Preserving the heritage of humanity? Obtaining world heritage status and the Impacts of listing
Aa, Bart J.M. van der
Chapter 6
Touring world heritage

In the eighteenth century Thomas Cook stated that “travel… promotes universal brotherhood” (quoted in Lash and Urry 1994: 262). International organisations support tourism for its contributions to world peace, as “travel broadens the mind” (Cooper et al. 1993: 1; Robinson 1999: 3). UNESCO is claimed to be such an organisation, as world citizens can learn about other cultures when they visit world heritage sites: “One of the primary goals in creating the world heritage list was to attract visitors to different areas in the world and, thereby, encourage greater understanding and sharing of experiences among people” (Drost 1996: 483; see also Boniface 1995: 42). Tourism, however, should not result in eroding the qualities of internationally recognised heritage sites. Within the context of this research, two questions arise. First, does the magnitude of visitor pressure change after a world heritage designation? And second, what are the impacts of a world heritage designation on the site’s visitor management?

6.1 World heritage sites as leading tourist attractions

All heritage sites receive visitors, as “heritage and tourism are collaborative industries, heritage … [converts] locations into destinations” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 151; see also Yale 1991: 1). World heritage sites in particular are tourist attractions. They receive fifteen to twenty percent of the tourist market (Musitelli 2003: 331) and there is a relationship ($R^2 = 0.56$) between the number of world heritage sites and the number of tourist arrivals per country (Lazzarotti 2000: 15).

What makes world heritage sites so popular? The world heritage status allows site managers and tourist organisations at world heritage sites to distinguish themselves from other sites. Prominence in any form is helpful because of increased competition among sites (Ashworth and Voogd 1990: 14; Goodall 1990: 259). The world heritage status is a ‘unique selling point’ (Burns and Holden 1995: 67) to attract visitors. Some countries have specific promotion for their world heritage sites, such as in Hungary (Rátz and Puczkó 1999) and South Africa (Koch and Massyn 2001: 153). Increased visitor numbers after a world heritage designation are reported at several sites, such as Te Wahipounamu (New Zealand) (Watson 1992: 16; Hall and Piggin 2002: 406) and Mesa Verde National Park (United States of America) (Ambio 1983: 142).

In addition, the world heritage label allows tourists to choose between similar heritage sites – for example between cities whose qualities are otherwise rather similar (Holcomb 1999: 56; Tunbridge 1984: 178). The world heritage list serves “as a selection of display of top heritage tourism sites” (Boniface 2001: 74). The discerning
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power of the label is useful for the contemporary tourist who seeks qualitatively high-standing sites (Cooper et al. 1993: 265). World heritage sites receive many visitors, as they function as magnets for tourists thanks to their high-standing quality (WTO 1994: viii; Butcher 2003: 119; Drost 1996: 479; Leask and Fyall 2001: 59; Lash and Urry 1994: 253; Yale 1991: 13). Creaser (1994) observes, “Australian world heritage properties read like a travelogue of our most spectacular and unique places” (p. 76).

The world heritage label attracts visitors, as designated sites “serve as destinations in their own right” (Hall and Piggin 2002: 402). The hope to attract more visitors – and reap economic benefits – is also a reason to ask for a world heritage nomination (Von Droste et al. 1992: 8; Page 1995: 116; Nuryanti 1996b: 256-257; Anker et al. 2002: 4).

The danger that “tourism is… promoted before conservation” (WTO 1994: ix) is large when stakeholders regard heritage first of all as an economic resource. There is a real threat that “tourism discovers the quality landscape, invades it, exploits it, spoils it and, finally, recedes” (Anagnostopoulos 1994: 318).

The sheer number of visitors can damage the site, and is often identified as the largest threat to world heritage sites (Batiste 1992: 30; Kuijper 2003: 269). However, visitors do not always cause physical damage when they “gaze at what they encounter” (Urry 1990: 1). Also the ambience of the site can suffer from too many visitors, leading to a site’s “loss of… integrity, its soul” (Boniface 1995: 44). Negative influences of visitors are reported in Kakadu National Park (Australia) (Davis and Weiler 1992), Stonehenge (United Kingdom) and the Lascaux Caves (France) (Butler 1998: 224), Avebury (United Kingdom) (Pitts 1990: 272), the Galápagos Islands (Ecuador) (Von Droste et al. 1992: 7), the Acropolis (Greece), the Pyramids in Egypt, and some pre-colonial sites in Central America (Dix 1990: 394).

World heritage sites, designated to improve their preservation, may be more threatened after listing. Likewise, national parks have been created to better protect the environment, but their designation “has accelerated demands for their recreational use by drawing public attention to them” (Gilg 1979: 165). World heritage sites should not await this destiny, as they have to be preserved for future generations. Nonetheless, tourism leads to damage at the majority of world heritage sites – at forty-six out of sixty-seven world heritage case sites (sixty-eight percent). The question at hand is whether this has been the consequence of the world heritage listing. Does the world heritage designation have an impact on the number of visitors as well as the ensuing pressure stemming from increased use and visits?

