

Heritage Management Challenges in Historic Town of Ludlow, England

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Submitted: Aug 11, 2013; **Accepted:** Sep 18, 2013; **Published:** Sep 22, 2013

Abstract: The concept of heritage management appears ambiguous and the perceptions of it are varied, depending on the interests of the stakeholders involved, conservationists, heritage managers, visitors, private sector, local communities and local authorities will all have their different views. Research on heritage management has tended to look at the values, motivations and expectations of visitors and at the process of managing heritage facilities or a heritage town. The principal issue is controversial domain in heritage management in historic town due to different perspectives among stakeholders and lack of integration among them. This paper intended to explore the role of key stakeholders in managing and promoting heritage tourism in historic town and the interaction among stakeholders. The town of Ludlow, South Shropshire, England was selected as a case study. The study adopted qualitative approach involving semi structured interviews with appointed officials and heritage managers, direct observation in selected case studies and also engaging with the events held in Ludlow. Finally, the key findings revealed the spectrum of challenges in heritage management is not primarily due to stakeholder roles but includes the morphology of the town and heritage ownership.

Key words: Heritage • Heritage management • Stakeholders • Challenges • Ludlow • England

INTRODUCTION

Heritage buildings, monuments and culture promote a feeling of pride in the nation because they contribute towards a sense of place and remind us of past history as we move towards the future. Heritage resources attract tourism and tourism may revitalize the towns in which it takes place as explained by [1] in their concept of the 'tourist-historic city'. Today, heritage tourism in an urban context can also be beneficial in boosting the local and national economy and in revitalizing historic places and their surroundings. There are social, political and economic dimensions to the development of the heritage 'industry', as it has often now become. Much heritage management research has focused on the definition of heritage, dissonance of heritage and the commodification of heritage [2-9]; or on heritage motivation, visitor management, resource management and staff management [10-14], as well as on integrated heritage management [15-17]. emphasized many heritage management problems are caused by a lack of interaction

among stakeholders. Furthermore, they indicated that heritage management is a process which needs to be integrated with values and journeys of people's lives. Yet, limited studies on the different roles and motivation of stakeholders in managing and promoting heritage tourism in historic town associated to challenges in heritage management. Thus this paper aim to explore the role of key stakeholders in managing and promoting heritage and how they interacts and collaborate in small English historic town in England.

The Importance of Heritage: Built heritage, cultural heritage and contemporary culture are the strongest product driver in most overseas markets and is the highest rated attribute when perceiving Britain as a tourist destinations. Heritage resources are irreplaceable and non-renewable; they require conservation and good management. The broad field of heritage values, questions of whose heritage and for whom heritage is commodified are the major issues in developing heritage as a 'product' which thus requires 'heritage management',

with all its complexities. Although the term ‘heritage’ seems easy to understand, when looked at in greater depth, it can be more difficult to define. The Oxford English Dictionary refers to heritage as ‘property that is or may be inherited’, ‘valued things that have been passed down from previous generations’ and ‘a special or individual possession’. Heritage can be regarded as anything that someone wishes to conserve or to collect and to pass on to future generations [18]. Yet what is meant by ‘anything’ can vary widely. Since the 1970s, the term heritage has been used increasingly to refer to cultural and natural heritage such as historic buildings and landscapes that are to be preserved and passed on for future generations [19]. Traditionally, scholars who study heritage have come from disciplines that study some of the phenomena and artefacts that are commonly collected and conserved. Heritage also has been seen as an urban product, an assemblage of selected resources bound together by interpretation [2]. [3]: identified five aspects of the expanded meaning of heritage: a synonym for any relict or physical survival of the past; the idea of individual and collective memories in terms of non-physical aspects of the past when viewed from the present; all accumulated cultural and artistic productivity; the natural environment; and a major commercial activity such as the heritage industry. As can be seen, there are two views on heritage: one that regards it primarily as physical attractions (museums, landmarks, historic structures) and one that sees heritage tourism as a valuable experience as well as an activity with an educational dimension.

Who Owns the Heritage and the Key Stakeholders in Heritage Management?: Heritage means ‘that which has been or may be inherited’ but an important question is

‘who owns the heritage now’? The concepts of inheritance and ownership are different. Inheritance can refer to something that has been or might be passed down while ownership can refer to being the guardian of the heritage. It is important to understand who owns the heritage in order to manage the heritage resources. [20] used a three sector classification for the ownership of different type of heritage attractions: public, private and voluntary. Each sector has its own goals and motivations, as shown in Table 1.

