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The social production of ‘attractive authenticity’ at the World Heritage Site of Røros, Norway

Torgrim Sneve Guttormsen* and Knut Fageraas

Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research, NIKU, Storgata 2, Postbox 736 Sentrum, 0105 Oslo, Norway

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This paper examines how authenticity and its use as a way of conceptualising the past participates in processes of heritage production, which are here defined as both the social construction of heritage sites and the uses of heritage sites as resources to achieve social goals. We argue that the social production of place and the social values generated by place are linked by a common approach based on the use of ‘place attraction’ as a unifying social concept. The World Heritage Site of Røros has as an attractive place become a resource for the production of cultural capital among various stakeholders, taking the form of a large body of ‘heritage knowledges’. However, a symbolic capital production of ‘attractive authenticity’ has today generated an idealised past and a purified iconic image of Røros as World Heritage. The discourse of ‘attractive authenticity’ reveals a conflict of interests where symbolic capital unfolds and makes power relations evident. This exposes a discussion about cultural heritage management practices at World Heritage Sites.

Keywords: World Heritage; authenticity; cultural and symbolic capital; Røros; Norway

Introduction

A major trend in World Heritage studies today is a shift in focus away from professional management frameworks and regimes towards public concerns where the primary subjects are the experiences and outcomes of the public’s use of World Heritage Sites.¹ Furthermore, a significant theme in this public heritage discourse is the concept of *authenticity*, which is evident in tourism studies and museum studies, as well as in the archaeological and built Cultural Heritage Management (CHM) or conservationist discourse. In the heritage literature, a wide range of methodological and theoretical approaches has been employed to explore this diversity. The common result, however, is a philosophical/theoretical discussion about the concept of authenticity in relation to objective and subjective approaches to reality. For instance, in the literature objective authenticity is recognised as a perspective put forward by experts within CHM, participating in the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ (AHD), as Laurajane Smith (2006) has coined it, whereas subjective authenticity is synonymous with unauthorised heritage discourses expressed in personal, emotional and various forms of perceived or interpretative approaches to reality or an

*Corresponding author. Email: torgrim.guttormsen@niku.no

‘authentic’ past (cf. Holtorf and Schadla-Hall 1999, Smith 2006, p. 71, Wells 2010). The subjective approach to authenticity has generated a vast literature examining the influence of *the experience society* (popular and consumer culture) at heritage sites, museums, centres, theme parks, etc. (cf. Halewood and Hannam 2001, Holtorf 2009). This leads us to the pivotal question: to what extent has the experience society contributed to the social construction of World Heritage Sites?

Today, socially-based constructivist authenticity is a dominant theme in the cultural heritage literature, emphasising the use of authenticity as a discursive and socially diverse, contested and negotiable heritage concept generated in the public realm (cf. Cohen 1988). In a social constructivist sense of authenticity, the past cannot be recreated or reconstructed in an objective authentic sense, but rather only reinvented in the ongoing fabric of cultural heritage production. However, a phenomenological approach defined as existential authenticity is vital in explaining a greater variety of ‘heritage experiences’ (see Wang 1999, Reisinger and Steiner 2006, Steiner and Reisinger 2006 for this approach in sociological studies of tourist motivations and experiences). According to the sociologist Ning Wang (1999), both existential authenticity and constructionistic authenticity relate to a broad post-modern theoretical framework defined as being in opposition to a modernist empiricist-positivist paradigm emphasising an ‘objective’, ‘historically accurate and truly’ ‘essentialistic’ definition of authenticity (pp. 351–352). Whereas objective authenticity distinguishes between ‘real–fake’ dichotomies on the basis of a universal concept of reality, constructive authenticity emphasises reality constructions defined by social contexts and (symbolic) power structures, and existential authenticity emphasises how experiences of reality are present in bodily senses and activities.

Based on this, a subject-orientated concept of authenticity examines authenticity at work in social processes at heritage sites; in other words, how people with varying perspectives and goals partake in processes striving to attain ‘the real’. In this context, performative acts (agency/practices) refer to the notion of ‘the transitional and transformative processes inherent in the action of authentication in addition to contradictory positions existing between phenomenological and social constructivist perspectives in which meanings and feelings of self and place are both constructed and lived through the sensuous body’ (Knudsen and Waade 2010, p. 1). A focus on the relationship between agency and authenticity brings attention to the transformative character of historic places and people’s motivations for visiting heritage sites as being significant in the fabric of ongoing cultural heritage production. Our hypothesis in this paper is that the attractiveness of historic places promoted by the experience society’s approach to authenticity is a constructive element in the cultural heritage production that shapes heritage sites and that it has significance for how heritage sites are valued today.

Visitor motivation studies aimed at defining the relationship between experienced authenticity and heritage as cultural attractions form a central topic in cultural heritage studies, especially tourism and leisure studies (for a review, see Richards 2001a). To define heritage as *attraction* means studying how heritage places become a ‘gravitational force’ on the basis of crowd-pleasing actions, forces and qualities that amuse, amaze, inflame and astonish; in short a ‘site-seeing’ that captures the attention of the general public (for overview, see Orbaşlı and Woodward 2009, pp. 317–320). The word *attraction* is thus synonymous with charisma and charm, or in other words, the seductive quality of cultural heritage as supplied by clever purveyors and as demanded by diverse consumers in the

cultural attraction market. Even atrocity/horror or fear attractions that disseminate traumatic histories (so-called ‘Dark Tourism’) might be regarded as ‘charismatic’, promoting a sense of nostalgia or a seductive quality (cf. Lennon and Foley 2000). A main focus in visitor analysis is how heritage attracts museum visitors or tourists. However, as expressed by Burnett (2001): ‘Heritage attractions are frequented by many kinds of visitors – people spending leisure time locally, people visiting for education or for business or, in many cases, individuals visiting as tourists’ (p. 39). In addition, cultural heritage attractions express how local historical environments with a distinctive heritage become attractive locations for residents, property developers and other entrepreneurs. Distinguishing between short-term and long-term ‘visitors’ is thus a complex task. This approach, where the ambivalent character of the ‘visitor’ is examined (and not only that of the tourist), moves the authenticity discussion from tourism studies into the broader interdisciplinary field of heritage studies, where processes of cultural heritage production and construction are emphasised.