6.2 Visitors at world heritage sites

Accurate information on visitors statistics at heritage sites is not always available: “Site records may either not be kept at all… or may be published in combination with other sites… or may (in the majority of cases) be simply unreliable” (Shackley 1998b: 202; see also Buckley 2004: 73). Data collection is further complicated, as such research necessitates information about the change in the number of visitors as a consequence of the world heritage listing. No world heritage site included in the research collects this kind of data. The assembled data is based on what respondents think, not on concrete statistics. Most respondents in this study had difficulties differentiating the ‘regular’ increase in visitors due to the autonomous rise in cultural tourism (Richards 2000: 14; Williams 1998: 47) from the increase because of the world heritage listing.
An analysis of the number of visitors to world heritage sites leads to two main conclusions. First, predominantly decentralised (or non-centrally) nominated, cultural world heritage site see more visitors after their inscription, whereas many centrally nominated sites already receive many visitors before their listing. And second, a world heritage listing has more impact on the number of foreign visitors than domestic ones, leading to increased visitor pressure in holiday periods.

6.2.1 Visitor numbers
Most world heritage sites included in this study, in total 51, did not experience a change in visitor numbers after their listing (table 6-1). There are, however, some impacts of a listing on the number of visitors. Visitor numbers particularly increase at decentralised nominated sites. These sites are underrepresented in this research. The increase can also be enormous at these sites. The number of visitors to Tàrraco (Spain) is claimed to have more than tripled, from about 300,000 in the late 1990s to one million in 2003 (Interview 92).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in visitor numbers</th>
<th>Centrally nominated</th>
<th>Non-centrally nominated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large increase</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small increase</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No increase</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P-value chi-square is 0.00.
Source: Own field study at various world heritage sites.

1) Centrally nominated sites are more established visitor attractions
Most centrally nominated sites receive many visitors and are often among the most visited attractions in a country (Boniface 1995: 45; Kidane and Hecht 1983: 210-211). Examples from Wales and Mexico illustrate the high number of visitors at world heritage sites in general, and at centrally nominated sites in particular. The Welsh Monument Organisation (CADW) has collected visitor statistics for eighteen of its castles. Four of these castles – Beaumaris, Harlech, Caernarfon, and Conwy – are on the world heritage list. Over the last twenty years these four castles together received roughly the same number of visitors as the other fourteen castles (CADW 1976-2001).

Visitor statistics are also available for twenty Mexican archaeological sites run by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). In 2001, the seven world heritage sites – Teotihuacán, Palenque, Monte Albán, Chichén-Itzá, Uxmal, El Tajín, and Xochicalco – received about twice as many visitors as the remaining thirteen sites (SECTUR 2003). The first four archaeological sites listed in the first two years of Mexico’s participation received three times as many visitors than the last three listed sites. A total of 185 archaeological sites run by INAH are classified into four groups with different grades of visitor facilities. The top class, with the ‘best’ visitor facilities contains seventeen sites. Notably, all nine archaeological world heritage sites managed by INAH – apart from Calakmul, listed in 2002 – belong to the top class.
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High visitor numbers and high-quality facilities are often not the consequence of, but are preceded by a world heritage listing of centrally nominated sites: “Durham is not famous for its world heritage site status, but because it is Durham castle and cathedral” (Interview 38). These sites already have established their reputation as visitor attractions before their world heritage listing, and are regarded as ‘must see’ attractions. This limits the impacts of a world heritage designation on the number of visitors.

2) More visitors at decentralised nominated, cultural world heritage sites

Decentralised nominated cultural sites are often less established visitor attractions before their world heritage listing. The listing can lead to more visitor numbers to these sites, which is in part possible through the extension of the site or an extension of the opening hours. The number of visitors to the churches in Vall de Boi (Spain) doubled since the world heritage listing to 140,000, while the number of churches open to the public increased from one to six after listing (Interview 94). Relatively ‘new’ heritage sites become major visitor attractions after a world heritage listing, partly thanks to the high-standing reputation of the other impressive sites on the world heritage list. However, this pattern is not repeated at every site. Almost complete absence of action by the autonomous region of Castilla y León has prevented the archaeological site of Atapuerca from becoming a tourist attraction (Interview 97).

Increase in visitor numbers is seen more often at cultural than at natural sites (table 6-2). The larger increase in visitors to cultural sites (which are often in or near urban areas) than to natural world heritage (which are often in more rural areas) fits within the overall pattern that “international tourists visit urban centres in greater numbers than they do rural areas” (Butler 1998: 212).

Table 6-2: Change in visitor numbers as a result of world heritage listing at cultural and natural sites (number of sites, N = 67).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of site</th>
<th>Large increase</th>
<th>Small increase</th>
<th>No increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P-value chi-square is 0.06.
Source: Own field study at various world heritage sites.

Almost all natural case sites, however, are centrally nominated sites in the United States of America. The number of visitors to natural world heritage sites hardly changes, as most Americans are unaware of the parks’ world heritage status. Great Smoky Mountains receives annually more visitors than any other American park, about ten million, but a respondent states: “I would say that [of] people who come here, probably ninety-nine percent or more do not know that we are a world heritage site” (Interview 45).

The number of visitors to American world heritage sites increased at a higher rate than at non-world heritage sites between 1980 and 2000 (forty percent at world heritage
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sites and twenty percent non-world heritage sites). The forty percent visitor increase at world heritage sites occurred solely at cultural world heritage sites (figure 6-1). The number of visitors to cultural world heritage sites doubled, while the figures stayed roughly the same for natural sites.

