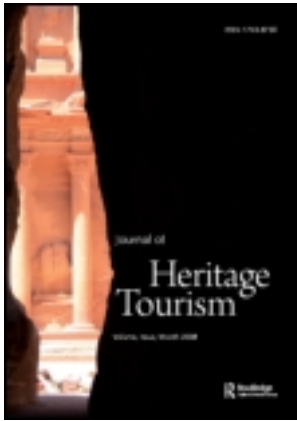


This article was downloaded by: [86.25.27.38]

On: 18 April 2014, At: 09:50

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Heritage Tourism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjht20>

The invention of the Barcelona Gothic Quarter

Agustín Cocola Gant^a

^a History of Art University of Barcelona Barcelona Spain

Published online: 24 Aug 2013.

To cite this article: Agustín Cocola Gant (2014) The invention of the Barcelona Gothic Quarter, Journal of Heritage Tourism, 9:1, 18-34, DOI: [10.1080/1743873X.2013.815760](https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2013.815760)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2013.815760>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

The invention of the Barcelona Gothic Quarter

Agustín Cocola Gant*

History of Art, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

(Received 18 October 2012; final version received 6 June 2013)

The Barcelona Gothic Quarter was re-constructed in the twentieth century. Although theoretically historic monuments refer back to past epochs, in many cases they were produced recently. In Barcelona, medieval buildings were restored in a gothic style, while other historic buildings and facades were moved stone-by-stone into the area and ordinary residential houses were removed and replaced by seemingly historic buildings. As a result, the new Gothic Quarter seems to be a space which is completely medieval but was actually re-built between 1927 and 1970. This recreation was meant both as an example of the invention of tradition in the context of Catalan nationalism and as a way to promote the city through spectacular historic monuments, irrespective of whether they were materially authentic. In this context, this article focuses on the second phase of this process, in the commoditisation of heritage alongside city marketing, stressing the relationship between the touristic promotion and the production of urban space. It also examines the principal reconstructions in the neighbourhood and how this process of changing a residential area into a space for tourist consumption were the first signs of gentrification in Barcelona.

Keywords: authenticity; commoditisation; urban heritage; national identity; Barcelona

Introduction

The Barcelona Gothic Quarter was re-constructed in the twentieth century. In fact its name is also a modern creation because the space was traditionally known as the Cathedral neighbourhood. Although theoretically historic monuments refer back to past epochs, in many cases they were constructed recently. As with other European cities, the facade of the cathedral was built in a gothic style between 1887 and 1912, but then nationalist politicians and touristic trade associations proposed the reinvention of the whole quarter, a fact that changed the shape of almost 40 buildings. Medieval edifices were restored in gothic style; other medieval buildings and facades were moved stone-by-stone into the new area; and ordinary residential houses were removed and replaced by what appeared to be historic buildings. This ‘medievalisation’, undertaken between 1927 and 1970, transformed a degraded neighbourhood into the most attractive part of the city and it provided the space with an historic image that it did not have previously. This paper examines both the motivation for such a transformation in the context of the promotion of Barcelona as a tourist destination and the way in which the neighbourhood was re-created. As it depicts a historical

*Email: acogant@gmail.com

case study it also provides a critical understanding of the current relationship between heritage and tourism.

The invention of the Barcelona gothic quarter

Heritage policies since the French Revolution have passed through two general phases. An early time in which nationalism began to re-edit its own history (Díaz & Champion, 1996) – which marked the beginning of heritage restoration, and a second one in which that monumental past was exploited as an instrument of city promotion (Rowan & Baram, 2004). These phases do not contradict themselves, and thus the use of heritage both to reinforce national or local identities and to create a tourist destination can take place simultaneously. However, several studies illustrate that the commercial use of the past generally prevails over its ideological use, which means the loss of symbolic meaning attached to the object and the subsequent commoditisation of heritage in a market-based society (Alsayyad, 2001; Rowan & Baram, 2004). The meaning contained by heritage changes according to an interpretation process, so that the same resource may be used to convey different messages (Ashworth, 1994, p. 17). Moreover, as historic monuments become only a way to create picturesque spaces, they may not have any ideological connotation (Herzfeld, 1991). The idea of re-creating the Gothic Quarter had a nationalist origin in the context of the Catalan ‘*Renaixença*’ (Re-birth), but it was constructed decades later as a means to promote the city. Catalan nationalism became increasingly more important during the last decades of the nineteenth century and nationalists would govern the city council after 1901. As with other cases in Europe, the Catalonians found in the Middle Ages their legendary origin; this epoch became the most important for the national history, and from this the gothic buildings were taken as collective symbols. The re-creation of the cathedral and its neighbourhood emerged as an example of the ‘invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), which aimed to justify the continuity of an idealised past. But at the same time, Catalan nationalism was by then a bourgeois movement formed by liberal politicians, industrialists and business people. Since they ruled the city they also sought to promote Barcelona as a tourist destination, and so in 1908 the Tourist Attraction Society (Sociedad de Atracción de Forasteros, SAF) was founded. In this context, the invention of the Gothic Quarter was also used to create picturesque spaces, irrespective of whether they were materially original. This case study, in which a source of Catalan identity was mostly re-constructed by Franco’s dictatorship, reflects the tensions intrinsic to the political and economic use of heritage. But as Ashworth states

the heritage interpretation used to sell a town may convey a different and contradictory message to that simultaneously being used to sell the region or country in which it is set. This is so common in tourism marketing as to be the rule rather than exception. (1994, p. 23)

In the framework of this dual use of heritage, the Gothic Quarter is related to both, with the constant promotion of Barcelona under all governments (Palou i Rubio, 2012) and with it the change of message that heritage contains, according to who commemorates it. As a result, the assumption that Franco’s dictatorship entailed a rupture with the previous Catalan and Republican agenda need to be re-examined. Muñoz-Rojas Oscarsson also provides an example of continuity in urban planning after the Civil War in Barcelona and ‘the celebration of the positive effects of the works for tourism’ (2013, p. 479), revealing ‘a subtler and more eclectic panorama of approaches to urban planning, history, and heritage under Franco than is usually acknowledged’ (2013, p. 479).