A major theme in studies emphasising cultural heritage in terms of visitor attraction has been the transformation process by which heritage locations set ‘the touristic’ in motion, often described as a sort of sacralisation process activating increased nostalgia (MacCannell [1976] 1999; see also Richards 2001b, p. 15). Our concern, however, is the relationship between location and attraction as a dynamic process. The objective of this paper is to examine how ‘attractive authenticity’ is a primary driver and how it becomes a medium in the social construction of cultural heritage sites. First, we provide an insight into how the concept of authenticity is at work at Røros in order to set up a sociological basis for our study based on a review of the heritage history at Røros. Second, we conduct a textual analysis of the ‘uttered and imagined’ Røros in order to scrutinise how ‘attractive authenticity’ partakes in various social practices. Using the World Heritage Site at Røros as a case study, we combine two approaches for examining ‘attractive authenticity’ as a social concept: namely, a theoretical approach based on Pierre Bourdieu’s social modes of capital, and a linguistic-analytical approach emphasising the imaginary aspect of World Heritage based on the experience of ‘authentic Røros’ as a semiotic sign. Our main argument is that World Heritage sites act as generators for the production of both cultural and symbolic capital. We stress that ‘attractive authenticity’ produces various social modes arising from the use of visual qualities of historic sites and landscape as a cultural heritage concept, and that this knowledge is important in CHM strategies.

Background: the research literature

Røros and the use of authenticity as a conservation tool

The way in which Røros became a World Heritage Site provides an example of how various discourses on authenticity form part of the heritage discourse in general. The industrial history of copper mining at the small and peripherally located mountain town of Røros in mid Norway began in the seventeenth century (1644) and reached its peak during the nineteenth century (Figure 1). Mining production declined at the turn of the twentieth century and ended in 1977. The conservation history of Røros was initiated during the first half of the twentieth century by local enthusiasts and the national CHM authorities. During the early twentieth century’s modern Fordist age of mechanisation and mass production, an increased focus on

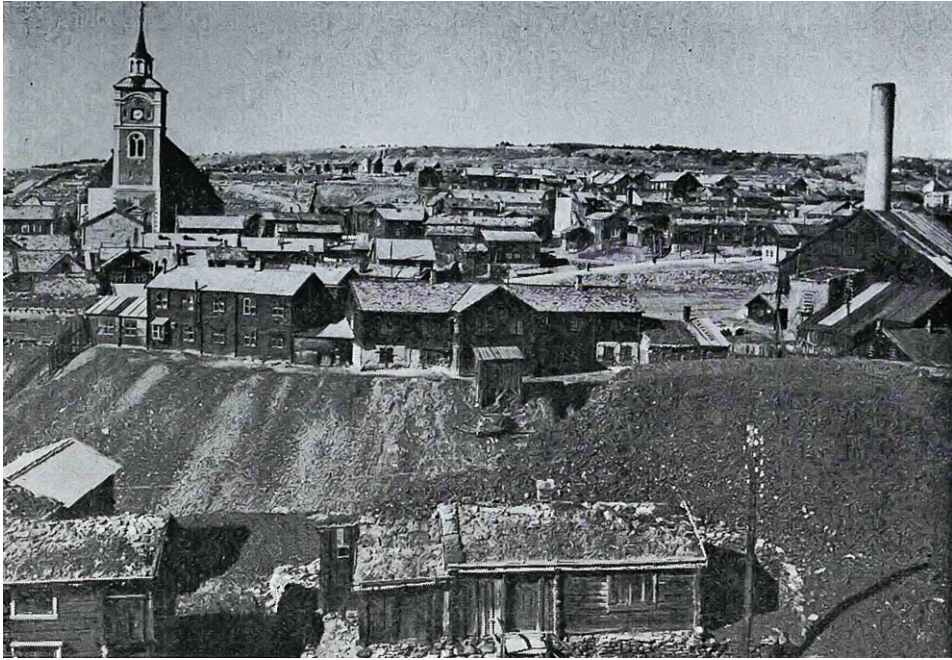


Figure 1. The then newly-established national industrialised heritage site at Røros, photographed in 1938. This image depicts a 'realist' urban landscape where the simple dwellings, slag heaps and deforested surroundings resulting from local copper mining convey an impression of a harsh industrial environment affected by pollution and poverty. The photo is taken from Eliassen 1939, p. 3.

the history and heritage of technology and industry arose in Norway, as it did in many other countries across Europe (Palmer and Neaverson 1998, p. 13). The attention directed towards Røros as a vulnerable cultural heritage object is thus an example of general contemporary trends in a wider European consciousness of the past.

As the ruinous nature of the mining landscape surrounding the town became evident and the old town started to crumble with decay, an increased sense of nostalgia arose regarding Røros' industrial heritage. Norway ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1977 and a few years later, in 1980, the mining town of Røros was placed on the World Heritage List. The main feature in the conservation of Røros as a World Heritage Site is its early industrial urban history represented by its streetscapes, town plan, panoramas and small townhouses (Figure 2). Based on criteria drawn up by UNESCO, the town comprises the preservation of a 'unique' and 'authentic' early industrial urban historical environment exemplified in the picturesque townscape composed of traditional wooden houses. At the time of writing, an application to UNESCO for the incorporation of the vast derelict industrial mining landscape surrounding Røros as part of the World Heritage Site has been accepted, thereby extending the conservation area to a circumference of 6,000 square kilometres (UNESCO 1992–2010). In contrast to the attractions associated with the charming urban-historical scenery, the fascination of the mining landscape for visitors