Figure 6-1: Number of visitors at natural and cultural world heritage sites in the United States of America.

Source: NPS (2002b), adapted data.

The Statue of Liberty, New York, is one of the cultural sites where the number of visitors increased considerably – from about one million in the early 1980s to more than five million in 2000. The increase is largely due to a major renovation project in the first half of the 1980s, which also prompted the site’s world heritage nomination. The accompanying increase in (international) fame, in part following the world heritage listing, has led to more visitors (Interview 40).

6.2.2 Visitor patterns
Most of the visitors to heritage sites are domestic (Cooper et al. 1993: 1; Nuryanti 1996b: 254; Smith 2000b: 703; Von Droste et al. 1992: 6), but world heritage sites may be more popular with international visitors. Olduvai Gorge (Tanzania) receives many more foreign visitors than domestic ones (Mabulla 2000: 225-226). In addition, there are indications that international visitors are more oriented towards world heritage sites. The world heritage site of Sukhothai is more popular with foreigners than other heritage sites in Thailand (Peleggi 1996: 433-438). An increase in the number of international visitors can have an impact on the site. International visitors are likely to stay longer, for more than one day, and are liable to spend more money – especially if they come from richer countries. In particular the world heritage listing of centrally...
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nominated sites leads to more international visitors, as foreign visitors want to see the ‘best’ available heritage sites.

1) More international visitors than domestic ones

The world heritage status usually induces an increase in international visitors rather than in domestic ones (Table 6-3). The absolute number of extra international visitors following a world heritage listing is often small, but still larger than the increase in domestic visitors.

Table 6-3: Dominant type of visitor as a result of world heritage listing in the case countries (number of sites, N = 54).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P-value chi-square is 0.10.
Source: Own field study at various world heritage sites.

The country where the world heritage designation has in particular led to more international visitors is the United States of America. Twelve American site managers indicated that the world heritage listing might have led to some extra international visitors, none indicated more domestic visitors (see also Douglas 1982: 6). The interest of Americans in their national world heritage sites is low, as the world heritage status has not been much publicised in the United States of America due to anti-United Nations feelings in large parts of the country. Domestic exposure of a site’s world heritage status is liable to result in negative publicity, while the world heritage status is used abroad to attract foreign visitors (Interview 49).

Intercontinental tourists are interested in world heritage sites, both in North America and Europe. North Americans – the largest group of non-European visitors at European heritage sites (Richards 2000: 10-11) – are above all keen on European world heritage sites. The world heritage label has the most impact on international visitors who visit another continent. Intercontinental visitors travel long distances and spend a relatively short period on another continent. They focus on ‘must see’ places with a good reputation and the world heritage label affirms this reputation. The world heritage status is a means that facilitates “the tourist gaze” (Urry 1990: 1). “I think, the number of visitors has increased due to the world heritage listing. Tourists think: ‘If I want to see the best, then I have to visit the world heritage sites’” (Interview 67, translated; see also Weightman 1987: 234).

The number of international visitors increases in particular at centrally nominated sites (Table 6-4). Centrally nominated sites are more likely to be included in a tour itinerary
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that comprises only the (very) ‘best’ heritage attractions, which may indicate that centrally nominated sites are of a higher quality than decentralised nominated sites.

Table 6-4: Types of visitors as a result of world heritage listing at centrally and non-centrally nominated sites (number of sites, N = 54).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centrally nominated</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-centrally nominated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P-value chi-square is 0.49.
Source: Own field study at various world heritage sites.

2) Visitor peaks in holiday periods
Richards (1996) has identified a schism in the cultural tourism market: “the cultural attraction market is becoming increasingly polarised between a few major attractions which attract millions of visitors every year, and a growing number of smaller attractions, who must share a declining pool of visitors between them” (p. 318). World heritage sites, belonging to the top segment of the tourism market, will often fall in the first category. Many centrally nominated sites already received many visitors before the designation, while the number of visitors particularly increases at decentralised nominated sites. Most visitors come to world heritage sites in a limited period of time, leading to high visitor pressure within a condensed period, quietude at other times (see photo 6-1).

Photo 6-1: Varving visitor pressure: Everglades and Kalwarija Zebrzydowska.

The visitor pattern at Welsh world heritage castles and non-world heritage castles illustrates that the number of visitors to non-world heritage sites is more spread out. Throughout the year a world heritage castle receives many more visitors than other castles, but there is almost no difference between them in the winter months. Visitors especially come to the world heritage castles in August, during the summer holidays in good weather (figure 6-2). On average about 30,000 visitors visit a world heritage castle in August – peaking at Caernarfon with about 42,000 visitors. In comparison, the average number of visitors at the other fourteen castles is about 5,000 in August – with the highest number of visitors at Castell Coch in Cardiff with about 12,000 visitors.
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Figure 6-2: Average number of visitors at four Welsh world heritage castles and fourteen other Welsh castles, 2001.

![Graph showing the average number of visitors at Welsh world heritage castles and other Welsh castles from January to December 2001.](image)

Source: CADW (1976-2001), adapted data.