The connection between heritage and tourism is patent in the derivation of the term itself, which comes from the aristocratic *Grand Tour* of the eighteenth century. But the use of heritage to create experiences for tourists where the history of a site can be altered and, moreover, re-created into something completely false has normally been depicted as a particular phenomenon of the consumer society (Alsayyad, 2001; Jameson, 2004; Wiles & Vander, 2008). Some researchers argue that it is a postmodern singularity (Goulding, 2000), a consequent feature of the society of spectacle, of which its most particular paradigm would be theme parks (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1990). One of the aims of this research, however, is to provide a critical understanding of how, in some cases, such places have been re-created before the post-industrial society. Studies in urban history and the history of tourism (Cocola Gant, 2012; Medina Lasansky, 2004; Palou i Rubio, 2012; Ward, 1998) illustrate how tourism trade associations sought to influence the production of urban space in order to display cities in as spectacular light as possible from the end of the nineteenth century. In Barcelona, the SAF not only boosted the re-creation of the Gothic Quarter, but many of the characteristics of the post industrial 'spaces for consumption' (Miles, 2010) were already anticipated: international promotion, creation of impressive mega events and the eradication of derelict areas in the city centre in order to attract investment and inhabitants with higher incomes, city pride as a means of social cohesion, and, above all, fabrication of a spectacular urban image as a tourist attraction. These characteristics can also be extended to the debates on gentrification, which generally depict gentrification as a post-industrial phenomenon (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). In Barcelona, the changing of a residential area into a space for tourism consumption also entailed the eviction of the working class from the city centre.

Several studies have shown a link between planning decisions and a lack of authenticity in heritage tourism products and experiences created for visitors, turning history into a commodity rather than a source of objective truth (Jameson, 2004; Medina Lasansky, 2004; Mills, 2007; Waitt, 2000; Wiles & Vander, 2008). The issue of authenticity in tourism, as Wang has illustrated, should be separated into two different issues: that of tourist experiences and that of toured objects (Wang, 1999, p. 351). The first is related to MacCannell's tourist who seeks authenticity in other times and other places. Authenticity, as MacCannell declared, refers to an authentic experience (MacCannell, 1976, p. 30), to the amusement that spectacle confers. Objective authenticity, on the contrary, would be the authenticity of the original. It refers to the historical materials and shapes and to the recognition of the toured objects as authentic. The important point for us is that 'even though the tourists themselves think they have gained authentic experiences, this can, however, still be judged as inauthentic, if the toured objects are in fact false, contrived, or part of what MacCannell calls staged authenticity' (Wang, 1999, p. 351). As objective authenticity is not required to obtain an authentic experience, Susan Fainstein proposes as a solution to city conservation of such places as Venice or Florence: replicate them in the USA or Japan, so that European cities would not be overcrowded by tourists (Fainstein, 2008). In general, the more the tourism sector gets involved in heritage preservation and restoration, the less authentic places and objects will become. As Ashworth and Tunbridge declare, for the marketing of tourist experiences, history and heritage are simplified, stereotyped and promoted as a packaged product prepared to be consumed (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1990, p. 54).

This debate is inherent to the invention of the Gothic Quarter. Both local authorities and tourist business people around the SAF were aware that tourists sought historical experiences. Thus, what Barcelona needed was to exhibit its monuments in a spectacular way, irrespective of whether the objects were original, re-constructed or even invented. Generally, authenticity in tourism research focuses on the authenticity of the consumption

process, in which ‘satisfaction with a heritage event depends . . . on its perceived authenticity’ (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003, p. 705). According to Cohen (1995), postmodern tourists accept the lack of originals and they are not concerned with authenticity as long as they enjoy their experiences. Reisinger and Steiner even argue that ‘there does not seem to be one argument for continuing to mention object authenticity in tourism research anymore’ (2006, p. 73), suggesting that ‘whatever is given’ is authentic (2006, p. 77). However, this research does not focus on the satisfaction with a heritage product, but rather on the product itself regardless of whether tourists find it enjoyable. Heritage – in this case historic buildings – is not only an object of tourist consumption, but it is also a historic document, a source of information about the past. This paper advocates that object authenticity is a property of an object (Lau, 2010), and that the production process of a given object should be depicted and explained in order to avoid confusion. In Barcelona tourists are usually not aware that they visit a ‘staged place’ and both the City Council and tourism organisations show the Gothic Quarter as the best example of the importance of Catalonia in the Middle Ages. This illustrates this argument with ‘medieval’ buildings that actually were invented in the twentieth century. Many of them are today catalogued as ‘historic monuments’ or even appear in books on medieval history as ‘originals’ (Nicolau, 1999). The difference between the creation of spaces for authentic experiences and the authenticity of the object is also the difference between the aims of the tourist market and the aims of history as an academic discipline. But if in the free market thinking the notion of authenticity is removed from the world of the object (heritage) and placed into the world of personal consumption (tourism), then a historical analysis of a heritage product must reverse this order to make clear the way in which destinations have been produced. In such a framework, this article analyses how tourism organisations have triumphed in staging authenticity, complicating the role of current historians when it comes to the study of buildings that have been re-created for tourism purposes.

Urban reform planning and the idea of the Gothic Quarter

After the middle of the nineteenth century many cities in Europe had become adjusted to the new conditions of industrialisation. City centres were opened up by big avenues to facilitate circulation and sanitation. These infrastructure changes cleared away whole medieval neighbourhoods. These changes were sharply criticized owing to their lack of consideration of heritage. In Barcelona the demolition that made way for the current *via Layetana* started in 1908, and by 1913 this large avenue divided the whole city centre. From the beginning of this process the City Council selected historic building materials, which were put into storage. The idea was to create a museum to exhibit them (Ganau, 2006), but when whole facades and even buildings were accumulated stone-by-stone, the idea was abandoned. Between 1908 and 1913 a wide-ranging debate took place to decide what to do with the stored materials. The architect Jeroni Martorell proposed that ‘they could be reconstructed near the cathedral. We should compose a display that summarises the art of ancient Barcelona’ (Martorell, 1908).