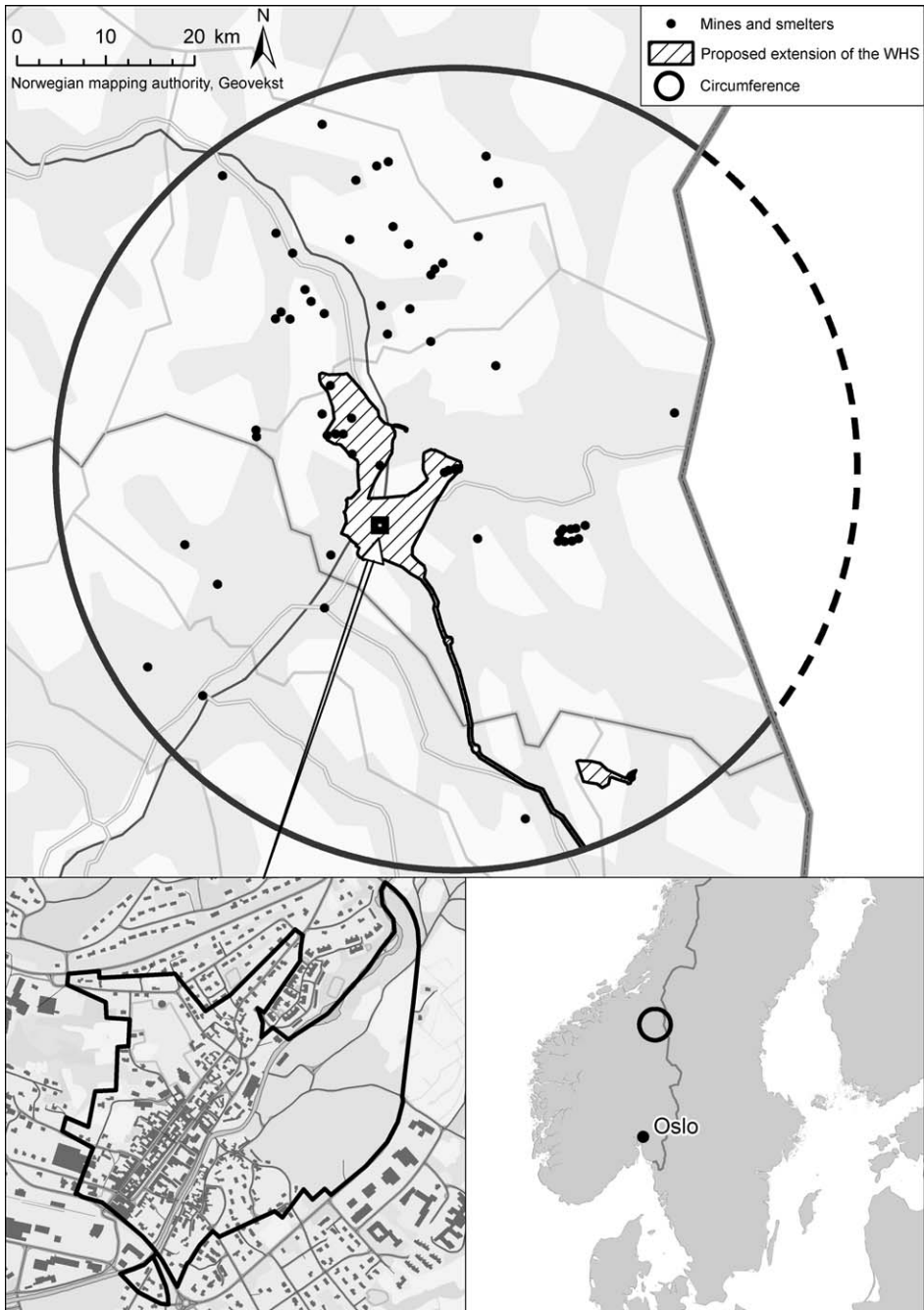


Figure 2. The town map (below left) shows the extent of the World Heritage site in 1980, whereas the map of the mining landscape (top) shows sites of mines and smelting works within the circumference (circle) of the town and specific protected areas (hatched) implemented in the World Heritage extension of 2010. Map creator: Troels Petersen, NIKU.

(who take part in so-called ‘mining safaris’, for example) lies in its abandoned landscape evocative of harsh living and working conditions in the past.

The long-term historicity of Røros as a place of ‘memory work’, and the implementation of heritage management policies and practices during the last 100 years, is remarkable when compared with other heritage sites in Norway. In the heritage history of Røros, ‘authenticity’ and its twin concept ‘integrity’ comprise basic terms used in connection with the valuation of the town and the industrial landscape as heritage in the form of a well-preserved historic town. Røros’ architectural conservation history anticipates the idea of authenticity as an intrinsic value: that is, the conservation of the original intact or untouched historic environment as defined by the aesthetic qualities of the place. The main goal of the conservationist regime of the 1940s was to ‘nurse’ the historic environment of Røros (Vreim 1944). In other words, authenticity has been used as a conservation tool by CHM in order to prevent the destruction of the historic environment and preserve the originality of the site. To a large extent, this has been synonymous with preserving the existing townscape of historical streetscapes and the built environment.

The instrumental World Heritage management discourse at Røros has produced a vast body of literature on authenticity under the heading ‘guidance for practice’ (methods, procedures of protection), including research literature discussing the conditions and effects of CHM practices. A dominant discourse in this guidance literature has been an applied-scientific approach examining historic authenticity as an instrumental tool in conservation strategies, and identifying conservation challenges caused by external threats such as pollution, development of land or property, tourism and so on (for international reviews, see Stovel 2007, Alberts and Hazen 2010).