6.3 Factors influencing the number of visitors to world heritage sites

A world heritage listing is not the only factor that leads to more visitors (see also Buckley 2004: 82), but the status can play a part in this. The low share of visitors that visit a site for its world heritage status is exemplified by Cahokia Mounds (United States of America). In 2002, about five percent of almost 400,000 visitors signed the guest book (Cahokia Mounds 2003). Of the in total 7,920 visitors – more than ninety percent American – ‘only’ fifteen to twenty persons had heard about the site from UN-related sources. A score of 0.25 percent is remarkably low for a decentralised nominated site that is one of the least well-known American world heritage sites (Interview 42). The number of visitors that will purposely visit already well-known sites for their world heritage status, such as Yosemite or the Grand Canyon, is likely to be even lower.

Still the world heritage status may, however, function indirectly as an engine for higher visitor numbers. Cahokia Mounds received the world heritage status in 1982 and the visitor numbers remained the same after that. The status became a useful argument to convince state politicians that the site needed a better visitor centre. The new centre opened in 1989 and the number of visitors increased from less than 100,000 to more than 400,000 visitors in the following years.

The increase in the number of visitors to world heritage sites and the reasons behind such an increase may be explained along three lines. First, world heritage sites can be included in major tourist routes. Second, the world heritage status can lead to intensive and more promotional campaigns (see also Shackley 1998b: 200). And third, the fame of the world heritage site may increase through growing media attention.
6.3.1 Tourist routes

The number of visitors to (world) heritage sites depends on three – often interrelated – factors: a site’s accessibility and inclusion in tourist routes and tours. Tourist routes are created paths, such as the Ruta Maya (Evans 2002b: 8), that tourist and tour operators entirely or partly follow when they put together a (package) tour. Inclusion of the routes is often a prerequisite for success in attracting more visitors: “tour operators… play an important role in determining which locations will be successful in the competitive struggle for favour of the cultural tourist” (Richards 2000: 12). Tour operators frequently refer to a site’s world heritage status (box 6-1).

In Mexico the world heritage sites that lie along a tourist route witness the largest increase in international visitors. International visitor numbers are claimed to have increased in Puebla, Oaxaca and Palenque, while three colonial world heritage cities on the northwest side of Mexico City – Morelia, Guanajuato and Zacatecas – ‘only’ received more national visitors as a consequence of their low accessibility. The Dutch world heritage site of the Wouda pumping station receives fewer visitors than the Cruquius pumping station, which is not a world heritage site, as the former lies further away from the international tourist centre of the Netherlands, the area in and around Amsterdam (Interview 22). However, a location near a country’s tourist centre does not always lead to more visitors. The Beemster polder still receives much fewer visitors than two ‘typical’ Dutch villages of Marken and Volendam, partly because the polder is not included in any tour operator’s itinerary (Interview 17).

There is no indication that the world heritage status has an (immediate) impact on creating new tourist routes, but existing ones may be (slightly) adapted. World heritage sites near tourist routes may attract more visitors after a world heritage designation. Some world heritage sites receive more visitors, as they are located near mass tourism places (see also Williams and Shaw 1991: 19). The archaeological sites in Tarraco attract many tourists from the Costa Dorada. The number of visitors increased at the Castle of the Teutonic Order in Malbork (Poland) – not far from the East Sea – in the last two years, as the good weather drew more Polish people to the seaside (Interview 87).

Box 6-1: Worldheritagetours.com.

Tour operators often refer to a site’s world heritage status in their advertisement, even though “die Welterbeliste der UNESCO ist keineswegs als touristische Enzyklopädia gemeint” (Von Droste 1995b: 338). The world heritage list is used as a reference for intercontinental, culturally tinted travels (Munsters 1997: 133; see also Musitelli 2003: 331). Hall and Piggott (2002: 405) claim that about one in every four tour operators in New Zealand uses the world heritage label in its promotion.

The organisation World Heritage Tours specifically uses the world heritage name, logo and association (World Heritage Tours 2004). The tour company was established in 1978, the same year in which the first world heritage sites were inscribed. Its logo bears some resemblances with the original world heritage logo (figure 6-3). The organisation mentions on its website that the tours – of which almost half are in Asia – are based on UNESCO world heritage sites.

Using the world heritage name and logo seems to be more important to the organisation than visiting world heritage sites. Participating travellers visit a world
heritage site once every four days. The eighty-four tours last on average about thirteen
days, wherein on average almost 3.5 world heritage sites are visited. There is one trip
that goes to as many world heritage sites as the number of days of the tour. The tour
‘Czech: Seat of world heritage’ visits nine world heritage sites in nine days.

Figure 6-3: World heritage labels: tours (left) and convention (right).