According to [20], the public and voluntary sectors are mainly concerned with conservation and education while for the private sector, the primary motivations are said to be mainly profit and recreation. Yet the types of attraction owned by each sector are often similar between sectors, for example, museums, which can be in public, private and voluntary sector ownership. According to [21], public ownership means a site is owned and possibly operated by a government department or agency such as a National Park Service. In the UK, English Heritage is the official government agency responsible for promoting and preserving England’s historic buildings and monuments. In the voluntary sector, the goals appear to be to earn enough revenue for the conservation and maintenance of the property. The National Trust is the non-profit organisation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that has fully undertaken its responsibilities for the conservation and preservation of heritage attractions by gaining funds from membership fees and donations, entrance fees and other sales revenues. Finally, some heritage sites, for example, in the museums and historic sectors, may be run in partnership between public sector and voluntary organisations. The motivations of different owners are varied and this will affect their approach to heritage management.

Table 1: Ownership of heritage attractions

Sector	Examples of attractions owned	Primary and secondary motivation for ownership
Public	Ancient monuments	Primary - conservation
	Archaeological ruins	
	Historic buildings	Secondary - public access, education, revenue, catalyst for tourism development
	Parks	
	Forests	
	Museums	
Private	Historic theme parks	Primary - profit
	Museums	
	Wineries and distilleries	Secondary - boost visitation, entertainment, public image enhancement
	Culture centres	
	Art galleries	
	Industrial plants and mines	
Voluntary	Historic buildings	Primary - conservation by self-sufficiency
	Museums	
	Heritage centres	Secondary - entertainment, education
	Trails	

Source: Adapted from Swarbrooke (1995)

A number of key stakeholders play an important role in managing heritage resources. The stakeholders may vary depending on the type of heritage product, its setting and the activities involved. This can be exemplified, as shown by [22] in the triangular interaction of visitors, places and host communities, which are the major elements in all approaches to tourism management. According to [23], the four main stakeholders involved in decision-making at visitor destinations are residents; elected representatives; government officials; and business providing directly and indirectly for visitors and other users. Collaboration, co-operation and partnership among key stakeholders in heritage management have received growing attention in the literature for example [15, 17, 24-28].

Heritage Management Issues and Challenges: Heritage management is recognised as an increasingly complex and controversial domain. Researchers, conservationists and heritage managers face pressure in determining the most appropriate methods of conservation and management. Questions of identity, meaning and values indicate the likelihood of there being conflicting notions of ownership attached to heritage and therefore conflicting sets of values and interests with which the heritage manager has to contend. An explanation for these conflicts lies in the notion of ‘dissonance heritage’ [29]. This implies a discordance or lack of agreement and consistency that allows new classifications to be constructed based on the type of dissonance perceived. However, analogies with musical or psychological harmony imply that, where dissonance occurs, there will be a tendency for people to adjust behaviour in order to achieve or regain harmony [30]. The recognition of these features as part of the concept of heritage management means that behaviour is, or should be, managed with sensitivity towards the incidence of dissonance.

[16] have shown that the nature of heritage management has changed over the years, reflecting society’s changing relationship with heritage. In the 1970s, heritage management was concerned with the conservation of heritage resources but as government funding declined in the 1980s, attention became mainly focused on visitors. Then, in the 1990s and 2000s, the allocation of resources became the main concern, while the concern has shifted to stakeholders partnership and collaboration in heritage management in the 2000s and subsequently. The context of heritage management reveals tension and issues. The possible ‘problem’ of heritage arises from the fact that heritage can be a

sensitive topic. Generally, heritage is defined as ‘that is which inherited from the past’, yet ‘inherited from the past’ is a fragile concept. Indeed, valued historical buildings will be exposed to danger if visited by too high a volume of tourists: the result of a destination exceeding its carrying capacity. The realisation of this has been a major factor in the development of the heritage management approach, which aims to secure and sustain the valued assets being managed and also to maximize the quality of the visitors’ experience. According to [31], heritage is subjective and vague depending on one’s perception. The definition of the term can encompass many characteristics, ranging from the physical attributes of an historic site to the quality of the experience of visiting it.