Røros and the constructionistic authenticity discourse

The instrumental authenticity discourse has generated a considerable literature in which the historical and theoretical (philosophical) legacy of authenticity as a World Heritage concept is explored (for example, Jokilehto 1995, 2006). A pivotal event in this heritage discourse was the Nara Conference (convened by UNESCO in Nara, Japan, in 1994), which put forward proposals intended to implement a constructionistic concept of authenticity that was considered more up-to-date by adopting a culturally diverse definition of authenticity rather than a universal one (Larsen and Jokilehto 1995). At Røros, the constructionistic discourse of authenticity has been a source of critique regarding the aesthetic conservation ideology evident within long-term local CHM practice. A common point of departure in the heritage literature of Røros is criticism of the CHM regime of the 1940s/1950s, when several houses from the late nineteenth century were transformed and even destroyed in order to (re)construct a ‘correct’ historic townscape on the basis of aesthetic conservation ideals of the mid-twentieth century (cf. Ødegaard and Øverås 1988, p. 139, Bye 2000). Based on this critical perspective, historic authenticity reflects the history of conservation as much as the specific period that is valued. Consequently, authenticity addresses questions regarding how Røros’ conservation history reflects ideological choices in the construction of a historical place rather than being the result of objective reconstructions. The critique has a hermeneutic dimension, questioning the extent to which the conservation history represents an historical transformation of the town that strengthens the ‘true authentic’ Røros, or whether it should be seen



Figure 3. A romantic scenic view of Røros's historic urban landscape painted by Harald Sohlberg in 1902 (open access).

as an idealisation of a place that is far-removed from historic reality (that is, the town as it really was, afflicted by industrial pollution and poverty; see Figures 3 and 4, compared to Figure 1). Viewed from this social constructionist perspective, heritage sites 'appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers' (Wang 1999, p. 351).

Røros has changed as a result of the choices made in connection with conservation practices and modern development trends, and 'few would want to return to the grimy and polluted conditions prevailing at the height of mining' (Jones 1999, p. 47). However, in the constructionistic discourse there has been little emphasis on authenticity in terms of how Røros as a scenic historic place is shaped by various stakeholders. As is the case at many other World Heritage Sites, a main challenge at Røros is how to protect the historic environment which today defines the place as a valuable historical site. The authorised authenticity discourse adopts an 'expert' conservationist rhetoric where *original* (understood as true, intact) and *homogeneous* (totality, continuity) are viewed as more valuable than *renewed* (understood as false/fake, copied) and *heterogeneous* (relict, changed) historic environments. However, viewed from a socially diverse authenticity concept, these dichotomies bypass issues of agency, whereby heritage is valued and protected by various stakeholders (for example, Wells 2010, p. 480). The dichotomies bypass issues concerning the extent to which the 'scenically authentic Røros' is a historical and social construction and how it has become an attractive cultural product for the public. In order to analyse these sociological aspects of authenticity, a theoretical approach formulated by Pierre Bourdieu has been applied.



Figure 4. The same historic urban scenery as figure 3 pictured in 2007, illustrating how Sohlberg's view became a vital point of reference for subsequent conservation strategies at Røros. Photo: the authors.

Approaching authenticity as a sociological concept

Pierre Bourdieu provides an inspirational framework for this analysis, which serves as a theoretical vehicle for exploring how discourses of 'heritage-scapes' are a resource for various heritage practices, thereby defining values generated by attractive authenticity as a diverse social concept. According to Bourdieu (1986), people acting within various normative social practices have different access to social resources depending on the amount and forms of capital they possess (pp. 241–258). These might comprise economic (money-values, profit, investments), social (human relations and communicative networks) or cultural (education, knowledge, skills) forms of capital, which also could include symbolic capital (honour, prestige/reputation). In the heritage literature, ways in which cultural heritage sites generate various forms of capital are explored from various disciplinary perspectives. The notion of cultural capital has, for instance, been introduced in order to examine relationships between economic capital and cultural capital derived from cultural heritage (cf. Throsby 2001, Graham 2002). In museum and tourism studies (notably commodification and leisure studies), visitor motivation analyses have examined how cultural capital in the form of heritage is invested by people in social differentiation and affiliation strategies, such as the definition of group or class identity, or a sense of the past experienced in personal terms contra institutional terms (for example, Merriman 1991, Walsh 1992, pp. 123–135, Smith 2006, pp. 49, 198–200). In addition, heritage as cultural capital becomes symbolic capital when master narratives, images and monuments are used in the construction of, for instance, a

national or an urban identity (ancestry, community/fellowship) and for branding products, places and people (cf. Till 2003). Bourdieu's concept of capital has been inspirational for analysing power mechanisms as well as relationships between various socially constituted 'heritage knowledges' and spheres of activity at heritage sites. This is exemplified in our own case, where authenticity is seen as a socially diverse concept.

Cultural capital and symbolic capital, which are the topic of this paper, together comprise an analytical concept for examining how cultural heritage is valued and contextualised within various social spheres. Our concern is how the institutional practice of CHM at Røros participates in public discourses in terms of what Bourdieu calls *social fields*, which can be explained as constitutive frameworks of knowledge and value systems structuring the ways in which meaning and action are performed. The amount of cultural and symbolic capital produced within a 'heritage society' is constituted by relational social fields, which constitute various frameworks for knowledge production (for this approach, see, for example, Di Giovine 2009, p. 9). The discursive practices by which authenticity is defined within various social fields constitute the overall *social space* that actors share and operate within, defined in Røros' case as a negotiable and disputable World Heritage discourse. A specific topic in this discourse is the visual aspect of heritage settings, and how the so-called 'heritage-scapes' of World Heritage Sites and landscapes become cultural products in the public domain. The visual or scenic criteria defining a World Heritage Site are based on different ways to gaze upon and experience aesthetic qualities of place (for review, see Waterton and Watson 2010). Based on this, a theoretical approach to 'attractive authenticity' (subjective, interpretative and imaginal) relates scenic cultural heritage to a semiotic discourse of historic place. Authenticity is an expression of a socially diverse scenic place as visual representation, a 'floating signifier' in social discourses (cf. Laclau 1990, p. 28; see also Reisinger and Steiner 2006, p. 70, regarding 'fluid authenticity'). Floating signifiers define linguistic signs that various discourses struggle for in order to gain hegemonic power. This is also referred to by Bourdieu (1991), when he states that people possess a *linguistic capital* that becomes a product with a certain value for the linguistic market which partakes in hegemonic power relations and in 'symbolic struggles'. The linguistic market analogy is therefore a useful tool for conceptualising how symbolic capital is produced at heritage sites.