The suggestion of composing a display around the cathedral has to be related to the construction of its own facade. The facade had remained unfinished since the fifteenth century, as had happened in many other cities in Europe. But in general, cities completed their cathedrals during the nineteenth century, motivated by nationalist movements, which used the Middle Ages as their standard. On one hand, it was a way of creating national symbols, while on the other hand, it signified an opportunity to embellish the city by decorating

its most important historic building. In Barcelona, construction was funded by the banker and politician Manuel Girona and took place between 1887 and 1912.

In the debate about what to do with the accumulated building materials, the establishment agreed that the most convenient option would be to relocate them around the cathedral, above all the medieval facades and buildings that had been kept. In 1911, the politician Ramon Rucabado argued that the most important historic buildings were in the cathedral neighbourhood, but he pointed out that they were degraded and surrounded by many ordinary residential houses (Rucabado, 1911, p. 309). He proposed ‘adopting the unifying style in this area . . . making a truthful Gothic Quarter’ (Rucabado, 1911, p. 310). It was the first time that the expression Gothic Quarter was used, but in fact Rucabado summarised what different politicians, architects and business people had wanted from the start: to remove the dwellings of the poor along with their inhabitants and replace them with neo-medieval buildings that would be used either as cultural infrastructure or as government offices. At the same time, he suggested creating a defined area delimited by gothic suspension bridges and then relocating the accumulated materials, facades and buildings. In addition to eliminating traffic, this would create a unified historic area. In a period in which urban tourism began to be developed in other parts of Europe, the justification for this sort of reconstruction was obvious, and as Martorell pointed out, the investment ‘would be a capital with high interests: tourists would have good motives to come to Barcelona to spend their money’ (Martorell, 1911, p. 307).

In 1920, Jeroni Martorell once again proposed an example of this type of reconstruction. He replaced less valuable residential houses next to the cathedral with a new building produced with the stored building materials that, as he had stated, could represent the art of ancient Barcelona. Actually, the shape of the new building was a complete reproduction of the ideal model of a ‘Catalan house’ which nationalist historians – above all Puig i Cadafalch – had announced as the most significant medieval monument in Catalonia (Puig i Cadafalch, 1913). The origin of the Gothic Quarter, then, has to be related to the idealisation of the Middle Ages, which entailed the study of every cultural form produced in that epoch and the aspiration of re-establishing them in the present time. It was an example of the ‘invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) aimed at exhibiting the continuity of an idealised history, even though ‘insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of invented traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 2). From the beginning, most projects proposed re-building the area after the shape of the ‘Catalan house’. We can see this with sentences such as ‘there are so many parallelisms between buildings and nations that reconstructing monuments is the same as reconstructing the homeland’ (Folch i Torres, 1912, p. 1). However, to understand the loss of this ideological meaning under Franco’s dictatorship, it is necessary to consider the marketing and promotion of the city and the subsequent commercial use of the past.

The origin of branding Barcelona: Promotion and image of the city

The promotion of Barcelona as a tourist destination is not a recent trend, but it has been an essential target for local authorities since the International Exhibition in 1888. In spite of heavy industry being the main economic sector of the city, and although the wide-ranging industrial relocation would only be understood decades later, from the beginning of the twentieth century both tourism and trade fairs identified a new flow of capital that would move Barcelona along if they were properly promoted. This was the focal aspiration of the Tourist Attraction Society (Sociedad de Atracción de Forasteros, SAF) that was created in 1908 by local politicians, bankers and business people.

Also in 1908, the banker and hospitality entrepreneur Gonzalo Arnús published *Barcelona Cosmopolita*—a book about ‘the convenience of attracting international tourism into Barcelona’ (Arnús, 1908, p. 5) and the measures undertaken to succeed in doing this. If ‘tourism increases the monetary flow of people . . . , it is enough that a city was properly distinguished to obtain it’ (Arnús, 1908, p. 8). However, in 1908 Barcelona did not have a recognised international image, so producing one was a central goal for the SAF. In this context, in 1908 a poster competition was announced to advertise the city abroad as a tourist destination. At that time, one media outlet argued that this was a publicity stunt that did not reflect the reality of Barcelona:

a poster that gracefully illustrates Barcelona has to be obtained. But to display a falsehood is complex. What is necessary to attract millionaires is what we precisely do not have: either historic prestige or luxurious and cheerful hospitality. (Tulp, 1909, p. 50)

In tourism, history is illustrated with images, so historic prestige is achieved through the construction of monuments. Accordingly, Arnús recommended to local authorities: ‘ancient Barcelona, whose archaeological value is higher than people believe, does not contain much loveliness, but it would enjoy great fame if its monuments would be better known and portrayed’ (Arnús, 1908, p. 15). Therefore, it was necessary to revalue the existing heritage in order to lend historic prestige and international recognition to the city. In this context, the SAF commissioned the engineer García Faria to write a report on the differences between Barcelona and other European cities to ‘make our country appealing by improving the attributes we do not have’ (García Faria, 1912, p. 71). He suggested general works such as developing transportation and accommodation or transforming public hygiene and urban aesthetics, but he also argued that ‘we need to reform our monuments if we desire the city to become more attractive, in order for visitors to pay attention’ (García Faria, 1912, p. 75). This requisite picturesque representation of heritage to attract visitors was accepted by diverse sectors of the city. The cultural columnist Folch i Torres in 1930 wondered the following about the city’s heritage: ‘do we have all of our resources in decent enough condition to be exhibited, or on the contrary, will tourist’ visits to some monuments result in shame and dishonour’ (Folch i Torres, 1930, p. 5). At the same time, in a report about the tourism development in Catalonia written in 1932, the author pointed out that

in spite of the importance of our heritage, it is an illusion to base our tourism in this resource. The majority of our monuments do not contain or we did not still give them the spectacular character that tourism requires. (cited in Vidal Casellas, 2006, p. 217)