6.3.2 Promotion
The level of promotion is a second factor that influences the number of visitors after a
site’s listing. Promotional campaigns by heritage cities aim to attract more visitors, but
there are also certain heritage categories that largely abstain from promotion. Most
centrally nominated or nationally owned sites hardly undertake promotional activities.
Managers of well-known sites, such as Stonehenge, Teotihuacán, Statue of Liberty,
Grand Canyon, and Westminster, hardly promote their site or world heritage status (see
also Evans 2002b: 9-10). Their already existing popularity warrants ‘de-marketing’
(Smith 2003: 114) to enhance the site’s preservation.
Nationally owned heritage sites, whose financial means are largely independent from
the number of visitors, do not carry out much promotion. In Mexico managers at
archaeological zones have different views on tourism than stakeholders in cities:
“Cities have more freedom to undertake action, are more often in private ownership.
Tourism is also more important for historic cities [as a source of income. In contrast,] archaeological zones are national property and it is not allowed to build modern
buildings within an archaeological zone, which limits the development of tourist plans”
(Interview 61, translated).
Some other sites abstain from promotion on moral or religious grounds. Managers at
Auschwitz think it is inappropriate to promote a former concentration camp, while
Pueblo de Taos (United States of America) (Interview 48), Tongariro (New Zealand),
Kakadu, and Ayers rock (both Australia) (Fontein 2000: 47) are (temporarily) closed
when the local community uses the site for religious ends. These restrictions have been
built in to counter, what Leu (1998) calls, “the egoism of the market” (p. 46).

Active promotion by smaller world heritage cities
The Organisation of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) is the only international world
heritage association that promotes tourism. The organisation was established in 1993
“to develop a sense of solidarity and a co-operative relationship between world
heritage cities” (Turtinen 2000: 16). Of the six case countries, world heritage sites in
Spain, Mexico and Poland participate the most in the OWHC with seventeen, nine and
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five participants, respectively. Three, two and zero sites in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States of America participate in the OWHC (OWHC 2004). Spain is also the country where the world heritage label is most visible (see box 6-2). A common feature by the world heritage cities in Spain, Mexico, and to some extent Poland is a move toward a coherent promotion through their respective national associations. In Mexico the mayor of Morelia was involved in creating Ciudades Mexicanas del Patrimonio de la Humanidad in 1996. The main goals were to be more independent of the federal government, to keep the costs of promotion low and to cooperate with the Mexican Ministry of Tourism (Secretaría de Turismo, SECTUR). All Mexican cities participate, except Mexico City that has its own programme. The national tourism organisation SECTUR supports this cooperation and contributes annually about €150,000 per city. The money is meant for the purpose of putting up signboards, improving the appearance of buildings, opening info kiosks, for marketing and publicity (Interview 55).

In Spain local actors in the field of tourism claim that the national cooperation of Ciudades Patrimonio de la Humanidad España is more helpful than the world heritage listing (Interview 100 and 107). The Spanish association of world heritage cities was created in the early 1990s, among others by the mayors of Santiago de Compostela and Ávila. All eleven Spanish world heritage cities participate in this association. Spain’s and Mexico’s respective national organisations pay exclusive attention to world heritage cities, not non-world heritage cities or cities with world heritage sites. The exclusion keeps the competition among sites limited and the status of world heritage city selective: “Only cities that are world heritage can be part of the association. Eleven is even too much, to promote together” (Interview 100). The world heritage sites in Tarragona, whose archaeological remains are found in the inner city, are excluded. The city of Córdoba, with only one building complex – the Mezquita – on the world heritage list in 1994, asked for an extension of its world heritage site to enable its participation in the Spanish association. The extension did not follow from a recognition of Córdoba’s inner city’s outstanding universal value, but in the city’s desire to join the Spanish group “as we saw this as an opportunity to culturally promote the city” (Interview 107, translated). Since then, politicians, mayors and aldermen in Córdoba are more aware of the city’s qualities, local promotional activities are organised and Córdoba is sold “as a commercial product” (Interview 107, translated). The world heritage status as a tool to attract more visitors is most useful for decentralised nominated, smaller cities and sites: “There are eleven world heritage sites in Poland and we frequently organise meetings for the representatives of these world heritage sites to exchange information. A pattern is visible in that smaller places are better able to utilise the possibilities that have come with the new situation. Zamość is doing very well, also Malbork and Świdnica. The world heritage listing has less meaning for the larger cities, such as Kraków and Warszawa… not much changes in practice in view of what they already have on offer” (Interview 84, translated). Some centrally nominated cities look for new alternatives, as the number of world heritage sites increases. The status of ‘cultural capital 2000’ has been a more useful promotional tool than the world heritage status for the Polish city of Kraków, as the European status is newer, more accurate and effective (Interview 79). The city of Córdoba tries to promote itself by becoming Europe’s cultural capital in 2016.
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**Box 6-2: Usage of the world heritage label.**

The world heritage status or logo can be reproduced in several instances – signboards, writing paper or employees’ business cards – but there are differences in how often and in what way sites show their status. The case country with the most “expressions” is Spain. Whereas the world heritage signboard for Schokland along the motorway is an exception in the Netherlands (Beusekom 1999: 20), large, purple signboards indicating that one is approaching a world heritage site are standard in Spain – also for non-world heritage sites. The local bus in Aranjuez and the inside wall of a pub in Ávila show the text “Patrimonio de la humanidad” (photo 6-2). The label abounds in the city of Tarragona, also when there is no link with the Roman heritage: “We deliberately put the UNESCO world heritage logo on everything that we produce, so that the people become aware of the status… For example, the UNESCO world heritage logo was replicated during the sixth meeting of female entrepreneurs” (Interview 92, translated).