Methodology and source material

The Bourdieuan approach serves here as a conceptual outlook for analysing the diversity and complexity of the heritage discourses and social practices that have produced Røros as an attractive and 'authentic' World Heritage Site. By adopting this theoretical perspective, the analysis of cultural and symbolic capital is seen as a methodological approach that has as its object of study the various social fields containing distinct practices associated with cultural heritage. These practices are promoted by a discursive content based on interpretations of various scenic values of place. In places like Røros, where processes of heritage management are a cornerstone in community development, heritage practices define an overall *social space* which becomes a vital structuring condition for knowledge production, interaction and development of place. As a result, various types of heritage practice have

produced a distinctive cultural and symbolic capital generated by the discourse relating to Røros as a World Heritage Site.

A vast amount of literature, including books, scientific papers/reports, newspaper articles, booklets, novels and the like, has entered the public domain in connection with these heritage discourses. This body of public literature, together with ‘heritage websites’, has provided source material for examining ways in which imaginings of authenticity at the World Heritage Site of Røros have generated cultural and symbolic capital. The analysis is based on sources available on the Internet and in local newspapers (*Fjell-Ljom* and *Arbeidets Rett*) accessed during the period 2006–2007, as well as heritage literature up to 2007 (for extended research information, see Guttormsen and Fageraas 2007). Whereas the heritage literature deals with the long-term scientific discussion about Røros as a World Heritage Site, the Internet and the newspapers express conflicts and commercial interests among different stakeholders as well as the general public. By analysing these texts as expressions of authenticity that belong to specific social fields, it has been possible to formulate a qualitative scheme characterising the roles of antiquarians, planners and commercial interests at Røros.

The production of cultural capital from Røros’ historic scenery

The first analysis comprises a text analytical survey of various types of cultural capital derived from using authenticity as a social concept. In the survey, three social fields of knowledge have been identified which promote distinctive social modes of authenticity. A main aspect of this is how uses of the historic scenic quality of place for the purposes of education, commercial branding or the planning and design of public spaces all contribute to a cultural capital of place.

A place of education – historic scenery as inspirational ambience

A social field of heritage knowledge present at Røros takes the form of cultural capital that promotes historic Røros as a place of education. The use of Røros’ historic scenic environment for public education in the form of a ‘heritage-scape’ was promoted as a grand initiative by the management authorities in the town’s early conservation period (see Fett 1939, p. 31).² In the heritage literature, conservation ideas are legitimised as a managerial practice that promotes human qualities of life and common cultural values through the experience of the town’s historicity. In this literature, Røros is promoted as a place for learning, education and research, as well as a place for reflection and the shaping of cultural attitudes and human values. It is argued that the experience of ‘authentic Røros’ increases historical consciousness and knowledge of life in general. This type of knowledge utilises authenticity in an ethical sense of the term, promoting an existential use of heritage and personalised space where authenticity of place equates to Rousseauan ideals of the education of the individual and the search for the authentic self (Wang 1999, pp. 358–361). A vital aspect of this intellectualised social field of knowledge production is the creation of a type of cultural capital that is intellectual or academic.

Røros has in effect become a laboratory, or think-tank, for a vast heritage-related research community, including universities, research institutes and the CHM sector. Academic theses, seminars and fieldwork make up a large amount of this academic knowledge. Academics are a distinct group of specialised visitors, whose presence

has in turn attracted non-heritage related enterprises and institutions to Røros for the purposes of education, communication and exchange of knowledge (conferences, workshops, seminars, etc). In addition, educational programmes of heritage management that engage the local community have taken the form of a variety of projects addressing cultural identity, public participation in the dissemination of local history and learning about traditional artisanship. Furthermore, cultural capital in the form of educational knowledge has brought a significant added value of local know-how, which is transferred to the management of other heritage sites in Norway and abroad. As a place of education with historical environment as an inspirational ambience, Røros attracts many visitors and new residents, thereby generating employment and commercial growth, among other things.

In this social field, rather than expressing one 'true' conception of the past, authenticity comprises a broad social approach to the past defined by the ability of the historical environment to facilitate education, stimulate innovative thought and generate a social platform for collaboration. In this context, authenticity is understood as an effect whereby historic scenic values serve as being inspirational, and are promoted as such, and establish settings for secondary goals. However, the understanding of historicity prevalent within an educational social mode tends to favour a sense of authenticity as expressed in the form of a historically intact museum-like environment. The presence of scientists or specialists in the town acts as a hallmark for the promotion of Røros as a place of education.

A place of facilitation – historic landscape as lived environment

The second category of public literature identified here deals with the production of heritage knowledge in the area of public requirements, namely, the facilitation of necessities associated with local residents' living conditions, logistics, resources and spatial use. Planning criteria are an instrumental framework for approaching authenticity of place, where CHM is only one of several actors in the discourse. Municipal agencies, planners and NGOs, as well as conservationists, are central actors in the production of cultural capital relating to the everyday lived environment of the World Heritage Site. This knowledge production emphasises the practical uses of heritage. The bottom line in this heritage discourse is the production of a facilitated place, where the historic environment is adapted to accommodate ordinary life consistent with current standards of living. At Røros, in contrast to many other places, cultural heritage is prioritised in decision making when various societal interests are at stake. In the vast amount of planning literature involving Røros, it is apparent that a balance between conservation and development is aimed at when integrating public facilities in authentic historic environments. The plans stress 'big picture' environmental thinking, such as the integration of historical centre functions with urban expansion, as well as the integration of natural and cultural landscapes, new and old buildings, new traffic and historical mobility, and so on. Examples of heritage knowledge gained within this field are to be found in the following areas: architecture (e.g. the integration of new houses and new functions for existing historical buildings); visual impact (the aesthetics of signs and streetscapes); and spatial planning and management (public/private accessibility). This social field has generated a cultural capital of practical cultural-heritage know-how within a living environment, but when adopted in the context of specific projects it gives rise to

much dispute and conflict between proponents of conservation, on the one hand, and use, on the other.