Hence, a central aim of the SAF was to stimulate the spectacular exhibition of heritage, and from its principal journal – *Barcelona Atracció*n – it persistently demanded the restoration of the historic buildings around the cathedral, starting with the construction of the Gothic Quarter. If the city’s history and culture were represented as exceptional monuments it was not because they constituted an advantage for the citizenry, but because they were a competitive advantage in the international tourism market. In the Anglo-Saxon world, there have existed cases of city marketing since the nineteenth century, as Ward (1998) has noted. In the Mediterranean region these processes have only been related to the current transformation to the service economy, although there is evidence of a previous origin. In promoting Barcelona, in 1919 the idea of a competitive advantage was apparent: ‘the city needs to be reordered to triumph in the struggle for charming inhabitants and in the competition against

other cities that bypass us in relation to their celebrated monumental urban centres' (Reyes, 1919). The term city branding had already been established in Barcelona by 1929. In 1929, when Barcelona hosted the International Exhibition, a commentator declared about the city: 'insert in the international market this new tourism brand and do not hesitate: if the new brand is well formulated and it is properly launched the product will be sold and the business will be assured' (Serra i Roca, 1929, p. 5).

Security and the competitive advantage: The monument as a form of civic pride

During industrialisation available real estate was located in peripheral residential neighbourhoods. The city centre was increasingly abandoned and became the abode of the lower social classes. At the same time, everyday life in Barcelona was subjugated to arduous social conditions and the subsequent organisation of the working class, whose more extreme expression took place in 1909 when a large part of the city was burned. These social conditions were obviously a disagreeable element of the city. Above all it was felt that the city centre should represent the main resource on display. Therefore, from a promotional point of view, it was necessary to change its image and also the social base of its inhabitants.

The paper that best summarises these bourgeoisie needs and the way to obtain them is the aforementioned *Barcelona Cosmopolita*. Arnús pointed out that the city had 'a vast population, but it was excessively industrial and it did not have either appeal nor loveliness' (1908, p. 20). He also stated that for the image Barcelona should try to express 'it is improper that a city so immense was only considered to have a working population' (Arnús, 1908, p. 16). Moreover, he pointed out that 'Barcelona was perceived as an unpleasant revolutionary centre and sometimes even dangerous. So this situation, as everybody can appreciate, is unattractive' (Arnús, 1908, p. 20).

If 'people are judged by their image, tourists also form an opinion of a city according to what they observe' (Arnús, 1908, p. 61). It was consequently essential both to embellish the city and to avoid the existence of impoverished people at the city centre. As a result, Arnús showed gratitude 'towards our local authorities for the campaign they have initiated against homeless and unemployed population that tarnished Barcelona so much' (Arnús, 1908, p. 66). At the same time, in 1915 a trade association petitioned the council to remove a charity organisation placed next to the cathedral because the area was frequented by tourists, who would feel negatively about watching 'the spectacle of our social miseries' (cited in Palou i Rubio, 2012, p. 141). Indeed, between 1900 and 1936, the anarchist movement and the working class gained greater importance in Barcelona. Class struggles were a daily reality and the conflict could only be avoided with Franco's dictatorship. In this context, the promotion of tourism was not viable, and so Arnús affirmed that 'if we have a population more predisposed to fight than to meek resignation . . ., what we first need is a social sanitation of the city' (Arnús, 1908, p. 39).

In 1913, the SAF's president declared that the city project promoted by his organisation was an 'essentially patriotic task' (Rubió i Bellver, 1913), and commended citizens for their civic support and assistance which "we profoundly appreciate" (Rubió i Bellver, 1913). The concept of 'city as native soil' entailed the recognition of Barcelona as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), or what Castells calls 'civic patriotism', which aimed to stimulate emotional values such as city pride or honour to create a general sense of community (Castells & Borja, 1997).

El Orgullo de la Ciudad (The Pride of the City) was the name of the book that the architect Vega i March published in 1918. Its aim was to enhance the possibility of 'converting

Barcelona in our dreamed city, beauty chest, citizenship emporium and paradigm of living together' (Vega i March, 1918, p. 25). The author declared that a great city means to have excellent citizens, but it was not the case of Barcelona at that time (Vega i March, 1918, p. 12). The book recommended the creation of symbolic mechanisms for reinforcing social cohesion. This represents a precedent of the new localism of urban regeneration policies in post-industrial city marketing, such as the English City Pride initiative developed in the 1990s, aimed at building consensual and holistic visions of Britain's main cities (Gwyndaf, 1995). However, Vega i March stated that 'none of these characteristics were present in Barcelona's urban structure' (Vega i March, 1918, p. 15), and that Barcelona needed a sign that the cathedral 'was built in the Middle Ages to emphasise the great soul composed by the soul of all citizens, who were united in a single wish' (Vega i March, 1918, p. 16). Thus, the author defined historic monuments as 'the complete symbol of the common homeland' (Vega i March, 1918, p. 19). Vega i March summarised the local bourgeoisie city project aimed at minimising the working class influence, as this was needed to pacify the city to develop the tourism industry in Barcelona. Social struggles were defined in 1914 as 'city enemies' (cited in Peran, Suárez, & Vidal, 1994, p. 18), and in this framework Vega i March proposed stimulating a sort of community value by creating emblematic spaces through monuments and architecture. Monuments should work as an irrational element to incite civic pride, but the author noticed that 'the reality does not correspond with our desires . . . We must work in order for people to feel Barcelona's noble city pride in their souls' (Vega i March, 1918, p. 26).

The Gothic Quarter and the 1929 International Exhibition

Local authorities decided that a grand international event was needed to present the city to the world as had happened in the 1851 London International Exhibition and in Barcelona with the Exhibition of 1888. The first idea emerged in 1905 by the same politicians and business people who three years later would create the SAF. In 1914 a commission was formed, in which Vega i March participated, and they presented urban measures to prepare the city for the exhibition. The measures were the same as those of the SAF: adapt the city through urban reform planning, create spectacular monuments to attract visitors and remove the homeless and indigent residents from the city centre (Vega i March, 1914, p. 338).

