Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage

Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism

edited by Nezar AlSayyad



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Preface

This book owes its origins to a discussion I had with Ananya Roy in early 1997. Together, we had just finished organizing the Fifth Conference of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE), in Berkeley, California, which dealt with the theme 'Identity and the Making of Tradition'. We were both convinced that while the conference had raised the level of awareness and reflected interest in the processes through which identity discourses shape practices of tradition, it had not adequately questioned basic assumptions about the nature of national identities, national heritages, and the commercial dimensions of traditional environments. Ananya challenged me, and then later helped me write the Call for Papers for the following IASTE conference, 'Manufacturing Heritage and Consuming Tradition: Development, Preservation and Tourism in the Age of Globalization'. This conference, held in Cairo, Egypt, in December 1998, was one of the most successful IASTE has ever organized. Participants were asked both to question the impact of tourism on traditional environments, and to consider the ways that the nations of both the First and Third Worlds have resorted to heritage preservation and the reinvention of traditional practices as new forms of resistance against the homogenizing forces of modernity and globalization.

During the 1998 conference it became clear that several of the keynote papers were particularly successful at exploring key conference themes — among them, how nations, regions and cities have utilized and exploited vernacular built heritage to attract international investors at a time of evertightening global economic competition, and how the tourist industry has introduced new paradigms of the vernacular and/or traditional, based on the production of entire communities and social spaces that cater almost exclusively to the 'other'. It was then that I decided to pursue the making of this book in its current form, a job that required asking several of the keynote speakers, as well as several presenters at regular sessions at the conference, to rewrite their papers with a set of common themes in mind.

The last few years have witnessed the emergence of a number of good books on the production of cultural landscapes and the making and selling of traditional objects. This book will add a new dimension to this literature. It differs from most previously published works in its primary emphasis on the built environment. The contributing authors provide a rich set of case studies spanning different types of environments, various scales of settlement, and a variety of geographical locales, starting from the late nineteenth century, and culminating with the end of the twentieth century.

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While the contributing authors did not originally coordinate their papers, their exposure to each others' work during the conference may have helped smooth the process of putting this book together. I am deeply grateful for their cooperation in reworking their original presentations to meet the larger themes of this volume. In addition, a number of other people deserve special thanks. J.R. Cousineau and Duanfang Lu helped with library research. David Moffat helped edit and prepare the manuscript for publication. Ann Rudkin initiated the idea of the book and handled ir in its final stages. I am grateful for her commitment to the project and work on the manuscript. Also, I must thank Caroline Mallinder, who was equally interested, and who kept sending me subtle reminders to finish the book through colleagues she met at recent conferences. I have been delighted with her enthusiasm.

Finally, I have benefited from my association with several research units at the University of California at Berkeley. And I am grateful to my colleagues and students, whose interests have helped shape the book. While some will find answers to their questions here, others may not. It is my hope that a continuing process of critical inquiry around the themes of the book will shape further investigations in this important intellectual arena.

Nezar AlSayyad Berkeley, October 2000

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