Whereas the modern discourse of authenticity promoted cultural heritage as representing ‘folk’ and ‘nation’ (cf. Holtorf and Schadla-Hall 1999), the post-modern authenticity discourse is more concerned with authenticity as a concept centred on the locality, and local people in particular. Consequently, the structuring condition for the production of practical heritage knowledge is an understanding of authenticity as something that is adaptable to the community and the local population’s practical needs (Figure 5). In addition, although neither fixed nor static, it is inherent to the soil and buildings, and continues to form the essence of the place despite the impact of modernisation and development. As such, this heritage knowledge can be described as a vernacular image of place. The scenic imagining of Røros as a facilitated place has produced a functional knowledge of cultural capital based on a problem-solving and future-orientated perspective. Fusions of modern and traditional (for example, the accommodation of car-culture within the authentic historical environment) have created a negotiable discourse of heritage that paves the way for authenticity with a twist towards a vernacular image of historical place as a qualitative setting for modern dwelling. This social mode of authenticity is, in other words, defined by the everyday embodied experience of the historic place and the facilities that fulfil the practical needs of modern life. A structuring condition within this social mode is the ability of the historic scenic townscape to provide a good place in which to live on the basis of the successful adaptive mix of old and new.

A place of commodification – historic scenery as performance

The third category of literature dealing with authenticity as a mode of cultural capital concerns commercial knowledge, whereby the possession of heritage knowledge is seen as having consumer value, and where ‘the authentic Røros’ is promoted as a branded product. In Røros, cultural capital in the form of commodified heritage is apparent in the vast literature and Internet website presentations of, for example, tourist industries (e.g. traditional crafts, local foodstuffs, adventure experiences/sightseeing, etc.), various cultural arrangements (cultural marketing, festival plays, outdoor theatre performances, etc.), commercial storytelling (tourist maps, guidance manuals, booklets, postcards, historical prospectuses for advertising, etc.) and cinematic storytelling (novels, advertising films, feature films, visual art, etc). On this basis, authenticity acts as a concept of commodity. The machinery of people, knowledge and experience related to the development of creative heritage-based products based on the imagining of historic place has created a distinct type of



Figure 5. Everyday life at Røros. Photos: the authors.

commercial heritage knowledge that contributes to defining both cultural and economic life in Røros.

In this process of knowledge production, the imagining of Røros has created a particular commodified place where the historic scenery acts as an arena for performance. As an historic place designed for use as cinematic scenery and to attract the tourist gaze, it promotes memory as a commodity. The experience of the historic environment becomes an act of performance and a means for souvenir production. Within this social field of knowledge, authenticity is defined as ‘staged’, synonymous with a set design (MacCannell [1976] 1999, pp. 91–107; see also Burnett 2001, p. 45, Harrison 2005, p. 3). In World Heritage Sites like Røros, the various forms of creativity involved in establishing staged authenticity attract an international visitor market. Authenticity within this social mode of comprehension is defined by the potential of historic scenic environments to attract visitors, or more specifically, the ways in which a consumer culture is attracted to Røros in response to the historic place’s ability to provide entertainment. However, this is a recursive process in which a number of stakeholders communicate within different logics of branding. The local community uses Røros’s World Heritage status as a brand in order to promote itself as an attractive and ‘unique’ place with a distinctive and exceptional cultural heritage.

Social fields as a structuring condition in the production of history and capital

The various social fields present at Røros show that the many ways of understanding ‘authentic Røros’ make it a diversified social concept. Authenticity evokes imaginings of the past where experiences of *historic scenic values* become a significant issue in the valuation of Røros. Today, this small mountain town is, on the one hand, a place of education and commodification adapted to the industry of world heritage tourism, while, on the other, it is a residential environment that exists and functions through the ordinary everyday practices of the local population as they lead their lives within the context of a protected historical environment. Imaginings of Røros as an authentic place that generates an educated, facilitated and staged place reveals various holdings of cultural capital. A comparable recent study of the public use of the World Heritage Site at Visby in Sweden (Johansson 2005), based on visual representations such as governmental information brochures, advertising, postcards, Internet sources and paintings, has shown that Visby participates in three social contexts (or fields): namely, Visby as a town for artists (aesthetic value), tourists (entertaining and partying/dining), and as a town for local residents living in a historic environment (for example, a good place for families to raise children). The three social contexts define a diverse and interrelated knowledge production in the public domain that structures the visual expressions and narratives of Visby as valuable historic place. As can be illustrated at both Røros and Visby, authenticity deriving from historic visual or scenic qualities becomes a nodal point – a floating signifier – in which the physical processes involved in creating heritage sites and cultural capital are socially produced, both historically and as contemporary discourse.

No one in Røros wants to live in a town that is too much like a museum, too much like an ordinary town or too much of a consumerised tourist destination. However, although there are conflicting issues associated with the various forms of cultural capital, such as the conflict between commercial value and educational value, for example, they nonetheless share common historical processes and visions

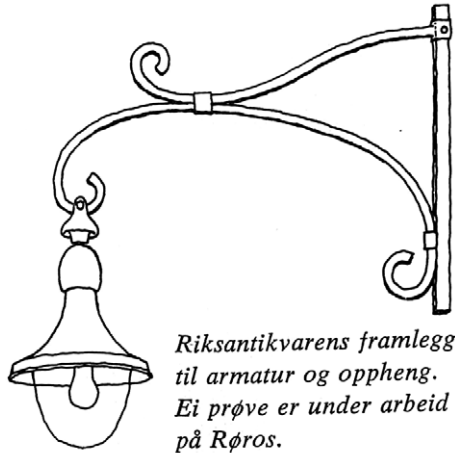


Figure 6. Street lamp designed to promote a sense of nostalgia. From Øverås 1977, p. 91.