**Photo 6-2: Using the status: Xochimilco, Mammoth cave, Atapuerca, and Aranjuez.**

The world heritage logo which helps to attract visitors has been in use since the early 1990s at the Wieliczka salt mine: “This is part of our cooperation with UNESCO. We use the UNESCO logo, we put it into our advertising and leaflets. That is how it works. UNESCO has Wieliczka on the list and we get their moral support” (Interview 82, translated). There are, however, also cases in which tourist actors have not used the world heritage label, such as the state-run, profit-making organisation of CULTUR at the archaeological world heritage sites on Yucatán (Mexico) (Interview 64).

The political circumstances influence to what degree the world heritage logo is shown. In Mexico, the world heritage status is highly visible around municipal offices. Anti-UN feelings in the United States of America largely circumvent usage of the label:
“There is a fair amount of suspicion about the UN organisations… and we do not specifically mention UN or UNESCO in our discussions or in our material talking about our world heritage listing” (Interview 50). The management at Great Smokey Mountains has never dared to put up a signboard to indicate the world heritage status, the world heritage signboard has been removed at Mesa Verde and visitors to Yellowstone that are interested in a world heritage leaflet, “have to ask specifically for that brochure on US world heritage sites in order to get it” (Interview 53). Mammoth Cave is the only American case site where the world heritage status is visible at the park’s entrance.

6.3.3 Media attention

A world heritage designation can also lead to more visitors through increased media attention because “world heritage sites are being given more and more publicity… tourism at world heritage sites has significantly increased” (Batisse 1992: 30). Media attention increases in particular at decentralised nominated sites, while the international media is most interested in centrally nominated sites. This pattern is similar to the changes in the number of visitors and their origin after a world heritage designation.

1) More media attention for decentralised nominated sites

Decentralised (or non-centrally), often later, nominated heritage sites see most often an increase in media attention after listing (table 6-5).

Table 6-5: Change in media attention as a result of world heritage listing at centrally and non-centrally nominated sites (number of sites, N = 61).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media attention</th>
<th>Increased attention</th>
<th>Unchanged attention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centrally nominated</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-centrally nominated</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P-value chi-square is 0.09.
Source: Own field study at various world heritage sites.

Increasing press coverage is manifested in two ways. Site managers more often contact the media, while newspapers are more willing to include an item about a world heritage site: “I can now call the national newspapers and tell them what is going on at Las Médulas, and they immediately publish it. They also phone us nowadays” (Interview 98). The media attention often peaks immediately after the designation and fades away later on, returning back to ‘normal’ as illustrated by the following respondent:

“Immediately after 1997, yes there was a series of articles and such things. Today not anymore, it is as it used to be, the same level. In the 1990s, we had a very rapid increase in film productions… all that decade was full of film productions, and I strongly believe that it must have been connected with the fact that it had been listed on the UNESCO list, because they were mainly foreigners. Somehow, the foreigners opened their eyes to Malbork. There were some feature film productions and lots of documentaries.”

(Interview 87)
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2) Scale level of media attention
Centrally nominated sites receive more media attention from the international level than decentralised nominated sites after listing (table 6-6, see also box 6-3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increasing media attention at different scale level</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centrally nominated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-centrally nominated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P-value chi-square is 0.21.

Source: Own field study at various world heritage sites.

It should be noted that the large amount of attention for centrally nominated sites is partly influenced by the situation in the United States of America:

“I do not think that we receive extra attention from the American press. The international press is a different story. I think, we are not sure, international visitors are more aware of what world heritage means, and that this is also valid for the international press than for the American press. We get quite some attention from the international press but I am not sure if that is driven by or due to the world heritage status.”

(Interview 50)

A respondent of the defence line of Amsterdam explicated the impact of the listing on receiving attention from a higher level: “The message is propagated by the foundation, but also picked up by the press. In the past, we were mentioned in the local newspaper at best; today we are mentioned in the national newspapers” (Interview 18, translated).

Box 6-3: Representation of world heritage sites and status in the Lonely Planet.

Each case country’s last edition of the tour guide Lonely Planet pays particular attention to centrally nominated and cultural world heritage sites. Centrally nominated sites are significantly more often mentioned as a suggested itinerary, displayed on the national map, and have more photos in the Lonely Planet than decentralised nominated sites. The world heritage status of cultural sites is significantly more often cited, they have more maps and are displayed on more photos than natural sites. These differences suggest that international tourists are more interested in centrally nominated or cultural sites than in decentralised nominated or natural sites.

A comparison between an early (1982) and recent (2002) Mexican edition of the Lonely Planet shows that most of the decentralised nominated sites were not yet an international tourist attraction in the early 1980s. The latter edition deals with all Mexican world heritage sites, whereas the 1982 edition dealt with half of them. It only included the cultural sites that were listed during Mexico’s first two years of nominating sites, as well as four decentralised nominated cities (Morelia, Zacatecas, Querétaro and Campeche) and one archaeological site (Uxmal).
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A designation hardly has an impact on a site’s representation in the *Lonely Planet*. A comparison of four successive Polish editions of the *Lonely Planets* (1993, 1996, 1999 and 2002 – each about 600 pages long) shows that a site’s representation does not change after its world heritage listing. The same number of pages is spent on a site, no map or colour photo is added and the advised itinerary still does not refer to a site after listing. The world heritage status is mentioned in later editions, with some time lag, for all world heritage sites. The last two editions contain a section – between ‘highlights’ and ‘suggested itineraries’ – and cites all Polish world heritage sites.