In urban regeneration, is it appropriate to preserve the layout and facades of older buildings while gutting and transforming them internally for twenty-first century activities? These and similar dilemmas have implications for the management of historic buildings and cities in the longer term [29]. The movement for heritage conservation and changing aesthetic taste, which are evident in many countries of the world, has influenced the selection of what is to be conserved. Moreover, the challenge to those responsible is to make the best selection of the existing heritage resources to be interpreted to the nation, visitors and other users. Research on heritage management has tended to look at the values, motivations and expectations of visitors and at the process of managing heritage facilities or a heritage town. [15] investigated the major constraints and imperatives relating to the long-term management of built heritage attractions in the United Kingdom. There is resonance between the strong emphasis on conservation and the notion of sustainability. Drawing on twenty-five years of research into tourism planning and management in Cambridge UK, [32] explored how strategic aims are derived, focusing on the balance between local and external influences and how policies to implement the aims are developed. His conclusion was that locality factors and the role of local regimes and policy communities are more important than national government policy in accounting for aims and policies.

Methodology: This paper opted for a case study in the setting of a small heritage town, to investigate the real phenomenon of stakeholder responsibilities, goals and ownership in managing heritage resources and heritage town. [33] observes that case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in

question. Thus, although the focus of the present study is on heritage tourism, it was recognized that even what we refer to as a 'heritage town' is much more complex than this. A town has its own history and development; its own population and a range of economic activities, some or even many of which may not be related to its present-day function as a tourism destination. These characteristics must be recognized and respected and the concept of the tourist-historic city acknowledges that such cities or towns have many functions. It was expected that any town chosen would exhibit diverse or heterogeneous functions, though the extent of diversity might be expected to be less complex in a smaller rather than a larger town. The small English historic town of Ludlow was selected as a case study. The authenticity of Ludlow as a small English town is well known and has been recognized in at least two BBC television documentaries over the past thirty years. Each town has its own history and tourist attraction but Ludlow is a small English market town that is not widely promoted as a tourist destination, especially among international tourists. This is due to Ludlow's relatively remote location within England. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the key stakeholders. For convenience, they are referred to collectively as 'managers of tourism and related services'. The interviewees came, respectively, from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A brief introduction is given here to the roles and responsibilities of the interviewees. 'A' is a local government officer responsible for the promotion of tourism in Shropshire, in partnership with private sector providers. 'B' has worked for many years as a custodian of historic buildings. 'C' is manager of the tourist information centre, which assists visitors with information and advice, including the provision of an accommodation service in liaison with local hotels, guest houses and other accommodation providers in the surrounding area. 'D' is a local government conservation officer, with many years' professional experience. Important roles are to advise the Council on the conservation aspects of any development that might affect the viability of the town and its conservation areas; and to work alongside local groups with conservation interests, including work in schools to raise awareness and knowledge of conservation issues. 'E' is a representative of the business community, whose organisation will share ideas and experiences relating to tourism and conservation and

whose main aim is to improve trade and commercial interests in Ludlow and district. 'F' is from a voluntary organization concerned with 'maintaining the historic integrity and future vitality of Ludlow' through coordination and consultation with the relevant public bodies and encouraging an active interest in the character and history of the town.

Heritage Tourism in Ludlow, England: Ludlow has shown an importance of heritage tourism in Shropshire, with its wealth of attractive villages and picturesque small market towns, its historic buildings and important archaeological sites, together with many fine traditional buildings. The question of how the heritage product is segmented or promoted was considered, with reference to the heritage production model of [29]. It was shown that heritage products could be developed and commodified through an interpretation process, in which different elements or features of the product, such as 'heritage' and the sub-products within it, are tailored to different markets. This process can be seen at work, for example, on websites and brochures promoting Ludlow as a tourist destination, where it is described as a 'market town', a 'Norman planned town', a town with 'more than 500 listed buildings; a place for 'food and drink' and with fine 'natural surroundings'; and the home of 'Ludlow Castle' and 'St Laurence Church'. Such phrases are also to be found in the several government documents [34-36]. It was agreed by most of the managers of tourism and related services that the distinctiveness of Ludlow and its surroundings are strong factors influencing people to visit. For example: 'B' interviewee said *'If you stand there [in the town centre], you can see the evolution of the town through hundreds of years. Not everything was built at the same time and the main historical periods are all represented. There is not much from the Victorian period and later – at least in the town centre'*. 'F' interviewee similarly said *'Ludlow has a unique identity with a mix of architecture from various periods and interesting rural surroundings. The grid street pattern and the squares were laid out in the medieval period and that's part of the history, too. The key attractions that make Ludlow distinctive are the timber-framed buildings, their human scale and character and the relaxing feel of the town, especially as a place for walking.'* Ludlow was referred to by one of the managers as being particularly favoured by visitors who are 'keen on heritage' and who will come to the town despite it being quite far from the national motorway network.