of the future. The processes by which the town became an attractive place were based on the production of an idealised or nostalgic image of Røros. As expressed by Burnett (2001): ‘In this ideal type of heritage there is less concern over what is “authentic” in any accurate historical sense and greater emphasis is given to what is “attractively authentic”’ (p. 40). The interrelated social production of an educated, facilitated and commodified place has a historical dimension related to the construction of Røros as idealised nostalgic image. For instance, when the film *The Doll’s House* (written by Henrik Ibsen in 1879, directed by Joseph Losey in 1973, and starring Jane Fonda) was shot at Røros, several adaptive measures were undertaken, such as the provision of old-fashioned hand-rails and street lamps (Figure 6), to increase the nostalgic character of streetscapes in the town (Øverås 1977, pp. 89–91). Attempts by commercial stakeholders to augment the sense of nostalgia were embraced by professional conservationists as well as local inhabitants. Attractive authenticity has been a primary driving force in this historic process. The social construction of Røros as an attractive place of heritage in the nostalgia market has, as a historic product, resulted in the production of a diversified cultural capital.

Attractive authenticity as contested heritage: symbolic capital

A vital dimension by which cultural capital becomes symbolic capital is the production of a symbolic economy based on sites and landscapes with World Heritage status (Geronimi 2006). A significant aspect of this is the creation of authenticity when local communities market their heritage as a symbolic product. This is a two-way process in which globalisation affects local communities at World Heritage Sites while at the same time they produce a symbolic economy for the global market. A major asset in the construction of a symbolic economy of World Heritage Sites is the branding of symbolic images, which also advertise place identity based on a culturally genuine historic authenticity. In the case of Røros, this is exemplified by its promotion as a place in which to experience the ‘true nineteenth-century town atmosphere’ or ‘real Norwegian mountain life’. However, a fixation of the floating signifier ‘authentic Røros’ is today becoming evident in symbolic struggles.

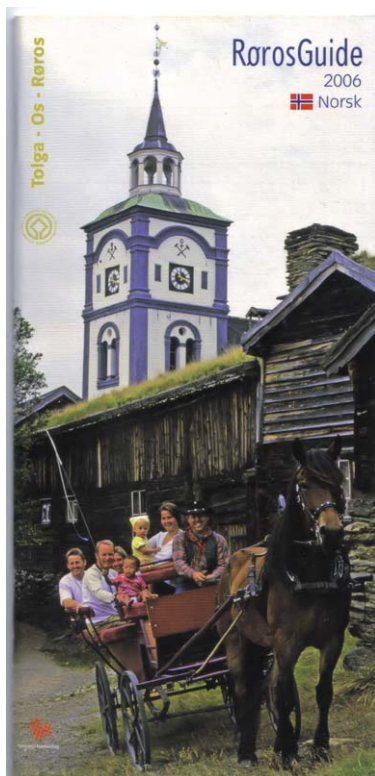


Figure 7. Historic urban scenery as a brand: ‘the church motif’ used in the symbolic economy of Røros. From the cover of a tourist guidebook produced by ‘Røros Reiseliv’ (2005–2006).

This conceals the splintering effects of the complexity and diversity of the distinct social fields of authenticity discourses as they are constituted by different valuations and practical considerations.

The analysis of scenic representations of Røros in contemporary literature and on the Internet indicates that, while images of the past are the subject of symbolic struggles between various entrepreneurs, conservationists and commercial cultural heritage-based enterprises are unified in their desire to control a ‘correct’ image of Røros. The symbolic struggles are evident in the creation of a purified, iconic or stereotyped image of Røros as an attractively authentic place. The main asset for this iconic or stereotyped idealised image is the church tower, which acts as the central motif in the historic townscape, a topographical feature that has become both a landmark and a trademark (see Figure 7). The church tower acts as community logo and a hallmark used in various ways in the marketing of Røros, both as a community and as a site of commercial enterprise, which includes both heritage-related businesses and other businesses located here.

The idealised image represented by the church tower is used by some stakeholders, especially conservationists and World Heritage-based businesses, as a main argument against the use of other types of heritage-based valuations of Røros as a historic place. Their basic argument is that the use of other images would fragment the shared communal identity and the existing branding of Røros, and that this

would in the long run adversely affect the conservation of the town and, in the worst case, result in Røros being removed from the World Heritage List. Another aspect of this struggle regarding the use of symbols to promote authenticity is the way in which particularly successful iconic symbols highlighted at one place may be adopted elsewhere. A case in point is the way in which the historic mining town of Falun in Sweden (placed on the World Heritage List in 2001), itself a town with close geographical and contextual similarities to Røros, has adopted its own version of ‘the historical Røros motif’ for the purposes of branding in order to market itself as an attractive tourist site (see Figure 8).

The notion that Røros is an exemplary attractive authentic place has, in other words, become fixed in the commercial rhetoric that promotes Røros as such to the general public. The use of idealised imagery has also become the main asset for the production of educational and facilitational cultural capital. It could be argued that this symbolic power strategy is a clever way in which to put Røros on the heritage map, while simultaneously providing a basis for a shared local identity. However, it



Figure 8. The symbolic image – ‘the church motif’ – at the historical mining town of Falun (Sweden), also a UNESCO World Heritage site, resembles the symbolic scenery of Røros (see figure 7). Picture from Länsstyrelsen Dalarna Tourist Guide from 2006. Photo: Lars Dahlström.

might conversely be argued that it has resulted in oversimplification, where the 'individuality' of place in reality promotes conformity. This is the opposite effect to that which was intended by using authenticity as a social concept promoting cultural diversity. It excludes and neglects heritage dialogues: in other words, 'The disagreements, arguing, good discussion, quarrelling and newspaper writing [are] all indicators of a living and engaged community, and a desirable complexity in the living heritage that we want to maintain and develop' (Vistad 1999, p. 541). CHM at Røros occupies a central position in this contested symbolic capital production.

