

INTRODUCING WHTRN (World Heritage Tourism Research Network)



The World Heritage List now includes over 890 properties from around the world all deemed to have an outstanding value to humanity (UNESCO, 2009). Paralleling this increased interest in nominating natural and cultural heritage, there has been a burgeoning global tourism market with interest, access and means to travel to visit these heritage sites and properties, placing extreme pressure on many of them. When World Heritage landscapes, both cultural and natural, become cultural tourism destinations, complex management challenges cut across social, financial, environmental, and political domains, and also extend to our intangible heritage assets. With the increasing number of designated World Heritage sites and properties, emergent and serious gaps in this research area have become evident.

Recognizing these gaps, the idea of an international and multidisciplinary network of social scientists was launched by Dr. E. Wanda George, Mount Saint Vincent University, and Halifax, Canada. UNESCO experts, tourism scholars and researchers joined forces and ideas (Halifax meeting 2008). The objective of the network is to exchange knowledge and expertise and gradually develop a collaborative and comparative research program that would focus on growing concerns and issues associated with the designation of UNESCO World Heritage status. This addresses the complex relationships and interconnections between cultural heritage planning

and management of World Heritage Sites as global tourism destinations. The initiatives are to organize intensive seminars (as we did in Halifax-Canada 2008, Leuven-Belgium-2009) and to integrate well-targeted workshop into conference programs that are related to cultural tourism and heritage. (Such as the June 2010 conferences in Quebec –Canada and Evora Portugal)

<http://english.fsa.ulaval.ca/sgc/faculty/quebec2010>

<http://www.heritage2010.greenlines-institute.org>

Title of Workshop: The Tourism Destiny of Cultural World Heritage Sites: Focus on Management Issues .

Ideas about this theme were developed in a co –authored chapter ; *The tourism destiny of World Heritage cultural sites*, by Myriam Jansen-Verbeke (K. U. Leuven-Belgium) and Bob McKecher (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR) (forthcoming publication of the Academy; *Tourism a 20/20 vision*. eds R.Butler & D.Pearce)

So far, three academy members are involved in the network and the workshops (Bob McKecher (Hongkong) and Myriam Jansen -Verbeke (Leuven) were among the initiators (2008 –Halifax meeting) and Geoff Wall (Waterloo- Ca) is joining in as a discussion leader in the Quebec workshop.

Procedures for expanding membership and action plans of WHTRN will be communicated during the Quebec workshop.

More information on the current team and ambitions will soon be available:

www.WHTRN.ca (under construction)

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