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Sacred but not holy: Awe, spectacle, and the heritage gaze in Danish religious heritage contexts

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Abstract

Based on an ideal-typical distinction between the "holy" and the "sacred", this paper considers the effects of the heritagisation of religious spaces in the three Danish World Heritage sites of Jelling, Roskilde, and Christiansfeld. Religious sites are often intended as spectacles inspiring religious awe in the religious constituency, but when considered heritage, the site becomes a spectacle for a different public, for whom the sacrality of the place is not necessarily motivated by religious piety. Instead, the church as heritage site may be a sacralised focal point for ontological pride on behalf of another, secular constituency, like the region or nation, or for vicarious nostalgia of a tourist public. The religious congregation itself might become the object of a heritage gaze on the part of cultural experts and tourists who foreground the "authenticity" of the religious experience in the spatial environment of the place in line with UNESCO principles. In this paper, we argue that the overlaying of a heritage gaze over a religious gaze results in the potential hybridisation of religion as a category of heritage. This not only hybridises religious piety but inadvertently frames it *as* cultural heritage through the secular, immanent frame of heritage.

KEYWORDS: World Heritage, religious heritage, sacred, holy, Denmark

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Introduction

As of 2019, three active Protestant churches in Denmark are located on World Heritage Sites. These are in order of inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones and Church (1994), Roskilde Cathedral (1995), and Christiansfeld, a Moravian Church settlement (2015). The challenges and policy solutions to their status as World Heritage sites and active church spaces afford the case studies for this paper. Since World Heritage has become an important factor in their promotion and management within the last decade, each of these sites receives tens of if not hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. This has brought the management of church spaces into question, as the religious and heritage dimensions of these sites invite different uses and publics. In this article, we explore these spatial evocations, and the consequences effected through the spatial channelling of publics through separation and mixing of practices in these three Danish World Heritage sites. We examine how the values and presence of churchgoers, managers, and tourists make and remake these three Danish churches as sites of religious worship and as World Heritage sites.[1] In other words, we seek to examine the relations, practices, and claims made over Protestant church spaces as holy sites on the one hand, and as secularly sacred heritage sites, on the other. We do so with reference to a distinction between the religious category of the holy, and the category of the sacred, which may adhere to secular phenomena, such as cultural heritage.

Heritagisation, sacralisation and the holy

The idea of heritagisation, meaning the discursive, regulatory, practical and experiential process whereby specific sites, objects and practices are turned into cultural heritage, is predicated on a set of immanent, secular principles and criteria. In the terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* of July 10, 2019, the monuments that contain elements 'which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science' may be considered for the World Heritage list, whereas 'groups of buildings' must have 'Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science' and 'sites' must be outstanding 'from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view' (UNESCO, 2019, p. 19). Religious sites, buildings and objects, and—in the case of "Intangible Cultural Heritage"—practices may very often be religious or religiously inspired, but religion itself is not part of the criteria for outstanding universal value; heritagisation conceives of such religious

[1] Field research in Jelling (2016–2019) and Roskilde (2017–2019) was mostly done by Sofie Isager Ahl in the context of the Heriligion project. The field research in Christiansfeld (2016–2019) was done mostly by Rasmus Rask Poulsen in the framework of his anthropological master thesis research at the University of Copenhagen.

sites, objects, and practices through an immanent frame. Religious sites (here churches as places of worship), objects and practices are not classified as heritage, because of their transcendent religious meaning, but because of their this-worldly, historical, aesthetic, and cultural significance. Birgit Meyer and Marleen de Witte (2013, p. 277) call this process 'the heritagisation of the sacred,' by which religious 'things' are evaluated for their cultural heritage value, which is arguably a secular criterion. In addition, heritagisation implies subjection to what Haidy Geismar (2015) calls a "heritage regime".

Simultaneously, Meyer and de Witte argue that 'not unlike religion, heritage formation involves some kind of sacralisation, through which cultural forms are lifted up and set apart so as to be able to speak of what is considered to be central to social life' (2013, p. 276). For example, a chair in the Danish Design Museum is not intended to be sat on, but it is put on a pedestal or exhibited in a glass case to be looked at, contemplated, admired not for its immanent use or aesthetic value, but for its outstanding value as a specimen of a category of objects, thus transcending its immediate use or even its aesthetic appearance. When Durkheim (1995) developed the notion of the sacred as requiring distance, awe and special, ritual treatment as opposed to the category of the everyday profane, he theorised that as the basis for religion. However, as a range of scholars—including Marx with his commodity fetishism and Weber with his idea about the capitalist ethic as a secularisation of religious calling—have shown, the sacred may travel onto this-worldly phenomena, with art and cultural heritage arguably among them. In that sense, heritagisation as a form of secular sacralisation of specific sites, objects, and practices complements this first dimension of heritagisation as a form of secularisation. Both processes of either heritagising the sacred or sacralising heritage entail contestations and dissonance vis-à-vis the meaning, ownership, and modes of production that make these sites sacred or heritage (Meyer & de Witte 2013, p. 280).