Since the nineteenth century, Barcelona has held mega events to facilitate capital flows that were meant to hasten urban growth. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was obvious that the Exhibition was a means to obtain the goals expressed by the bourgeoisie, that is to convert Barcelona into a Mediterranean capital. In 1915, the SAF recognised that 'what remains of an exhibition is more interesting than the exhibition itself' (Barcelona Atracci3n, 1915, p. 11), and an example could be 'to restore our historic and artistic monuments to exhibit them to future visitors' (Barcelona Atracci3n, 1915, p. 11). If the most important thing was not the exhibition but the advantages Barcelona might have in organising it, this benefit was measured in the way the city was placed in the international urban market. Because of the urban redevelopment done in preparing for the event, the Exhibition Official Daily (DOEIB), affirmed that 'these works position Barcelona in the category together with leading cities' (DOEIB, 1930). The DOEIB also declared 'the name of Barcelona should wield only considerable tourist appeal' (DOEIB, 1929). Therefore, city embellishment and the creation of picturesque spaces meant both the production of the Barcelona brand image and a precedent for current city marketing.

After two decades discussing the possibility of reconstructing the cathedral neighbourhood, the urban renovation done in preparing for the Exhibition ushered in works that changed the area into the current Gothic Quarter. Although the neighbourhood's past represented the most glorious national epoch, its reconstruction was only possible when that past was used as a commodity and as an instrument of city promotion, and as a means of creating the historic prestige Barcelona did not have. In this context, works started in 1927, but they actually were prolonged until 1970; the transformation affected approximately 40 buildings. In spite of this prolongation, the place was promoted almost immediately. In 1930, one commentator on the Exhibition had already expressed the view that 'this resurrection is making the greatest appeal of Barcelona: that marvel known as the Gothic Quarter' (Díez de Tejada, 1930).

The construction of the gothic quarter

The first building reconstructed between 1927 and 1930 was the Canonical House, which is situated behind the cathedral. The work was promoted by Milà i Camps, one of the most affluent Catalan bankers at the beginning of the twentieth century, who in 1922 had proposed enclosing the neighbourhood with an artistic fence and reconstructing every building in the area. In this framework, Milà i Camps awarded the building's restoration to the architect Jeroni Martorell, who returned the house to its primitive form that it could have had in the Middle Ages. The house had a real medieval origin, but it had been enlarged and modified several times, so the architect did not know what its primitive design would have been. Thus, he reinvented the appearance of a 'Catalan house' as it had been defined by nationalist historians. The work was made both with historic building materials stored by the city council and with new materials which imitated medieval designs. As a result, the house became a hyper-real gothic collage, but at present it is still one of the most picturesque locations in the city (Figures 1 and 2).

The re-creation incorporated a neo-gothic bridge inaugurated in 1928 by the architect Rubió i Bellver, who was the brother of the president of the SAF, and it was also promoted by Milà i Camps (Figure 3). The bridge was so 'excessive' that it was the only work criticised by some commentators. On the contrary, *Barcelona Atracció*n considered the bridge an opportunity 'to increase the city's artistic category and its historic prestige' (Barcelona Atracció)n, 1927, p. 3). Indeed, in 1934 the journal publicised the building as an example of a historic monument that tourists could discover in Barcelona (Barcelona Atracció)n, 1934). These statements demonstrate that as the market took charge of heritage enhancement, its objective authenticity decreased. On the contrary, contrived authenticity was consented and promoted by the tourism industry, and in fact, the image of the 'medieval' bridge still appears today in almost every Barcelona guide.

In 1927, the City Council started restoring the Royal Palace, which is located next to the cathedral. It was comprised of different buildings which formed a block, and the main facade was located in the Royal Square. The Palace occupied three sides of the square; the fourth side was located by a residential house built in the nineteenth century. As noted earlier, after 1908 every proposal included removing buildings that did not appear historic. In 1928, the first example of this sort of dismantling occurred. The City Council removed a house and its inhabitants, which they considered unsuitable. In its place, the Padellas House, a sixteenth-century building situated 200 metres away, was relocated stone-by-stone. The aim was to gather historic buildings and as Adolf Florensa, the architect who led the restoration, said 'the house was so well



Figure 1. Canonical House before the reconstruction, 1927. This figure was published by the journal *Barcelona Atracci3n*, 1927, vol. 195.

received by the other buildings that it seems they were together for centuries' (Florensa, 1950, p. 630). During the re-location, elements considered missing were added such as a medieval window and a loggia. The work finished in 1943, and since then the building houses the City Historic Museum. At the same time, the whole Royal Palace was completely transformed between 1927 and 1955. Two additional residential houses annexed to the building were torn down and substituted by an ideal 'Catalan house' built with new materials. Historic doors, stairs and a coffered ceiling were re-located from other buildings, while 14 medieval windows, the most particular element of the idealised model, were invented (Figures 4 and 5). After the whole re-construction, the Royal Palace was declared by the state a 'historic monument' in 1962.

Adolf Florensa led the restoration of the whole neighbourhood for 40 years (C3cola Gant, 2011a, 2011b). In his book *Pol3tica del Barrio G3tico* (Politics of the Gothic Quarter) Florensa summarised his method in three different points: restoration of medieval buildings in gothic style; re-location of historic buildings, facades and materials into the area; and neighbourhood harmonisation with neo-medieval elements (Florensa, 1958). The aim of these works can be summarised as follows:

as a result of this quantity of monuments gathered in a space so sparse, we possess an atmosphere with a formidable historic density, which absorbs visitors and produces an unforgettable impression. For this reason, a visit to the Gothic Quarter is essential for every tourist. (Florensa, 1950, p. 629)



Figure 2. Canonical House reconstructed by Jeroni Martorell (1930).



Figure 3. Neo-gothic bridge built in 1928. Picture published by Barcelona Atracci3n in 1934 with the title 'the ancient buildings of Barcelona'.



Figure 4. Posterior facade of the Royal Palace. On the left, the relocated Padellàs House and on the right, a nineteenth century residential house, 1943.

