reinius et al., 2019), as it is the only possible way to ensure that heritage has a prominent role in the construction of the future of societies (Troitiño & Troitiño, 2018).

These academic contemporary theories imply the initial premises of this research. Thus, the main objective is to look for new tools to help with the development of certain peripheral European regions that, while being among the most disadvantaged areas in social and economic terms, have an enormous wealth of heritage. This limited development has contributed to the maintenance of large spaces with low rates of anthropization, as well as a good conservation of the traces of the past. Hence, there is an opportunity to make heritage an alternative vector of development capable of answering the needs of these regions, reversing their current situation in terms of progress. Then, departing from the recent territorial approaches for heritage (see Latarjet, 1992; Magnaghi, 2000; Ortega, 1998; Fera, 2013; Pillet, 2011; Mulero, 2015; Troitiño, 2013; Troitiño & Troitiño, 2018) and integrating a tourism vision to make it a productive resource (Troitiño et al., 2005; Prats, 2006; García & Calle, 2012; Troncoso, 2013; Troitiño, 2015; Cors et al., 2018), this research evaluates the incorporation of the concept of territorial heritage into tourism-related policies in a region that is both one of the main tourist destinations in Europe and a place with a GDP per capita well below the community average.

Literature Review

Throughout the whole of the twentieth century, several changes took place in the concept of heritage, from the idea of monument to cultural asset, the incorporation of urban contexts, or the recognition of the immateriality of heritage. In the last decades, the continuous evolution from a segmented vision to an integration of environmental and social dimensions has resulted in the understanding of heritage in terms of integral system (Feria, 2013), or even in the definition of the concept of territorial heritage in the academic literature. This implies overcoming certain notions of scale, or expanding the categories of assets to be protected, moving from the evaluation and interpretation of elements in the land to the interpretation of the land as heritage in itself. Thus, the term refers to the understanding of the geographical space as an object with values, as it is the result of the permanent interaction between humans and nature (Ortega, 1998; Mascari et al., 2009; Capel, 2014; Florido, 2013; Calderón y García, 2016; López et al., 2017; Carta, 2010; Román y González, 2019; Manero, 2019).

In addition, in the second half of the last century, the reinforcement of development policies based on singular resources contributed to increasing the significance of lands (Bianchi, 2017; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). In this regard, heritage contributes to the emergence of new possibilities for territorial development, and the patrimonial conception of the land helps to it has undergone a profound revaluation in development processes. Consequently, land has become conceived as a resource for economic, social or cultural development (Laven et al., 2005; Castillo, 2009; Silva & Fernández, 2017). Thus, heritage in a territorial perspective become a productive resource in the postmodern economy (Graham et al., 2000; Harvey, 2019), serving sectors such as tourism through functional adjustment and promotion (Pillet, 2011; Fernández & Guzmán, 2004; Martínez, 2008; Troitiño and Troitiño, 2018; López et al., 2017; Mulero, 2015; Molina & Pascual, 2016; Castillo, 2009; Rodríguez & Sevilla, 2017). In this respect, heritage plays a key role in both (i) the content of the tourist offer and (ii) the configuration of tourism images, as projection of singular, easily recognizable assets encourages the process of choosing destinations by potential visitors (Andreu et al., 2000; Novo et al., 2013).

The interrelation between heritage and tourism can generate feedback in which, on the one hand, heritage configures the tourist destination (Troncoso, 2013; Bertoncello, 2015), and on the other hand, tourism gives new uses to assets and spaces (Almirón et al., 2006; Prats & Santana, 2011; Calderón & García, 2016). This process involves the tourism commodification of heritage, or even of land; however, there is a great difficulty in handling both subjects in a coordinated way, as two different rationalities are faced (Azadeh et al., 2020). The first is that of the market, which pursues profitability from a short-term point of view. The other is the cultural one, focused on the defense and preservation of values (Velasco, 2009). Hence, this fact can bring the generation of dichotomies that result in substantial alterations of places and a loss in heritage values (Hernández, 2015; Coombe, 2013).

Objectives and Methods

The aim of this research is to evaluate to what extent the concept of territorial heritage has been incorporated to public policies related to tourism at different administrative scales. We

start from the idea that heritage management from a territorial, integrative perspective is the only way to overcome disagreements between sectoral policies and thus to achieve greater territorial development. To this end, a methodological proposal based on exhaustive clerical work and detailed fieldwork is established. In this respect, an analysis of tourism-related policies (i.e. management and promotion) takes place. First, by using documentary review techniques and adapting the proposal model for the tourism policy analysis of Velasco (2007), instruments launched by public administrations are analysed: (i) legislation, (ii) organizational structures, (iii) plans, (iv) strategies and programs, and (v) products generated. Subsequently, a study of the images used in tourist promotion is carried out by means of semiotic analysis, employing techniques that allow systematizing and analysing the visual information included in promotional pictures in statistical terms, according to previously defined categorizations. This is a process repeatedly used in academia (see Urry, 2002; Edelheim, 2007; Milman, 2011; Foroudi et al., 2020).

To do so, we follow a typical case study that is defined by two geographical levels: (i) the Autonomous Community of Andalusia; and (ii) the district of Sierra de Cádiz. These areas are characterized by high unemployment levels and rurality, while having a remarkable potential in terms of heritage and they have a very popular tourist image.