Churches as World Heritage Sites instantiate the heritagisation of the sacred and the sacralisation of heritage, but this is not to say that heritage and religion are the same or even of a similar nature, for they are sacred in different ways and for different reasons. Fundamental in an analysis of such processes is a rudimentary definition of the sacred. To distinguish between secular and religious notions of the sacred, we may consult Duane Jethro's (2013) succinct formulation of the sacred in relation to heritage formation. In reference to David Chidester's work within the study of religion, Jethro suggests two classical characterisations of the sacred, one being, 'as a distant, awesome, and transcendent otherworldly force' and the other, 'an essentially social, human creative expression central, yet set apart, in processes of creating the social world' (Jethro 2013, p. 374). In

the latter understanding, the sacred stands apart as a pivotal yet markedly outstanding element of social life (outside the everyday) which lies at the core of any collective social order. This Durkheimian vision of the sacred allows us to see the sacred for the transgressive metaphysical qualities it holds, as well as the social dynamics it evokes in human life, where it is both being produced by and itself produces subjectivities on an individual and collective scale. Here all things may be sacralised through interpretive action, ritual, or negotiation, for which the sacred as an object of reverence, awe and contamination may cause dissonance, conflict and elation (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995).[2]

Jethro's first characterisation of the sacred owes much to the German theologian Rudolf Otto (1923), who theorised the idea of the holy (*das Heilige*) in terms of non-rational feeling towards the numinous (derived from the Latin word *numen* for divinity or divine presence) as the awe-inspiring and overpowering (*tremendum*) unknown (*mysterium*). Unlike Durkheim's category of the sacred, this explicitly transcendental definition of the holy cannot be transferred to this-worldly, immanent phenomena. This is not to say that cultural heritage, art and other human phenomena lack the capacity to inspire awe, but they do so as either representative or derivative of the divine, and hence they inspire awe as transcendental phenomena or as immanent things that stand for the transcendental. For example, during a recent tourist visit to the cathedral of Granada by one of the authors, the audio guide that he was given offered an interpretation of the architecture and the artworks in terms of religious piety and divine inspiration rather than artistic genius, thus sacralising the site in religious terms rather than in secular heritage terms, as is more common these days.

In a spatial analysis of religious heritage, Kim Knott (2010) distinguishes between the "poetics of space" and the "politics of space". The poetics of space refers to phenomenological perspectives that emphasise the aesthetics, experiences and senses of the sacred (Knott 2010, p. 31-33). A key notion in this approach is the examination of the "sense of place" (Feld & Basso, 1996) and the human body as a sensual, emotional, and existential receptor and producer of sacred spaces. Here, the sacred has, broadly speaking, a substantial and experiential quality as something (often) inherent, uncanny and awesome (Chidester & Linenthal 1995). The other approach is the *politics of space*, which differentiates itself by examining the knowledge and power relations that are part of the production and representation of space (Knott, 2010; Chidester & Linenthal, 1995). Influenced by French post-structuralists such as Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, and Henri Lefebvre, the emphasis on politics focuses attention on how sacred spaces are produced

[2] For an extensive discussion on dissonance in heritage management, see Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996).

and reproduced through affirmation of property and access (exclusion/inclusion), which may happen through rituals, claims and contestations over ownership or orthodoxy. In a religious heritage context, the politics of space often plays out between religious groups and secular agents (government, NGOs, tourists), over the control and power over specific localities of worship.

Whereas there may be some overlap between Kim Knott's distinction between poetics and politics of place, and the distinction that we drew between the sacred and the holy, these distinctions are by no means identical, as the holy in Otto's conception refers to inner states of awe and wonder of humans when experiencing the divine, whereas the sacred adheres to a much wider variety of "things"—divine and human, transcendent, and immanent. That said, both the distinction between poetics and politics, and the distinction between the sacred and the holy are ideal-typical in the Weberian sense of constituting two poles that usually cannot be found in empirical reality but that enable interpretation, analysis and understanding. Most religious sites combine both aspects of the holy and the sacred in some, often variable measure, and can be interpreted in terms of both poetics and politics. To the extent that religious sites and objects are thought to contain, reflect or represent an awe-inspiring sacred agent (glossed as holy), such sites and objects are often intended to be awe-inspiring and spectacular themselves. We can think of temples like Egypt's Luxor, Cambodia's Angkor, Indonesia's Borobudur, Lhasa's Potala Palace, mosques like the one in Mopti (Mali) or the Sultanahmet in Istanbul, the Aztek and Maya pyramids, or even Stonehenge in England. Given their literally awesome aspect, it is small wonder that many such religious structures end up on the World Heritage list.

In medieval European cities cathedrals were meant to impress, not just as containers of the holy (for example saintly relics, such as in Santiago de Compostela) but also as expressions of piety of the faithful. At the same time, cathedrals constituted a competitive expression of secular political and economic power, through a spectacular religious architectural language, and through the height and beauty of church towers and domes. In that sense, cathedrals were spectacles: sites of religious and architectural wonder, and destinations for travellers—pilgrims and tourists alike—who described them in Europe's early travelogues, in which a pious religious gaze and a tourist gaze (cf. Urry, 1990; Urry & Larsen, 2011) merged and often enhanced each other. Although the Reformation was partly a response to the too overtly this-worldly concerns of European Christianity, it also created a potential alienation between a visited spectacular religious site, object or practice on the one hand, and a non-believing (Protestant, rationalist, or

atheist) visitor on the other hand. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his *Italian Journey* (1817–1818) described the Catholic Church and its liturgical and folkloric practices in Rome as a curious and exotic spectacle. His equivocal stance towards the Catholic faith facilitated his ironic distance towards the sites and scenes that he depicted on the surface rather than in terms of their meaning—let alone religious awe. Over time, the secularisation of the process of travel inaugurated by the Grand Tour created various distinct publics for religious sites, that is of pilgrims and of tourists, thereby enabling and separating distinct gazes of the same things and phenomena—a religious gaze and a secular tourist gaze, or better: a combined heritage/tourist gaze.