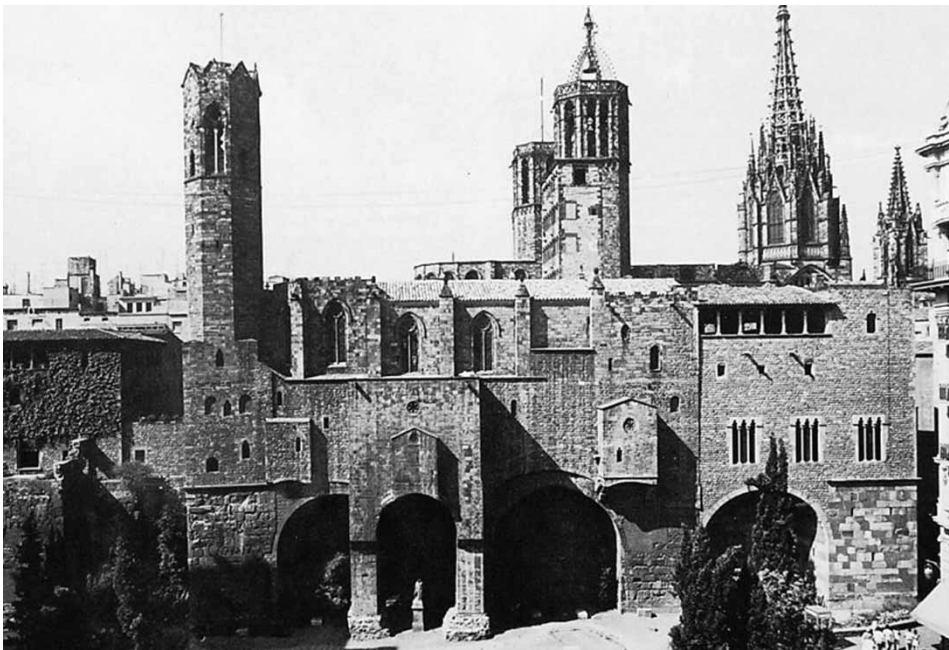


Figure 5. Posterior facade of the Royal Palace. On the right, the residential house was substituted by a Catalan house ideal model built with new materials in the 1950s.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a visit to the Gothic Quarter is to achieve the above-mentioned 'historic density' by gathering as many historic materials and forms as possible. Eighty-five 'medieval' windows were re-created around the whole neighbourhood; all the non-historic walls were eliminated and substituted by a technique that then was called 'stone tile'; and all residential houses were removed and replaced either by historic buildings or by neo-medieval ones. The important point now was to produce a historic image where every old design or material would be welcomed, abandoning the first aspiration of restoring only an idealised Catalan history. What remained from the first set of ideas was only to generate the historic acknowledgement that Barcelona had never had. As Florensa declared, 'in spite of some criticism, it is evident that Barcelona has increased its historic and monumental prestige' (Florensa, 1964, p. 21).

Conclusion

The invention of Barcelona's Gothic Quarter clearly shows the two general phases in heritage policies since the French Revolution: the initial period in which nationalism began to re-edit its own history and the second in which heritage was exploited as a channel for promoting the city. In Barcelona, what had been defined as a 'Catalan house' by nationalist historians was used as an ideal model regardless of the authenticity of building materials. For a nationalist movement, this re-creation became a way of producing the naturalisation of its own arbitrariness, thus becoming a way to convert a subjective selection of the past into some form of objective reality. Even if Puig i Cadafalch (1913) acknowledged that these types of houses had not been conserved in Barcelona, at present these are the types of monuments found throughout the city.

The Catalan bourgeoisie also expressed the need to exhibit the city centre as spectacularly as possible in order to attract tourism; the invention of the Gothic Quarter represented the main result of this necessity. During the years of its construction, it lost political meaning and became a picturesque place to show the heritage prestige that Barcelona needed. As Ashworth states, 'the interpretation, not the resource, is literally the product' (1994, p. 17), and under the Franco's City Council the main ideological message was to reinforce the pride of the city as a means of social cohesion. In fact, if at the beginning reconstructions were based on the ideal model of the Catalan house, by the 1950s and 1960s everything was welcome as long as it was old, historic or made of stone. Other studies about the instrumental use of the past also confirm this evolution in which the promotion of a place gains more importance than the original ideological meaning (Jameson, 2004; Herzfeld, 1991; Medina Lasansky, 2004). In Barcelona, the Franco dictatorship became a way to avoid a social revolution, and so a large part of the local bourgeoisie saw this 'return to order' positively to keep alive capitalist relationships and to continue the dream of converting Barcelona into a Mediterranean capital. Palou i Rubio, in her historical analysis of the conversion of Barcelona into a tourist destination, concludes that the promotion of the city continued uninterrupted under every form of government from 1908 until present (Palou i Rubio, 2012). Muñoz-Rojas Oscarsson also concludes that the break with the heritage ideas of the previous government was rhetorical in many ways, but 'it was not in much of its practice' (2013, p. 479), providing a post Civil War example of the 'the malleability of public discourse in relation to urban space' (2013, p. 491).

In the same way, the SAF's programme of evicting the working class from the city centre was only achieved under Franco's dictatorship. The invention of the Gothic Quarter transformed a degraded neighbourhood into the most attractive area of the city by also eliminating all the residential houses. The construction of Barcelona as a tourist

destination demonstrated several aspects of post-industrial city marketing: fabrication of spaces for tourist consumption; organisation of mega events to reinforce international promotion and speeding up city development; creation of a spectacular urban image and cultural clusters; coalition between city government and entrepreneurial interests; city pride as a form of social cohesion; and negation of poverty and social conflicts and displacement of low-income residents. As Ward (1998) has analysed, city marketing is not a recent feature, and it constitutes a 'natural' need of capitalist urban management.

The Barcelona Gothic Quarter is not only associated with the necessity of themed spaces to facilitate consumerism through diverting experiences, but it can moreover be defined as a theme park. Ashworth and Tunbridge declare that theme parks built from original ruins, as in the case of Williamsburg, employ three methods to re-create spaces: reconstruction in accordance with the original building style; relocation of similar buildings brought from other neighbourhoods or cities; and improvement of the built environment by eliminating recent construction that is substituted with neo-historic buildings (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1990, p. 54). In Barcelona, what Florensa called *Politics of the Gothic Quarter*, the ambition of reinforcing 'historic density' in the area was achieved by the same three methods described above. *Politics of the Gothic Quarter* actually summarised diverse criteria proposed by several projects since 1908, but if every idea were formally different, these three methods were basically applied to transform the cathedral neighbourhood.