Conclusion

The legitimacy of CHM practice whose mandate is to supervise the protection and prevent the destruction of historic material culture is today more than ever being confronted by an educated public critically engaged in intellectual debates on how to commemorate, value and use the past as common heritage. In order to meet these public demands, the CHM sector in Norway, as in many other countries, has implemented ideas defining cultural heritage as 'capital' and 'added value', two interrelated concepts emphasising the use of cultural heritage as a common good and a development resource. In this paper, it is argued that World Heritage Sites and landscapes are vital generators in the production of cultural capital. Cultural capital also contributes to other forms of capital, such as symbolic and economic forms of capital, whereby the international recognition and global status of these places activates processes of heritage that in various ways generate added values in local communities. The World Heritage Site at Røros has become a cultural centre, which creates various forms of cultural capital that are important in CHM strategies that implement cultural heritage as a resource for prosperous development.

The postmodern condition, which is evident in theories of hyper-realism or simulacra like Disneyland, suggests that *inauthenticity*, or the quest for the genuine fake, is far more prominent than the quest for authenticity. According to Wang (1999), these attempts of postmodernists to deconstruct and abandon the concept of authenticity are subverting the concept's analytical potential. In the case of Røros, the concept of authenticity is pivotal for understanding heritage processes at work. On the basis of the analysis of the cultural capital of Røros, we can conclude that its cultural heritage in general, and its World Heritage status in particular, have together generated a vast amount of knowledge. While all World Heritage Sites are likely to generate cultural/symbolic capital, the conditions and character of this production vary, depending on the ways in which World Heritage policies and national CHM processes are implemented in various communities. Compared with other local communities, the cultural heritage capital generated by the actors of Røros is high. Furthermore, discourses of authenticity of place based on imaginings of historic scenic spaces are a constitutive element in the production of the cultural capital of Røros. As a social concept, the authenticity of place is diverse. In addition, the socially diverse and constructive aspects of 'attractive authenticity' identified at Røros have relevance for understanding similar factors and dynamics of visitor experience at work at many other small World Heritage towns and cities, especially World Heritage Sites with a long-term history as attractions. We have indicated that similar processes are evident at World Heritage sites in Sweden (at Falun and Visby) and in Canada (Geronimi 2006). It would be interesting to pursue these aspects in future comparative studies. However, the pivotal task in this

paper has been to identify how the experience society's quest for attractions has shaped heritage sites, and how conservationists also participate in these processes.

Laurajane Smith, among others, argues that the discourse of emotional and experiential authenticity in tourism literature 'invariably frames all discussions of this thorny issue in terms of marketing and consumption, which many researchers of the humanities and social science disciplines that intersect with heritage issues often see as intellectually simplistic, and thus of little intellectual utility. . . . This is because it tends to assume that all "heritage" innately invokes a sense of nostalgia' (Smith 2006, p. 41; see also Graham *et al.* 2000). Smith argues that heritage is used and expressed in far more ways than simply as a nostalgic commercialised product. In this paper, we argue that 'attractive authenticity' is a social concept that both describes historical processes of how Røros has been constructed as a World Heritage Site, and how this idealised or nostalgic form of authenticity has actually been a resource for the production of a diverse cultural capital. It is also shown how this cultural capital is participatory in symbolic struggles that have produced a stereotypical image of Røros in the nostalgia market. CHM experts are vital stakeholders in this linguistic struggle of the semiotic sign 'authentic Røros'. As explained in the introduction to this paper, 'attractive authenticity' is defined by the ability of historic places to charm and seduce the public. The analysis shows furthermore that Røros' success in becoming an attraction that generates capital production is the result of popular rhetoric addressing the visual experience of place. The visual attractiveness of Røros was even a pivotal argument that underpinned the conservation ideology at the time when Røros was 'discovered' as vulnerable cultural heritage (Eliassen 1939, p. 3).³

The historic and social dimension of 'attractive authenticity' has theoretical and practical implications for CHM practice at Røros. The splintering effect of a socially defined concept of authenticity has created a disputed cultural capital that participates in symbolic power strategies. The present CHM strategy at Røros is to promote a diversified social concept of authenticity, while simultaneously holding on to an essentialistic understanding of authenticity. This approach is logically blurred. In reality, CHM uses essentialistic authenticity as a political tool in order to establish credibility for rhetoric promoting a symbolic economy derived from Røros' World heritage status. Consequently, 'attractive authenticity', as used in hegemonic power mechanisms, questions the extent to which authenticity becomes a democratic tool, which was the intention of the Nara Conference in 1994. To conceal and neglect the role of authenticity as constitutive elements in a socially diversified knowledge production shows a lack of awareness regarding the dialogic aspects of how a World Heritage Site is perceived and understood. It is important to recognise the social and constitutive dimensions of attractive authenticity's role in defining World Heritage Sites in order to understand various stakeholders' interests and common grounds. This is especially important when the aim is to utilise the diversity of a local population's valuation and uses of heritage as a prosperous resource.

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Notes on contributors

Torggrim Sneve Guttormsen is an archaeologist and Knut Fageraas is an ethnologist, both are researchers at the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research, Oslo, Norway.

Notes

1. Adding to this trend, this paper is the result of a research project exploring public relations at the World Heritage Site of Røros in Norway, in which the aim has been to examine both economic effects (Bowitz and Ibenholt 2009) and social effects (Guttormsen and Fageraas 2007) that are generated by the designation of Røros as a World Heritage Site.
2. Fett (1939): 'Kanskje man også her kunde skape en viddens høiskole, en eftertenksomheters høiskole' (p. 31). 'Perhaps it also is possible to create a 'mountain academy' here, an academy of pensiveness.' (translated by the authors).
3. Eliassen (1939): '...hvor det er selve byen som skal være attraksjon, må en være opmerksom på at det den tilreisende her vil søke, det er billedet av den gamle Bergstaden' (p. 3). '...when it comes to the town as attractive place, one must be aware that what the visitors here will seek is the image of the old mining town.' (translated by the authors).

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