Results

The Regional Scale

The analysis of the tourism policies set in motion in Andalusia forces us to study the Junta de Andalucía, which is the responsible public organism in terms of management and promotion since 1981. This entity has launched two general laws and multiple decrees whose Explanatory Memorandums attend a territorial reading of heritage, however, this does not occur in the subsequent articles. Regarding organizational structures in Andalusia, tourism administrations have never been linked to the management and protection of heritage at regional scale, which is an area that largely continues to have a protectionist perspective against tourism (e.g. cultural assets management plans). This is true although the four approved general tourism plans in the region have repeatedly called for the need to find synergies and cooperation between different administrations with competences for heritage and its uses, even integrating concrete proposals for landscape management from a tourist perspective. Similarly, most of the tourism projects and strategies carried out in recent decades have included the territorial perspective of heritage in their drafting, although this has not been fully addressed in practice. Finally, in a study of narratives of the tourist products generated by the Regional Ministry, we find that only one out of every four tourist routes designed responds to a territorial perspective of heritage.

Regarding tourism promotion policies, it has been found that the Andalusian current projected images are the result of a romantic inherence. That means that the most representative images of regional promotion emerge from the collective imagery that took shape during the 18th and 19th centuries. These pictures show holistic images, where landscapes and the relationship between monuments and surroundings are the main characters.

The Local Scale

For its part, at local level, the legislative regulations approved in the 19 municipalities that compose the district of Sierra de Cádiz are very diverse. Nevertheless, several ordinances for the tourist activity explicitly incorporate the concept of territorial heritage. Hence, tourism stands out as the only matter that incorporates the territorial perspective of heritage into regulations at local level. In addition, the distribution of powers in the city councils shows the existence of a widespread view of the capacity of tourism to achieve local development through the use of cultural assets (i.e. combining responsibilities for both matters in the same department), while natural heritage is relegated even though some of the most important natural spaces in the region include entire municipalities. For its part, the analysis of the four tourism plans promoted by supra-municipal entities in the district reveals that half of them did include a territorial perspective of heritage, both at the discursive level and the proposed actions. In the same way, in all the municipal plans for tourism, most of actions linked to heritage have a territorial reading.

It is paradoxical to see how only 8.86 percent of tourism promotional images at local scale serve views where heritage presents territorial values, while material cultural assets represent almost a third of the advertising instruments edited by the public bodies in Sierra de Cádiz.

Conclusions

The case study illustrates that today there is no a genuine incorporation of the concept of territorial heritage into legislative and operative instruments undertaken by tourism administrations. Indeed this incorporation is unequal, and shows a variable scenario both regarding the kind of policy (i.e. management and promotion) and the scale (i.e. regional and local).

At regional scale, the integration of the concept has been mainly limited to the theoretical discourse, however, this fact has not been reflected at the operational level. This phenomenon happens in legislative instruments, general plans, and projects carried out by sectoral institutions that are accountable to supranational entities (i.e. European Commission) and have very limited functions. Thereby, our findings suggested that these instruments have to progress toward more holistic discursive perspectives, following approaches presented in documents such as the European Landscape Convention or the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). On another note, according to recent scholar approaches, we find a link between our results and the inability of institutional frameworks to include perspectives that require overcoming the traditional segmentation. That is why, although some instruments demand the configuration of synergies and a larger inter-administrative coordination, the organizational structures don't show transversal approaches in a framework that continue to be structured in a sectoral way. So, in cultural or natural administrations, a traditional view continues to prevail, understanding assets in an individual and isolated manner, resulting in a tourism policy without territory-based view. In this way, new appreciations of territorial heritage generated in the academic field have scarcely been incorporated into the contemporary regional public action.

In contrast with what happens at regional scale, locals administrations have not dealt with the territorial perspective of heritage at theoretical level, however, its incorporation has been better solved in practice. Despite the fact that these entities have continued to support segmented models, they have included certain modifications, as well as they have implemented actions defined by more integrative perspectives. This is the case, for example, with regard to local plans, as they talk about assets and spaces and the relationships between them in a more comprehensive way. In turn, these instruments defend tourism as the matter that best handles this at operative level. Thus, we find evidence that local organisms have sought to adapt to facilitate their operability, even overcoming the traditional dividing lines between responsibilities. There is no doubt that the closest administrations to the citizens has formulated more cooperative, integrative models, demonstrating that it is at the local level where the processes of patrimonial management of the land have to take place, and which offer more guarantees of sustainability (Bianchi, 2017).

However, the tendency is paradoxically reversed in tourism promotion policies. In a tourist market dominated by the visual, the need to project images based on difference, linked to the symbolism of lands, and therefore linked to heritage, has been established all around the world. In the West, these images are based on a synthesis of the romantic iconography that was defined through a descriptive perspective of lands by foreigner who studied regions from a holistic perspective. And these ideas have continued to date in large-scale promotion (i.e. state and regional levels). Nevertheless, our study contributes to claim that the closer to the land the public management related to heritage is, the less present the concept of territorial heritage is in the tourism promotion. Thus, we find interesting correspondences between this data and the existence of a clear trend towards municipalism in Spanish rural areas.

This research, to sum up, provides a series of tools for the analysis of the dysfunctions between the public policies and the theorization of the territorial concepts of heritage, presenting a practical model that can act as a theoretical and methodological guide to further evaluative research.

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