Guiding the 'real' Temple: The construction of authenticity in heritage sites in a state of absence and distance

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the ways in which heritage sites that deal with the memory of the Temple of Jerusalem claim authenticity despite the absence of the Temple and the distance between the location of the site and the original location of the Temple. The paper compares three sites adjacent to the Temple Mount: the Western Wall Heritage Tunnels, the Temple Institute, and the Davidson Center. Each of the sites forms a unique claim of authenticity that is supported by adjusted guided tour performance. The existing literature discusses authenticity as based on emotions or objects that cannot be replaced. This research expands this literature by introducing the concept of potential-based authenticity, authenticity based on future events and authentic objects that can be remade.

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Introduction

Many argue that tourists visiting historical sites are motivated by their search for authenticity, the aspiration to connect, see, or experience the "real thing" (Boorstin, 1964), and that those who manage these sites work hard to provide this experience (MacCannell, 1999). Tourists interested in the historical sites within the ancient city of Rome will likely pay a visit to the Roman Forum, where they can view the remains of numerous monuments, arches, and Temples. If they are interested in the famous Roman leader, Julius Caesar, they can visit the remains of the Temple of Venus Genetrix he erected, walk through the building where he worked, and stand in the exact spot where he was assassinated. In Rome, the remains of the past are accessible today, still in their original locations.

In contrast, tourists and pilgrims interested in visiting the Old City of Jerusalem encounter more challenging circumstances. In this city, the (arguably) most famous building, the Temple, is absent. There are no remains and its original location is inaccessible. In such a situation, how can the heritage sites that deal with the memory of the Temple present themselves as authentic and real? How will authenticity be claimed and created and what sources of authority will support it?

This paper discusses the ways in which heritage sites adjacent to the Temple Mount construct claims of authenticity through adjusted guided tour performance. This is done by comparing three heritage sites that deal with the memory of the Temple: the Western Wall Heritage Tunnels (hereafter: the Tunnels), the Temple Institute, and the Archaeological Park of Jerusalem – Davidson Center, where claims to authenticity are advanced in spite of two challenges: the clear absence of the Temple itself, and the slight, yet important distance between the original location of the Temple and the locations of the heritage sites. The different claims of authenticity are presented and created via adjusted guided tour performances, whose

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character and methods are a part of the message of the site. Thus, narrative and performance bridge the gap, making absence into presence. Moreover, the different claims of authenticity are supported by sources of authority that substantiate the nature of the claim.

According to Jewish tradition, the First Temple was built by King Solomon on Mount Moriah, nowadays called the Temple Mount. This building was destroyed by the Babylonians in the 6th century BCE and subsequently rebuilt. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 AD (Tsafrir, 2009). The memory of the Temple in Jewish tradition revolves around the notion of it being rebuilt at the exact same location, on the Temple Mount. However, since the 7th century, this location has been the site of a Muslim shrine, the Dome of the Rock, which is the third most holy place for Muslims around the world and today, also the main symbol of Palestinian nationhood (Luz, 2004). Due to these political and religious concerns, the heritage sites that deal with the memory of the Temple are located outside of the Temple Mount rather than in the original location of the ancient Temples. These sites are therefore characterized by distance, the gap between the location of the heritage sites and the original location of the Temple, which is very close yet not identical.

This distance, as well as the absence of the Temple itself, makes it hard for the heritage sites around the Temple Mount to present themselves as authentic. There are several heritage sites around the world that also deal with the memory of the Temple, such as the Holy Land Experience Park in Orlando, Florida (Rowan, 2004; Wharton, 2006). However, these sites are located so far from the original location of the Temple that no authenticity is expected from them. The unique proximity of the heritage sites that are adjacent to the Temple Mount, to the original location of the Temple, is a leading factor in their attempt to present authenticity.

While scholars identified with the constructivist theory of authenticity argue that there is no authentic original, only a constructed experience or object (Bruner, 1994; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992), post-modernists assert that any difference between the copy and the original has long since disappeared (Baudrillard, 1983; Eco, 1986; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Melotti, 2011). However, tourists, as well as directors of heritage sites in Jerusalem, have a different motivation and do not share this point of view (Abu El-Haj, 2001). For them this is, to quote Bruner: "just post-modern gibberish" (1994:397). They represent the modernist approach, claiming that an original authentic thing or experience does exist. Visitors to the sites around the Temple Mount strive to connect with the authentic original (Shoval, 2000). They are far from the post-modern heritage tourists that consume tourist attractions ironically (Urry, 1990).

Pilgrims and visitors to the Wall and Temple Mount dream of a "hotter" authenticity and therefore, position holders and directors of heritage sites around the Temple Mount understand their mission as one of presenting the "real thing," rather than a staged experience or a post-modern simulation. The question is how they create such a presentation, in light of the absence of the Temple and the gap in space. Each site uses a different *claim of authenticity*, a kind of argument or method employed in order to present itself as original. A claim of authenticity is the answer to the question: "What is the real here"?

In this study, three different types of claims were identified: 1. Object based authenticity. 2. Experience based authenticity. 3. Potential based authenticity.

Object based authenticity

Perhaps the best-known claim of authenticity stresses the quality of the object. The original objects have an aura of authenticity while the copy does not project the same quality (Benjamin, 1936). According to Belhassen et al.: "This originality can be measured with objective criteria that determine whether the object is authentic or not" (2008:669). This claim is also referred to as *cool authenticity,* which is connected to knowledge and the value of the objects themselves (Selwyn, 1996).

Experience based authenticity

This claim of authenticity is based on the visitor's experience, which is perceived as real. *Cool authenticity* is differentiated from *hot authenticity* which is based on the visitor's identity and feelings (Selwyn, 1996). One of the effects of the authentic experience is that visitors may feel that they are more connected to themselves, and so their own authenticity is enhanced (Fees, 1996). This claim has also been defined as *existential authenticity,* a process by which tourists turn inward towards themselves and find parts of their identity which are not experienced in everyday life (Wang, 1999). Characterization and presentation of the tourist space can affect the creation of experience-based existential authenticity (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Rickly-Boyd, 2013) as well as the atmosphere created by the group surrounding the visitor (Buchmann, Moore, & Fisher, 2010).

Potential based authenticity

While scholars have previously demonstrated that authenticity can be based on objects or emotional experience, this research argues for a third authentication method: *Potential based authenticity*, which relies on actions that will take place in the future. This claim represents the notion that things are real now, in the present, due to the future reality. It is not based on an existing inherent aura of objects, or on the emotional experience of the visitors, but rather on actions and realities that are yet to come. The existing literature in the field discusses various ways in which authenticity is based on material or emo-