To speak of cultural heritage before the Second World War is admittedly anachronistic. Anne Eriksen (2014) showed that terms like antiquities or monuments – which were precursors for what is now called *heritage*—had different discursive and cultural meanings and entailed different social and economic policies and practices. Nevertheless, cultural interest in preserving the material remains of the past in the form of art and architecture emerged around the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries with the accelerated modernisation of European societies, as brought out by the church conservation and restoration projects carried out by Prosper Mérimée and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in post-revolutionary France. These projects were undertaken for historical and cultural rather than religious reasons, thus discursively turning such religious structures into cultural heritage [*patrimoine culturel*] *avant la lettre*. These projects and the thinking behind it can be considered as early instances of the heritagisation, or heritage formation, which describes processes of elevating oftentimes old cultural phenomena—whether material objects (landscapes, monuments, sites) or immaterial practices (rituals, music and related socio-cultural practices)—to the status of cultural heritage (Bendix 2009; see also Salemink, 2016). That status confers to present and future generations the injunction to actively preserve and protect the things considered heritage and hence valuable.

This evaluation and injunction set heritage apart from ordinary, everyday things and phenomena. Heritagisation figuratively and sometimes literally places sites and objects on a pedestal to look at (but usually not touch), to experience and to contemplate as something special, unique, outstanding, and certainly not everyday, but apart from its intended use. A church that is considered cultural heritage, for example, might effectively function as a quasi-museum, with an entrance fee, brochures, guided tours or audio guides and special sites protected by ropes or otherwise. To a lay public, then, such a church may be experienced as non-everyday, non-profane and hence sacred in a Durkheimian sense, but not for religious reasons. As such, the heritagisation of a site or

object entails its secular sacralisation. Simultaneously, as we argued previously, heritagisation necessarily involves spectacularisation, in the sense that sites or objects become a spectacle in the Guy Debord sense (Salemink, 2016), whereby the spectacle is a social relation between people mediated by images, and hence entails a representational alienation between self and image. The Notre Dame in Paris, for example, is a church but is visited and admired by thousands around the world for historical and aesthetic reasons (as a cultural heritage site) rather than for religious reasons. In that sense, the church, and to some extent the liturgy taking place in it, has become a spectacle for non-religious viewers. Much like the Eiffel Tower, the image of the Notre Dame even became an icon of Paris in the sense of representing nothing but itself, but nevertheless evoking affect among a wide variety of people in Paris, France, and around the world—as became clear in the wake of the devastating blaze that destroyed the old roof and Viollet-le-Duc's nineteenth-century spire. Many non-Catholics professed to be shocked because they considered the church a sacred place—not for religious reasons, but because to them it constituted unique and invaluable cultural heritage.

The very different publics, rationales, sensibilities and affects implicated in religious heritage require spatial management of the sites in order to respect their holy character for the religious congregation—i.e., their religious sacredness—as well as their cultural heritage status—i.e., their secular sacredness—for the heritage constituency and for tourists and other non-religious visitors. In this paper, we will describe instances of spatial and spatio-temporal separation in and around churches that are (part of) Danish World Heritage sites, which we interpret in terms of purification in Mary Douglas' sense when she famously defined dirt as "matter out of place" in *Purity and Danger* (1966). However, these are not mutually exclusive categories, as the cultural heritage status of religious sites is oftentimes predicated on, and enhanced by their religious significance and use by a religious congregation (i.e., their holiness). Conversely, and perhaps paradoxically, cultural heritage status might also enhance the holiness of a site in terms of immaterial recognition or material support for the maintenance. These paradoxical processes are clearly visible in the three Danish cases, where we will also encounter spatial hybridisation, whereby heritage valuations become part of religious structures, objects, and sensibilities, and notions of religious authenticity permeate heritage valuations.

Heritage purification and hybridisation in Jelling

In contrast with its reputation as a strongly secularised society, Denmark is one of the few European countries with a state church. The "People's Church" (*folkekirken)*, also

known as Evangelical-Lutheran Church, is formally headed by the monarch Queen Margarethe, and governed and financially supported by the state through its Ministry of Religion (*kirkeministeriet)*. This triadic combination of church, royalty, and nation is a feature that permeates Danish self-perceptions and self-representations, including of what counts as heritage. Within the seemingly top-down church governance system, local parishes enjoy much autonomy. Regardless of religious affinity, most Danish people register and practice their life cycle rituals like birth and baptism, confirmation, marriage, and death through the church, and these are often experienced as a ritual initiation into the nation. Since the nineteenth century all the older church buildings of the folkekirken —the majority of which date from the Middle Ages—are protected as "ancient monuments" (*oldtildsminder)* by the state, and the National Museum has an important consulting role (Kjær & Grinder-Hansen, forthcoming).

The composite nature of the secular (national, cultural, historical) and religious (Protestant) values of the three Danish cases is perhaps most evident at the Roskilde and Jelling sites, which are both believed to have been founded by the Danish Viking King Harald Blåtånd (which translates as Bluetooth) in the late tenth century.[3] They are, in other words, sites of religious worship and national iconicity, with strong royal connections. At the centre of the Jelling monument complex lies the small Romanesque church building, Jelling Church. The monumental site furthermore consists of two large Viking Age mounds, a stone ship setting, a recreated palisade wall, and two runic stones. On the largest of the runic stones, which stand by the entrance of the church, King Harald (911–986) proclaims to have united the Danes and converted them to Christianity. Marking the transition from a pagan Viking polity, this stone is considered the birth certificate of Danish nation, Christianity, and royalty.