This paper argues that the difference between the creation of spaces for authentic experiences and the authenticity of the object is also the difference between the aims of the tourist market and the aims of history as an academic discipline. The Gothic Quarter was created to promote Barcelona as a place for authentic medieval experiences; on the contrary, for a historian it is a paradigm of contrived authenticity. The dilemma is that after being reconstructed it is been difficult to study the medieval architecture of Barcelona through its buildings. Medieval historians in Barcelona argue that a gothic window could help both in dating a building and in providing information about the social status of the owner (González, 2003, p. 153), but the 85 'gothic' windows that were re-created between 1927 and 1970 just helped in providing Barcelona with the historic image that the local bourgeoisie needed to publicise the city. In some cases, the confusion brought about by this loss of objective authenticity has meant that re-created windows fill books on medieval history (Nicolau, 1999). In other cases, buildings re-invented in the 1920s were declared 'historic monuments' and a few years later they 'show the original conditions of the social life in the Middle Ages' (quoted by Cocola Gant, 2011a, p. 192).

Therefore, in this heritage narrative there are contradictory interests of social use that have made it impossible to reach an agreement between history itself and history as a commodity. But if we consider that capitalist conditions dominate every social relation, in practice it is evident which interest will prevail. In the USA, among other reasons, because heritage is not as old as that of Europe, when consumers visit a theme park they know they will experience reproductions and copies, and this fact is recognised without concerns. In fact, Wang concludes that to have authentic experiences 'the issue of whether the toured objects are authentic is irrelevant' (Wang, 1999, p. 366). The theme park version can be more appealing than 'the real past with all its warts' (Zukin, 1995, p. 61). But in Europe, or at least in Barcelona, to accept the supremacy of the market over authenticity still seems immoral for many observers and to recognise that the invention of the Gothic Quarter was aimed at attracting tourism remains somewhat scandalous. If tourists still enjoy the Gothic Quarter then its invention should be recognized and inform its visitors about how it was produced and its inauthentic reproduction.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Joan Molet and Saida Palou for comments on earlier drafts of this paper, Ishmael Burdeau and Michael Peters for editing the text, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback, and the Arxiu Historic de la Ciutat de Barcelona for the permission to publish the figures.

Notes on contributor

Agustín Cocola Gant holds a PhD in History of Art (University of Barcelona) and is the author of the book *El Barrio Gótico de Barcelona. Planificación del Pasado e Imagen de Marca* (2011), which has received critical acclaim and which has been reprinted three times. His research focuses on the social function of heritage, political uses of the past, and city-marketing and urban regeneration.

References

- Alsayyad, N. (2001). Global norms and urban forms in the age of tourism: Manufacturing heritage, consuming tradition. In N. Alsayyad (Ed.), *Consuming tradition, manufacturing heritage. Global norms and urban forms in the age of tourism* (pp. 1–33). London: Routledge.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Arnús, G. (1908). *Barcelona cosmopolita* [Cosmopolitan Barcelona]. Barcelona: Imprenta Viuda de Luis Tasso.
- Ashworth, G. J. (1994). From history to heritage: from heritage to identity. In G. J. Ashworth & P. Larkham (Eds.), *Building a new heritage: tourism, culture and identity in the new Europe*. (pp. 13–30). London: Routledge.
- Ashworth, G. J., & Tunbridge, J. E. (1990). *The tourist-historic city*. London: Belhaven Press.
- Barcelona Atracción. (1915). La futura Exposición de Barcelona. *Barcelona Atracción*, 55, 10–17.
- Barcelona Atracción. (1927). Nuevas mejoras urbanas. *Barcelona Atracción*, 190, 1.
- Barcelona Atracción. (1934). Las antiguas edificaciones de la calle del Obispo. *Barcelona Atracción*, 282, 365.
- Castells, M., & Borja, J. (1997). *Local and global: The management of cities in the information age*. London: Earthscan.
- Chhabra, D., Healy, R., & Sills, E. (2003). Staged authenticity and heritage tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(3), 702–719.
- Cocola Gant, A. (2011a). *El Barrio Gótico de Barcelona. Planificación del pasado e imagen de marca* [The Barcelona Gothic Quarter. Remaking the past and brand image]. Barcelona: Madroño.
- Cocola Gant, A. (2011b). El Barrio Gótico de Barcelona. De símbolo nacional a parque temático. *Scripta Nova Revista electrónica de geografía y ciencias sociales*, XV(371). Retrieved from <http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn/sn-371.htm>
- Cocola Gant, A. (2012). La fabricación de monumentos antiguos en la era del turismo de masas. *E-RPH Revista de Patrimonio Histórico*, 11, 1–20. Retrieved from www.revistadepatrimonio.es/revistas/numero11/patrimonio/estudios/articulo.php
- Cohen, E. (1995). Contemporary tourism—Trends and challenges: Sustainable authenticity or contrived post-modernity? In R. Butler & D. Pearce (Eds.), *Change in tourism: People, places, processes* (pp. 12–29). London: Routledge.
- Díaz, M., & Champion, T. (1996). Nationalism and archaeology in Europe: An introduction. In M. Díaz & T. Champion (Eds.), *Nationalism and archaeology in Europe* (pp. 1–23). San Francisco, CA: Westview Press.
- Díez de Tejada, V. (1930). El Barrio Gótico. *DOEIB*, 46, 3.
- DOEIB. (1929). 1.888–1.929. Ayer y hoy, 1, 10.
- DOEIB. (1930). Una gestión municipal afortunada, 46, 10.
- Fainstein, S. (2008). La única solución para el turismo masivo es crear Eurodisneys. *La Vanguardia*, 6 de junio, covert.
- Florensa, A. (1950). La Barcelona que surge. Valoración del Barrio Gótico. *Gaceta Municipal de Barcelona*, 19 de junio, 629–633.
- Florensa, A. (1958). *Nombre, extensión y política del Barrio Gótico* [Name, extension and politics of the Gothic Quarter]. Barcelona: Ayuntamiento de Barcelona.