6.4 Visitor management at world heritage sites

Most world heritage sites have to deal with increasing visitor pressure. The centrally nominated sites already received many visitors before their designation, whereas decentralised nominated sites often see a large increase after their world heritage listing. The listing may put more visitor pressure on a site, but it can also lead to more awareness among site managers and visitors. Tourism can be an incentive to preserve the environment better, as visitors will only go to high-quality sites (Williams 1998: 100). The relationship between world heritage listing and visitor management leads to two questions. First, do site managers introduce certain types of visitor management to deal more effectively with the visitor pressure after the world heritage designation? And second, in what way is the physical environment adapted for visitors?

6.4.1 Unchanging visitor management

Various forms of visitor management can be introduced after the world heritage listing to prevent or limit negative consequences of visitors. Such measures can be the consequence of increased pride or an understanding of one’s responsibility to preserve the world heritage site (see also Page 1995: 183) as shown by the following response:

“The world heritage status has made me happier… you could say it is a gift, it has been given to me. So, I respect it…. I think the world heritage status is an added extra. The visitors come anyway, but it is always in the forefront of our minds that it [Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey] is a world heritage site and we have to remember that when we are making policies and changes… I think, the status makes us think more beyond the boundary, literally… I think because we have a commitment to UNESCO to manage the site in a sustainable way.”

(Interview 35)

Davis and Weiler (1992) state that “it becomes difficult to limit visitors once a location has gained a reputation as an attractive destination. At this point the management requirement becomes one of damage control” (p. 313; see also Shah 1995: 2). A number of options are available to restrict the damage resulting from tourism. To mention some, limiting the number of visitors by increasing the entrance fee (Dix 1990: 395; Ceballos-Lascuráin 1996: 114), showing replicas instead of original objects, closing the ‘most valuable’ parts of the site (Pearson and Sullivan 1995), introducing circular routes instead of allowing visitors to roam around (Shackley 1999: 77; Helskog 1988: 542-545), or spreading visitors over different heritage places (Drdáchý 2001: 50).
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There are some examples of good practice, such as the restricted number of cars at Mesa Verde and Mana Pools National Park, Zimbabwe (Von Droste et al. 1992: 8). At the Giant’s Causeway (United Kingdom) and Palenque (Mexico) certain parts of the site have been closed off, but these measures are not related to the site’s world heritage recognition. A respondent from the archaeological zone of Palenque stated:

“A tomb was closed in 1999 to the public as the stuccos sustained damage from the minerals in human breath and sweat. Today, only sixty persons are allowed in the tomb between four and five in the afternoon, but those interested have to apply for this. One can see a replica at the entrance of the archaeological zone. However, such measures are not prompted by the world heritage status.”

(Interview 66, translated)

The world heritage listing can also lead to an extension of the opening hours of the site for visits or tours. In the past the Wouda steam pumping station (the Netherlands) was only open on National Heritage Day or when the pumping station was operating – which occurred a couple of times a year. Since the world heritage listing the pumping station is open to the public at fixed times (Interview 22; see also Smith 2000a: 411 on Derwent Valley Mills, United Kingdom).

Visitor management measures have not been introduced at most world heritage sites. Most sites have no other visitor management plan than plans to attract (more) visitors. No site included in this research has levied a higher entrance fee after the world heritage designation as a means to regulate the number of visitors. The most valuable parts of the site are hardly ever closed and the permitted number of visitors remains generally unchanged after a world heritage designation. The only place where a circular route was introduced is Fountains Abbey, but this is more a coincidence rather than a consequence of the world heritage listing (Interview 35).

6.4.2 Adapting the physical environment for tourism purposes

The world heritage listing of decentralised nominated sites is more often an incentive for constructing new visitor facilities – ranging from parking facilities to visitor centres, from footpaths to toilets – than at centrally nominated sites (table 6-7). World heritage sites do not share a common standard concerning visitor facilities (photo 6-3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitor facilities</th>
<th>Attributed to listing</th>
<th>Unrelated to listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centrally nominated</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-centrally nominated</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P-value chi-square is 0.11.
Source: Own field study at various world heritage sites.

Once world heritage status is acquired, this leads to more changes in heritage cities than at other kinds of heritage sites. The world heritage status was a powerful argument.
in several Mexican cities to make sites more attractive for visitors, such as Morelia (Interview 71), Mexico City and Puebla (Harrison and McVey 1997: 321-322; Jones and Varley 1994: 41; Churchill 2000: 2). The world heritage listing has also been an important incentive for large-scale renovations in the two Spanish towns of Tarragona and Lugo. In Tarragona some parts of the medieval inner city were pulled down, as the medieval town of Tarragona is largely built on the Roman city of Tàrraco – for example, the medieval Cathedral lies on top of the Roman Circus. The world heritage status has facilitated a regeneration programme in Lugo that was formalised in 1997. The government of the autonomous region of Galicia offers financial compensation to house owners whose homes are built on and along the Roman wall (photo 6-4). Many houses on the west side of the city within the Roman walls have already been expropriated (Interview 99).