Interest in Jelling emerged in the nineteenth century, as part of a Romanticist nationalist movement which highlighted Denmark's "Viking" roots. Considered the "baptismal certificate" (*dåbsattest)* of the Danish nation, church, and royal house in one, Jelling was described in early historical texts and for a long time attracted archaeological and tourist interest. With intellectual support from the local teachers' training college, the Jelling beautification association (*forskønnelsesforening)* was established in the early twentieth century, and it undertook an initiative towards *frilæggelse* (exposing) of the site, in the sense of making the archaeological remains more visible. The smaller runic stone was moved toward the entrance of the church, next to the large stone, and houses surrounding the two mounds were gradually demolished. As documented by Leif Baun Chris-

[3] See http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/697

tensen in *Jelling—byen der forsvandt* (2016) a large part of the town was eventually knocked down, including a listed building which was disassembled and reassembled in the *Gamle By* open-air museum in Aarhus.

Figure 1: *Jelling village centre in 1963 after the clearing of some gardens to the west of the monuments. Currently, all houses between the cemetery and the road have been cleared (Photo by Hans Stiesdal. © National Museum of Denmark, http://jelling.natmus.dk/om-jellingprojektet/udstillinger/byen-der-forsvandt-2010/)*

This urban disappearance intensified after the 1994 UNESCO inscription, when large-scale archaeological excavations brought to light the remains of a large stone ship setting encompassing the two mounds, and enormous trapezium-shaped wooden palisade with some longhouses within a 1.44 km perimeter. Like with the two mounds, nobody really knows the uses of these structures, which were abandoned shortly after they were erected. Nevertheless, the area was cleared further and the vacated space was used to sculpturally mark the excavated features with concrete poles marking the former palisade and other aesthetically and educationally intended markings. Further destruction planned by architect Kristine Jensen and the main funder, the Velux Foundation, did not

materialise, however.[4] Also, the old school building housing the visitor's centre was knocked down to be replaced by a new experience centre operated by the National Museum, *Kongernes Jelling* (The Kings' Jelling), which opened in 2014. For want of archaeological objects, it features Viking age experiential re-enactments. Jelling had for decades received many Danish visitors, but the UNESCO inscription put it on the international tourist map as well, and after the sweeping spatial restructuring projects of the 2010s the site received more than 225.000 visitors in 2017, now also including tourists from beyond Denmark who were mainly interested Viking history.[5]

Figure 2: *View of the northern mound, cemetery and (to the right) the church, with the palisade markers in the distance (© Oscar Salemink, 2017)*

What occurred over the past century of *frilæggelse* is the spatial cleansing (cf. Herzfeld 2006) of a large part of the town in an act of heritage purification, by which we mean the removal of profane sights in the heritage space in an attempt to make the heritage elements more visible. The UNESCO World Heritage site of "outstanding universal value"

[4] See https://www.kristinejensen.dk/MONUMENTOMR%C3%85DET_I_JELLING_n120.html

[5] See https://vafo.dk/artikel/interessen-holder-ved-kongernes-jelling-er-stadig-rekordernes-hus

was made to stand out in spatial practice, with the main elements figuratively placed on a spatial pedestal in what arguably counts as an act of sacralisation. However, the one element escaping this "heritage vandalism" was the church. In line with Danish church and heritage legislation within a context of non-separation of church and state, the parish is in charge of the church and is considered sufficiently capable to manage the heritage within the double church-*cum*-heritage governance structure legislated by the state. Both heritage preservation and church maintenance and operations are funded by the state, but the local parish council, which employs the parish clerk who doubles as UNESCO site manager, is an autonomous body elected by local parishioners.

Figure 3: *Map of the village in the 2017 Management Plan of the World Heritage site in Jelling; the area marked yellow is church property, and pink is municipal property (© Vejle Municipality, Management plan 2017-2021).*

That body is responsible for managing the church as part of the World Heritage (Salemink et al., forthcoming; Kjær & Grinder-Hansen, forthcoming). The church in the Jelling complex is an active parish church, with regular religious services and church-related social activities, even when the number of visitors increased drastically following World Heritage inscription, the spatial restructuring and the opening of the new Visitor's Centre, which is headed by a manager on behalf of the National Museum. The relationship between the church and heritage interests are generally peaceful, as brought out by Svend, a manager of the Visitor's Centre, during an interview at the site:[6]

> Did you see these two boys down there who parked their bicycles outside and came in? They were here for twenty minutes, then left again. I love that, local kids who use the place when they pass by after school. Before it was just 'grey heads' that came, now there are many families with children and school classes.

Svend expresses here that the church and heritage site have a joint interest in attracting more and younger people. Although he denies the impact of the World Heritage inscription ('We have been World Heritage for 25 years, it was not much different before or after'), the increase in tourist numbers does bring some challenges to reconciling church and heritage interests:

> Don't get me wrong, but it's OK to be able to say to American visitors that they cannot see the rune stone now, because there is a funeral going on—so that is the story that they tell when they come home. It is fine to be so close to local life. It brings something that this is a normal functional parish church, and not a giant cathedral. It is a very normal small church, like we have in many places in Denmark.