- Florensa, A. (1964). Restauraciones y excavaciones en Barcelona durante los últimos veinticinco años. *Cuadernos de Arqueología e Historia de la Ciudad*, 6, 5–36.
- Folch i Torres, J. (1930). Turisme i ruinas. *La Veu de Catalunya*, 31 de enero, 5.
- Folch i Torres, J. (1912). L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya. *La Veu de Catalunya, Pàgina Artística*, 17 de octubre, p. 1.
- Ganau, J. (2006). Invention and Authenticity in Barcelona's Barri Gòtic. *Future Anterior*, 3(2), 10–23.
- García Faria, P. (1912). Impresiones de viaje. Barcelona y las urbes extranjeras. *Arquitectura y Construcción*, 236, 66–78.
- González, R. (2003). Les cases de Barcelona. In A. Pladevall i Font (Ed.), *L'art gòtic a Catalunya. Arquitectura. Dels palaus a les masies* (pp. 152–156, Vol. III, (3 Vols.)). Barcelona: Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona.
- Goulding, C. (2000). The commodification of the past, postmodern pastiche, and the search for authentic experiences at contemporary heritage attractions. *European Journal of Marketing*, 34(7), 835–853.
- Gwyndaf, W. (1995). Local governance and urban prospects: The potential of City Pride. *Local Economy*, 10(2), 100–107.
- Herzfeld, M. (1991). *A place in history: Social and monumental time in a Cretan town*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jameson, J. (2004). Introduction. Archaeology and reconstruction. In J. Jameson (Ed.), *The reconstructed past. Reconstructions in the public interpretation of archaeology and history* (pp. 1–18). Oxford: Altamira Press.
- Lau, R. (2010). Revisiting authenticity: A social realist approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(2), 478–498.
- Lees, L., Slater, T., & Wyly, E. (2008). *Gentrification*. London: Routledge.
- MacCannell, D. (1976). *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.
- Martorell, J. (1908). *Informe al alcalde de Barcelona*. Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de Barcelona. Jeroni Martorell. Documentación Personal, Caja 9, Carpeta 20, Folio 137.
- Martorell, J. (1911). Reforma interior de Barcelona. Exposición al Excmo. Ayuntamiento. *La Cataluña*, 189, 306–308.
- Medina Lasansky, D. (2004). *The Renaissance perfected: Architecture, spectacle and tourism in fascist Italy*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Miles, S. (2010). *Spaces for consumption*. Sage: London.
- Mills, S. (2007). Moving buildings and changing history. In N. Moore & Y. Whelan (Eds.), *Heritage, memory and the politics of identity: New perspectives in the cultural landscape* (pp. 109–119). Burlington: Ashgate.
- Muñoz-Rojas Oscarsson, O. (2013). Archaeology, Nostalgia, and tourism in post-civil war Barcelona (1939–1959). *Journal of Urban History*, 39(3), 478–494.
- Nicolau, A. (1999). La Barcelona Gòtica al Palau Reial Major. In VVAA (Ed.), *La Barcelona Gòtica* (pp. 15–23). Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona.
- Palou i Rubio, S. (2012). *Barcelona destinació turística. Un segle d'imatges y de promoció pública* [Barcelona tourist destination. A century of images and public promotion]. Barcelona: Vitel-la.
- Peran, M., Suàrez, A., & Vidal, M. (1994). Noucentisme i ciutat. In M. Peran, A. Suàrez, & M. Vidal (Eds.), *Noucentisme i ciutat* (pp. 9–31). Barcelona: CCCB.
- Puig i Cadafalch, J. (1913). La casa catalana. In Ajuntament de Barcelona (Ed.), *Primer congrés d'història de la corona d'Aragó*, (pp. 1041–1060, Vol. II (II Vols.)). Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona.
- Reisinger, Y., & Steiner, C. J. (2006). Reconceptualizing object authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(1), 65–86.
- Reyes, F. (1919). El porvenir de Barcelona. Desaparición de las vías férreas. *Barcelona Atracción*, 103, 1.
- Rowan, Y., & Baram, U. (2004). Archaeology after nationalism: Globalization and the consumption of the past. In Y. Rowan & U. Baram (Eds.), *Marketing heritage: archaeology and the consumption of the past* (pp. 3–22). California: Altamira Press.
- Rubió i Bellvé, M. (1913). Pro Barcelona. Un discurs notable. *La Veu de Catalunya*, 6 de febrero, 1.
- Rucabado, R. (1911). Un barrio gòtico en Barcelona. *La Cataluña*, 189, 308–311.

- Serra i Roca, J. (1929). Les marques de turismo. *La Veu de Catalunya*, 22 de diciembre, 5.
- Tulp. (1909). Barcelona, estació d'hivern. *La Esquella de la Torrotxa*, 1569, 50–52.
- Vega i March, M. (1918). *El orgullo de la ciudad* [The pride of the city]. Barcelona: Imprenta Barcelonesa.
- Vega i March, M. (1914). Programa d'algunes obres a fer, amb motiu o amb ocasió de l'Exposició de 1917. *La Catalunya*, 343, 338–342.
- Vidal Casellas, D. (2006). *L'imaginari monumental i artístic del turisme cultural. El cas de la revista Barcelona Atracció* (Doctoral Dissertation). Universidad de Girona, Girona.
- Waitt, G. (2000). Consuming heritage: Perceived historical authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(4), 835–862.
- Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 349–370.
- Ward, S. (1998). *Selling places: The marketing and promotion of towns and cities, 1850–2000*. London: SPON.
- Wiles, C., & Vander, G. (2008). Consideration of historical authenticity in heritage tourism, planning and development. In C. LeBlanc & C. Vogt (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2007 northeastern recreation research symposium* (pp. 292–298). Washington, DC: USDA.
- Zukin, S. (1995). *The cultures of cities*. Oxford: Blackwell.