Photo 6-3: Provision of visitor facilities at world heritage sites: Parking facilities at Aranjuez and Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.

Photo 6-4: Renovation in Lugo has to precede new tourism developments.
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The world heritage status may trigger a gentrification process in world heritage cities which improves the state of the buildings and present a ‘cleaner’ appearance. City councils can try to start this process, but restorations may have an adverse effect on the ‘original’ local population. Street traders and inhabitants are often replaced by richer people (Jones 1994: 316). The renovation project in Morelia included the removal of the street traders who had occupied the centre for almost twenty years. Jones and Varley (1999), commenting on the situation in Puebla, believe that there is “an underlying ‘racial’ motivation behind the concern to repopulate the historic centre with ‘another kind of people’: a search to stress ‘Spanish’ rather than ‘Indian’ elements in the city’s cultural heritage and identity” (p. 1560).

In Tarragona, the municipality tries to excavate Roman buildings at the expense of existing, more modern buildings. The world heritage status is claimed to be a useful tool to expropriate property. The municipality is determined to recover more parts of the former Roman site, such as those around the present excavation of Circ Romà. To quote a respondent:

“There is one building with a huge painting of the UNESCO logo on its wall. That building is very ugly and we would like to pull it down. However, this will cost a lot of money, as people still live in this building… We painted a large UNESCO logo on the premise, as a means to define our place, our territory: ‘This house is ours and will be demolished soon.’ ”

(Interview 92, translated)

Photo 6-5: World heritage as a means of claiming space: Tàrraco.

It is no exception that (certain parts of) the local population is removed from the site after a world heritage listing. Street traders are regarded as problematic at Borobudur (Indonesia) and Quito (Ecuador) (Dahles 2001: 69; Middleton 2003: 73). Farmers have been relocated from their plots near Borobudur to enable the construction of parking facilities (Renes 2004: 11). Ashine (1982) provides similar evidence from Simen National Park (Ethiopia): “With the acceptance of the park as a world heritage site, the whole perspective of the development of the area underwent a great change. The world
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acclamation given to this area, through this acceptance, created a national awareness. The government took strong measures to resettle most of these people in a more congenial land elsewhere” (p. 738). The focus on renovations, tourism developments and local exclusion can lead to silent protest voices in the inner city (see box 6-4).

Box 6-4: ‘Vandalism’ of world heritage symbols.

An INAH signboard at the entrance of the Mexican world heritage site of Chichén-Itzá (Mexico) on the Yucatán Peninsula states: “Chichén-Itzá zona arqueológica, Patrimonio Cultural del Pueblo Yucateco, Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación, Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad.” The text indicates that this world heritage site belongs to people at all scale levels – local, national and global. Local populations in cities are often indifferent towards a world heritage designation, especially in cities with a long and established visitor tradition (see Evans 2002a: 133 on Quebec City, Canada). Local populations in smaller, decentralised nominated world heritage cities are more often against gentrification, especially when entire city centres are turned into museums (Musitelli 2003: 331; Lotens 2002: 25). In these cases, tourism becomes a medium for cultural conflict and misunderstanding between individuals and cultures (Robinson 1999: 6-7; Hall 1994: 89). Gentrification processes open discussions about whose heritage is to be preserved, and whether groups have the right to appropriate another’s heritage (Tunbridge 1984: 174; Tunbridge 1994: 123).

Photo 6-6: Graffiti on world heritage symbols: Guanajuato, Morelia and Ávila.

World heritage symbols, plaques and information boards have been destroyed. Such acts may be regarded as acts of vandalism or as indications of a local population’s objection to the listing. In the two Mexican cities of Morelia and Guanajuato fairly new world heritage signboards are bespattered with graffiti (photo 6-6). The buildings on the Roman walls in Lugo have been marred by graffiti – echoing some people’s sentiments for Galicia’s independence from Spain – and one information panel has been demolished. In the Spanish town of Ávila the world heritage plaque on the wall has been painted with the text: “Soy la alkalde” (I am the mayor).
Most respondents regard such destruction as acts of vandalism. In Zacatecas the local, rather poor population uses the world heritage status during political demonstrations and paint the walls of buildings. The local population knows that it will hit a raw nerve among the city’s governors, as the world heritage status and the town’s architecture are the politicians’ hobby-horse (Interview 73).

6.5 Concluding remarks
Almost all world heritage sites bear the heavy brunt of tourism. Most of the centrally selected, earlier listed world heritage sites were already famous heritage attractions before their world heritage listing. As such, the world heritage listing mainly induces bigger visitor numbers at decentralised nominated, cultural heritage sites. The throngs of visitors are concentrated within a particular period – summertime – and leads to increased visitor pressure. However, the world heritage status does not help to deal with this pressure. Site managers are sometimes more aware of the importance of preserving the site, but this hardly ever results in the introduction of visitor management measures to relieve the pressure. The decentralised nominated sites, especially the Spanish, Mexican and Polish cities are least prepared to deal with the increasing visitor numbers, with sometimes far-reaching side-effects for the ‘original’ local population.