Even though Svend represents the heritage interests in this World Heritage site, he emphasises its local embeddedness in a little village, with the parish church as one of the focal points of local community life.[7]

To mitigate the onslaught of tourists, the Visitor's Centre provides tour guides in the church by to separate worship from tourism. Inevitably, however, tourists come into the open church outside guided tours, and we sometimes witnessed visitors coming into church during mass, weddings and other ceremonies – something that is perhaps inevitable in an open church. Nevertheless, the congregation exercised its sovereign claim

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[6] All names in this chapter are pseudonyms, in line with current privacy requirements.

[7] In 2020, Jelling church hosted 29 baptisms, 75 confirmations, 9 weddings and 37 funerals; see https://sogn.dk/jelling/fakta-om-sognet/

to ownership of the church by having a new mosaic floor and modern stained-glass windows installed during an excavation and maintenance project. While the parish deemed an embellishment of the church desirable from its perspective that the church is a house for the worship of God, such an architectural renovation is rather unusual for a UNESCO World Heritage site. In other words, in this case, the integrity of the congregation's religious experience overrode the authenticity of the material heritage—an approach considered acceptable in a Danish heritage context and one that apparently did not elicit protests from UNESCO.

The experience with heritagisation in Jelling is mixed. Whereas the heritage space outside the church is marked by attempts at heritage purification, within and around the church a process of *hybridisation* between the secular sacrality of the heritage on the one hand, and the character of the living church as a site for experiencing the holy on the other, suggests a relative legal strength of the local church congregation in comparison with local town residents – a strength that is brought out by the fact that the parish clerk doubles as the UNESCO site manager. In short, local houses were cleansed in an act of heritage purification, while the church is *hybridised* as both religious worship site and heritage site.

Spatial separation and hybridisation in Roskilde cathedral

Like Jelling, Roskilde Cathedral is connected to the Danish Lutheran church, the nation, and as burial place of the monarchs, to Danish royalty. Reportedly established by the afore-mentioned King Harald who unified and Christianised the Danish nation, it was rebuilt in medieval times in Romanesque and Gothic styles as one of the most important archdioceses of Denmark. An imposing church building in brick close to the later capital of Copenhagen, in the fifteenth century the cathedral was chosen to be the burial place for Danish monarchs, and with the emergence of nationalist Romanticism in the nineteenth century, it became an iconic site in the Danish landscape. This status as a national monument attracting (initially mostly national) visitors to the church was confirmed through the 1995 UNESCO World Heritage inscription, which did not affect the site much during the first decade.[8] In other words, Roskilde Cathedral was already subject to a combined heritage-*cum*-tourist gaze early on, but World-Heritagisation (cf. De Cesari, 2012; Poulsen et al., forthcoming) gradually internationalised the oversight (conforming to UNESCO rules). This was capped by the relatively late mounting of the official UNESCO plaque next to the main entrance of the cathedral in 2015, twenty years

[8] For a virtual tour through the cathedral, see http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/695

after its World Heritage inscription. The public is also becoming increasingly international, proactively stimulated with billboards at Copenhagen Airport. In an explanation for the strong growth in visitor numbers from 2011 (89,000) to 2015 (130,000 entry tickets), the UNESCO site manager attributes this to the fact 'that Roskilde Cathedral markets itself now—in contrast with before—proactively as UNESCO World Heritage, which has strong meaning for foreign tourists.'[9]

Figure 4: *Bird's eye view of the Roskilde Cathedral nave, with the altar in the distance, visibly cordoned off with rope. Photo: Roberto Fortuna 2012 (© National Museum of Denmark)*

[9] More and more tourists come to the Cathedral; see https://sn.dk/Roskilde/Flere-og-flere-turister-stroemmer-til-domkirken/artikel/525022