Tourism Strategy and Local Involvement: The South Shropshire Tourism Strategy focused on encouraging and supporting sustainable tourism activity in maintaining the natural, built and historic landscape; raising awareness of the benefits of tourism to the local economy; increasing visitor numbers and spending; supporting local initiatives in tourism development; and encouraging the local tourism sector, collaboration and partnership between public and private sectors [37]. These aims remained unchanged when the Strategy was revised in 2008. [36] noted that in 2006, 29.7 per cent of economically active people in the District were employed in the tourism sector, compared to 5.7 per cent in agriculture and agricultural related occupations. Thus, it was claimed that 'tourism benefits local people as well as visitors', which is one of the reasons why tourism is recognized as a major contributor to local economic activity and development. Vibrant market towns provide services to locals that would struggle to survive without the income from tourists: also family and friends visiting the area can be major contributors to visitor numbers.

Community involvement in the preparation of the Tourism Strategy was organized largely through a series of meetings at which the tourism strategy and action plan were reviewed and discussed at various stages in their development. Meetings related to tourism and economic development involved representatives of the business providers but their attendance could not necessarily be guaranteed. 'B' interviewee said: *'With the lack of staff in my department, I was never able to attend and to take an active part in the meetings that were organized.'* Informal discussion with some local residents suggested they sometimes felt their views were not given sufficient weight: for example, their opposition to the development of the Tesco store at the northern end of Corve Street. However, their view undoubtedly would have been different if the store had *not* been built. Reflecting on the need for and the difficulties of engaging in stakeholder or public participation, 'A' interviewee said: *'Often our role is to encourage the expression of and to recognize, the different points of view of local residents, visitors and business providers, while trying to find a way of reconciling, or smoothing over, the range of opinions that can be put forward'*. The Council is also consulted on all planning applications and it works with Shropshire Council to improve Ludlow Town Centre. One of the aims of the town plan is 'to enable local people to express their ambitions, needs and priorities' and in preparing it, consultation meetings were held with community groups and the general public. For many people the opportunity

to communicate electronically with local governance organizations has widened the scope of public participation in a positive way. Both Shropshire Council and the Town Council also consult extensively with representative organizations such as the Ludlow Chamber of Trade and Commerce and other local groups. Despite these and many other attempts to bring people and organizations together to discuss matters of local interest and importance, the meetings and consultations in themselves will seldom 'solve' anything: rather, they are an opportunity for everyone to 'have their say' and perhaps to look at problems and proposals from different perspectives. Among most of the managers, there was a feeling that the public authorities 'do their best' to engage in partnership and participation but are often frustrated by the lack of resources available for what, ideally, might be done to further improve the town. Managers generally said that relations between the local councils and other organisations were good and that every effort was made to engage as fully as possible with local people. The private and voluntary organizations also were commended for the help they give their members, for example, in assisting local businesses with advertising opportunities, including e-shop browsing; and contributing to the production of maps showing the location of particular businesses.