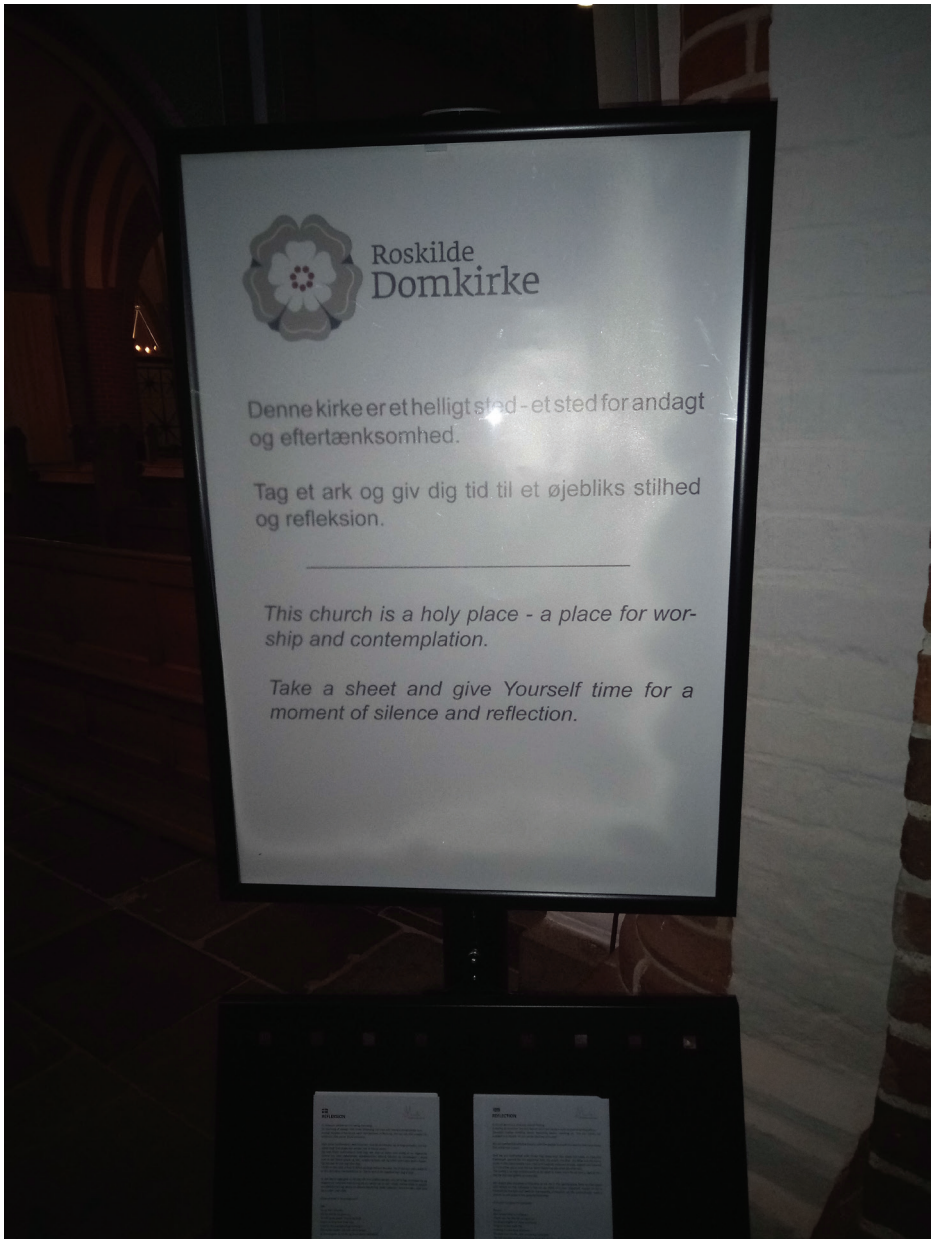

Figure 5: *Sign saying "This church is a holy place" in Roskilde Cathedral (© Oscar Salemink, 2018)*

In line with what one of the authors has called the spectacular aspect of heritagisation (Salemink, 2016), the cathedral became not just a site of worship, but a tourist destination and object of a secular heritage gaze and, as such, a spectacle. Becoming spectacularised, the church and congregation of Roskilde (but also Jelling and Christiansfeld) not only exist in what Thomas Bremer calls 'parallel geographies' and a 'simultaneity of places'—both heritage/tourist and religious (2006, pp. 25, 30). The influx of tourists and visitors necessitates some form of differentiation between worshippers and visitors, something facilitated by the size of the cathedral (unlike the small Jelling church). Outside religious service hours, all visitors are welcome to Roskilde Cathedral, and every-

one, no matter their purpose, has to enter through the cathedral's entrance. Here tourists are asked to pay an entrance fee, while churchgoers do not have to pay. Inside the cathedral there is some separation, however awkward this might be to regulate in practice. Spatially, the Sankt Andreas chapel of the cathedral is not open for guided tours and is intended to serve as a space of worship for churchgoers who seek peace and devotion. Temporally, in the event of church services, the heritage and tourist paraphernalia at the booth in the space of the entrance porch such as a cash register, books for sale, and pamphlets are hidden to temporarily diminish the otherwise museum-like appearance of the cathedral's entrance.

This limited spatial and occasionally temporal deference to religious sensibility within the cathedral does not hide the fact that religious and secular spaces co-exist most hours of the day. The cathedral priest Lone recognised this with a telling remark that 'We limit our members' rights in order to accommodate things like guided tours', thus referring to the tension inherent in churches as places of worship and as heritage sites *cum* tourist attractions:

> There are restrictions for tourists, for example, where they may sit during mass and when it is open. But there are also restrictions on church activities … Last year a declaration of intent was made that for instance all funerals have to take place at fixed days of the week …. This began when [the UNESCO site manager] started working here, he said that bigger companies would not come because of the risk of cancellation, they said, if there was a funeral.

To reconcile the heritage and religious aspects of the cathedral, other measures were taken regarding heritage communication. Lone said that 'They recently created a new, own corps in the church to ensure that the guides say the most important things and speak the truth, and that guided tours also have a church aspect'. The priests and the UNESCO site manager must, therefore, regularly discuss such matters in order to channel the various visitor streams and activities in the desired directions.

However, sometimes the visitor streams meet in less pleasant ways. Lone spoke of a local person who came to the church for an event and just sat down on a church bench to collect his thoughts, when he was photographed. He experienced that as painful and decided to not come back to the church again. A distinctive line between the tourists and churchgoers is not always easy to draw. Simon Coleman (2018) and other scholars (Ashworth, 2009; Shackley, 2001, 2002) argued that secular cathedral tourists might experience the awe that Rudolf Otto attributed to the divine. Coleman's analysis of four urban English cathedrals' 'dynamically co-habitated' and 'shape-shifting' spaces note

the ambiguity of visitors as agents whose experiences and movements 'are loosely framed' (Coleman 2018, pp. 12-14). Ultimately, Coleman argues that it seems unproductive to talk of delimited religious space, because cathedrals with high visitor numbers allow for simultaneous registers of experience and use to happen for visitors and churchgoers alike.