Heritage Ownership: [20] referred to the different goals and motivations of the owners of heritage buildings, using a simple classification of public, private and voluntary sector ownership (refer Table 1). In Ludlow, however, such distinctions were seen sometimes as over-simplified. The manager of an historic building, 'B' interviewee, said: *'This building may be privately owned but that does not mean we are free to do what we like with it. We need permission from English Heritage to make renovations or to change the fabric of the building. Our aim is to keep the building standing. We do not have any public funding so we have to create all our own income. It is quite frustrating since the building is used a lot by the public. But the family has owned it for nearly 200 years and they wish to carry on'*. Thus, the aim is to generate income through admission fees and other charges, in order to maintain and conserve the building as an attractive tourist destination. A privately owned heritage business, if it is to survive, must be profitable but not necessarily profit-driven, as suggested by [38]. It does not need to operate as a crowd-pulling theme park, as some heritage venues do; on the other hand, the introduction of special educational displays; the

provision of luxury holiday accommodation; or the promotion of the premises as a wedding venue are examples of how the attractions of a heritage building may be diversified to increase visitor numbers and profitability. Interviewee B added *'We created new attractions and introduced new ideas to grab more visitors. [The owners] did not want to make the premises a theme park.... but they were happy to use new technology, especially if it would make things more interactive and interesting to children. It is undeniable that it is hard to inspire and explain about 'stones' or 'the ruined castle' to the young generation....'* The need to develop an interest in heritage among all children of all backgrounds was one of the themes of a report by the Public Accounts Committee 'Promoting Participation with the Historic Environment' and the participation of children in visits to heritage sites is monitored regularly by English Heritage [39].

Challenges of Morphology of the Town: Most of the managers (four out of six) acknowledged that narrow roads and one-way streets in Ludlow lead to traffic congestion. For example, 'D' said *'We accept that the narrow streets and the traffic can be a major problem at times, especially when tourist numbers are high...Businesses want to encourage more visitors but sometimes residents wish the numbers were smaller and blame visitors for overcrowding and traffic problems. There are costs and benefits here. This is one of the conflicts we have to try to resolve and it is not always easy.'* On the other hand, 'E' commented: *'Ludlow is a medieval town. It was not meant for modern vehicles.'* The layout of Ludlow shows clearly its medieval origins, hence the narrow streets and pavements fronting the historic buildings. Ludlow has relatively little pedestrianisation and although some streets such as King Street, High Street and Castle Square might benefit from being completely traffic free, this idea is known to be unpopular with many of the businesses that would be affected. However, at least one of the managers was not convinced that pedestrianisation would be bad for business: *'Personally, I think the central town should be a pedestrian area. This would give more space for people to walk safely and would open up the views of the historic buildings. At the same time, you could spend more time looking in the shop windows, which could be very good for business.'* This is another area of policy and management where the 'solution', inevitably, is likely to be a compromise between different points of view. Inevitably, different stakeholders and different interest

groups can have different views, sometimes leading to conflict. According to 'A' interviewee: *'Often, there are situations where visitors, the business community, tourism providers and local residents, including young people and retired people, can be in conflict. In Britain nowadays, many people move around a lot, so when you talk about 'local residents' not many of them may be born and bred in Ludlow; they come from all over the place. So there can be incomers versus the existing population and there is always potential conflict there. It's a responsibility of the local council to help to smooth the water by promoting partnership working and sometimes that can be very successful. My feeling is that most local residents basically think tourism is a good thing and many of them give a lot of support to the special events'*.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown the difficulty of defining 'heritage'; the wide range of heritage consumption; and the different values, motivations, goals and objectives of the key actors involved. All these contribute to the complexity, conflicts and challenges of heritage management; and all need to be taken into consideration. Each 'manager' has clearly defined responsibilities for the job or the official position they hold and their perspectives on the study reflect the experience and knowledge they have gained in those positions. All of them recognised the appeal of Ludlow as a heritage tourism destination and some were actively working, as part of their jobs, to manage, promote and protect the town and to create, support and sometimes challenge the strategic framework. They showed vision for the future but many of their concerns were grounded in the practical issues of planning, management and business activity within the context of a historic town that is seen as important not only to the people who live and work there but also nationally and internationally. What emerged strongly from the interviews was the role played, particularly by the public officials and their colleagues, in seeking to resolve and achieve consensus on policy and practice affecting everyday matters and longer-term strategies for the town. This involves extensive liaison with managers in, or representatives of, other sectors and a significant level of consultation with the general public, through a variety of means. Apart from that, the morphology of the historic town itself also contributed to the challenges in heritage management. The ownership of the premises is one of the factors contributed to the

complexity in managing the historic town. The case of private ownership has limitation in funding in order to maintain and conserve the premise resulted re-adaptive use of historic buildings for generating the profit and income.

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