Worshippers
For churchgoers and worshippers: free access within the marked area

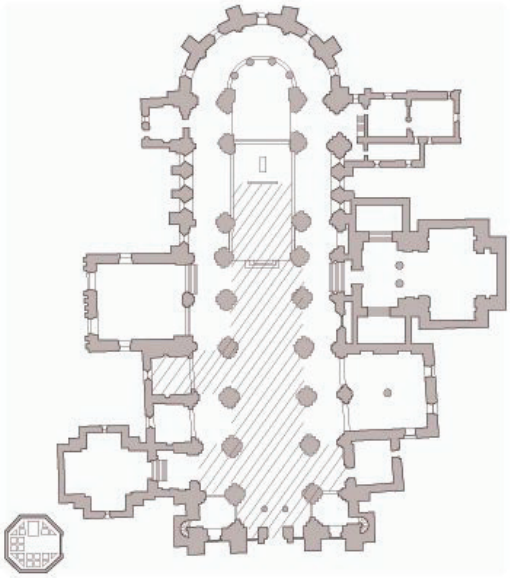

Figure 6: *Image from the website of Roskilde Cathedral marking free accessible space,[10] https://roskildedomkirke.dk/english/tickets (© Roskilde Cathedral)*

One incident in Roskilde encapsulated this difficulty of distinguishing between religious and secular spaces and sensibilities through spatial separation, channelling, and access. During a guided tour through Roskilde Cathedral, Johannes, a senior heritage manager of the cathedral paused before the chancel and altar in the cathedral's nave. His hesitation came because he was reminded of an incident, which had come to change spatial regulations inside the cathedral.

Until the year before, 2016, it had not been possible for visitors nor churchgoers to kneel at the altar rail before the chancel outside religious ceremonies. This was marked with a

[10] In an email to the authors, staff of Roskilde Cathedral note the following four points regarding the map on their website: (1) the separation of space is only used outside church ceremonies; (2) the separation of space is meant to create an opportunity, in which the cathedral through dialogue and directions creates a framework in a space without frames and cordons; (3) It is up to people's own conscience if they observe this separation; (4) and additionally it should be noted that the hatched area of space does not apply to churchgoers.

rope, which would indicate an enclosure around the altar, as a clear boundary between accessible and non-accessible, holy space. However, one day Johannes witnessed how a visitor, whom he took for a tourist, had crawled under the rope to kneel in prayer at the altar rail. The trespasser was visibly emotional and wept when kneeling by the altar. The manager said that at that moment, he was ready to interrupt the person to scold them and say, 'Hey you! That's not allowed.' He instantly changed his mind, and he asked himself why pious visitors could not approach the altar rail. Afterwards, he brought up the encounter with other managers, who could not remember why the rope was put up, and the issue was raised during a meeting in the cathedral's parish council. The council, as the local authority on such matters, decided to take the rope down and consequently allow churchgoers and (secular) tourists—without distinction—to approach the altar if they wanted. In other words, allowing for the possibility that visitors come for religious reasons the heritage manager and the parish council agreed not to distinguish between heritage space and holy space: they collapsed the previous distinction between heritage and religious space by design.

The manager, Johannes, and other personnel in Roskilde Cathedral called the abolishment of such spatial distinction a matter of common sense. Rather than augmenting differences, they argued that religious and secular features were in practice constitutive of each other, following a dictum of "the more heritage, the more church" and *vice versa*. This opening up allowed for a sharing of church space claimed for both religious and heritage purposes, not unlike the overlapping claims to Glastonbury through Christian and Goddess processions as described by Marion Bowman (2004). Such a pragmatic stance is very common in listed heritage churches with active congregations that are responsible for their management and maintenance, for example by charging or inviting an entrance fee, which in turn contributes to the maintenance of the church. Material considerations apart, Christian congregations and clergy are often concerned about spreading the religious message by exposing visitors to the special atmosphere of the place—a consideration that is also present in Roskilde. Kim Knott (2010) calls this special atmosphere the poetics of place, in the sense that the assumption is that exposure to the holy inspires awe, in the Rudolf Otto sense of the term. Hence, from a proselytising vantage point, fencing off holy places in a church does not make sense. In Roskilde Cathedral, the hybridisation of space as *both* church *and* heritage became a deliberate device to expose supposedly secular visitors to the work of the holy, and thus to inspire a hoped-for religious sensibility in them—as brought out in the instructions to tour guides, as reported by Lone. At the same time, this should be nuanced by mentioning the spatial cordoning off of the Sankt Andreas chapel intended to serve as a space of

worship for churchgoers, and the temporal closure of the cathedral to visitors during mass.

Christiansfeld's congregation becoming intangible cultural heritage

Christiansfeld was established in 1773 as a Moravian (*Herrnhuter*) settlement at the invitation of the Danish King Christian VII, as a congregation outside the Danish Lutheran church. The town layout of about 20 hectares was designed to facilitate the Moravians' utopian idea that piety should be expressed in everyday life, for example, through work, simplicity and frugality. The Moravian church building (*Salshuset*) lies at the town's social and geometric centre, making it the pivotal point for the small Moravian congregation of currently about 150 people. Beyond the church, buildings like the Brothers' and Sisters' houses, and spaces like the church square and the cemetery (called God's Acre) are impregnated with religiosity for the small congregation. Before the UNESCO inscription in 2015, several foundations had invested heavily in the restoration of the buildings—something beyond the means of the present-day Moravians. Although the Moravians are now a small minority in the town, they still own the heritage buildings, but unlike in Roskilde and Jelling, the church congregation through the parish council is not formally controlling the heritage as it is not employing the UNESCO site manager. After its inscription as World Heritage,[11] the number of registered visitors at the Christiansfeld Visitor's Centre shot up from 8,000 in 2014 to 40,000 in later years,[12] although the actual number of visitors is locally thought to be much higher. According to the local visitor centre's surveys, most tourists who visit Christiansfeld are an assortment of (mostly) Danish and German day tourists, who spend a few hours walking, shopping, and gazing at the townscape, the church interior and exhibitions of the centre. Especially in the summer, tourist buses arrive with visitors, who may be on a combined trip to visit both the Jelling and Christiansfeld sites because of their geographical proximity.

Although the visitor numbers are comparatively small, the recent increase had tangible effects on the local congregation's experience and use of its church space, changes which the Christiansfeld church share with the churches in Jelling and Roskilde. Being the object of a tourist gaze and urban legends told by tour guides irritates many Moravians, who miss the solemn post-mass atmosphere in the church square after mass on Sunday morning, or feel ill at ease when mourning dead loved ones at the graveyard, stared at and photographed by tourists. Almost all Moravian interlocutors in Christiansfeld with

[11] See http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1468

[12] See https://ugeavisen.dk/kolding/artikel/turister-str%C3%B8mmer-til-christiansfeld

whom we spoke could recount situations where they had participated in religious ceremonies, which had been disturbed or even interrupted by the presence or gaze of tourists. In such moments, the negotiation over the dominant feature of church space comes to a point of crisis, as Moravian social conventions state that their services have ultimate privilege *vis-à-vis* tourist activities and curiosity. For Moravians, secular uses of church space can and should wait for the completion of the ritual or religious use, but this does not always happen.

Figure 7: *Inside the salshuset [church] in Christiansfeld (© Oscar Salemink, 2018)*

One of the more dramatic incidents that illustrate this tension was recounted by a Moravian interlocutor, Simon, about a funeral service in the Moravian church, which per tradition ends with a procession from the Moravian church to the Moravian graveyard, God's Acre, some hundred meters through the streets of Christiansfeld. The procession is led by the Moravian brass band who plays during the procession, followed by the Moravian priest who wears a noble, black top hat and white gloves with his suit. Then comes the hearse with the coffin and lastly the mourners. On this occasion, as the pro-

cession went into the street, it was met by a noticeable group of tourists. Simon recalled his experience:

> All these tourists would freeze, 'Holy moly, what's going on here? Isn't this something! Oh, we better be ready, because something is happening', you know, 'The locals are doing something, the natives here', and we were mixed together, people ran to and fro between the coffin, and some took pictures and so on. Their filter was gone. Maybe they didn't have spiritual mooring? But then just a small filter of decency at least, no? ... 'This is people grieving, somebody is doing something that I shouldn't interfere with', and they don't have it ... It became like an act we put on, as if it was for their sake. I mean seems like that in this situation, right?

Figure 8: *Moravian brass band preparing for a funeral (© Rasmus Rask Poulsen, 2016)*

Here the established order of separating religious and secular space had collapsed and resulted in a moment of confusion and conflation. The case of funerals in Christiansfeld and of Moravians' use of public spaces in general is, of course, challenging from a her-

itage management perspective, because the congregation expands its rituals into public space and claims it for religious purposes. Nevertheless, it speaks to the vulnerability of sacred ritual, which may be highly choreographed, and in several ways delineated from secular (profane) space. Expectations of predictability and stability can disappear instantly when the secular and religious spheres intertwine and detract from the solemnity and holy character to crisis point. While Moravian religious sensibility claims privilege over religious spaces inside their church, as well as outside it, during ceremonies, the incident speaks to a specific element of engaging with sacred space, namely the spatial aspect of being the object of the curious gaze of a stranger (i.e., a tourist). Simon spoke to this when he said it was as if he was suddenly part of "an act". Local Moravian interlocutors rejected the exoticisation that they felt from tourists expecting Moravians' dress and comportment to be similar to that of the Amish in America. This reflects a general Moravian resistance towards becoming a spectacle for others to behold. Another Moravian interlocutor, Per, also made note of this sense of being stared at by tourists:

> We are in general very positive about this UNESCO thing: it's great for the town and for its future … but sometimes when we're going to church, we almost have to fight our away out after a church service. You feel like a monkey in a cage, like a zoo, that people are so impolite and show no respect, because 'Uh, they have to see the church', Yeah well they can wait five minutes and let the regular churchgoer out.

Both of the above examples illustrate the fragility of religious space when it becomes cultural heritage in Christiansfeld, while the official plans and policies that were put in place to "protect" this space and use thereof by congregants fall short of their stated aims.

In recent years, local authorities have published a number of "management plans" for the Christiansfeld World Heritage site and stipulated policies for safeguarding the integrity and authenticity of the site. Such plans are drawn up in consultation between local government, private landowners and the local Moravian church. In contrast with sites like Jelling and Roskilde that belong to the Danish folkekirken and fall under the dual oversight of the Ministry of Religion and the National Museum, the preservation of religious values in Christiansfeld is considered the sole responsibility of the Moravian congregation itself. Under the headline "Cultural World Heritage Values" the most recent management plan writes the following:

> The Moravian Brethren lives in respect for the historical setting that has been given to them. The town is seen as an inheritance (*arv*), passed on through gen-

erations. The congregation carries out a responsible management of this inheritance as one of its duties. Such management entails a continued ownership … [M]anagement has to happen in accordance with the congregation's principles. (Management Plan for Christiansfeld, 2019)

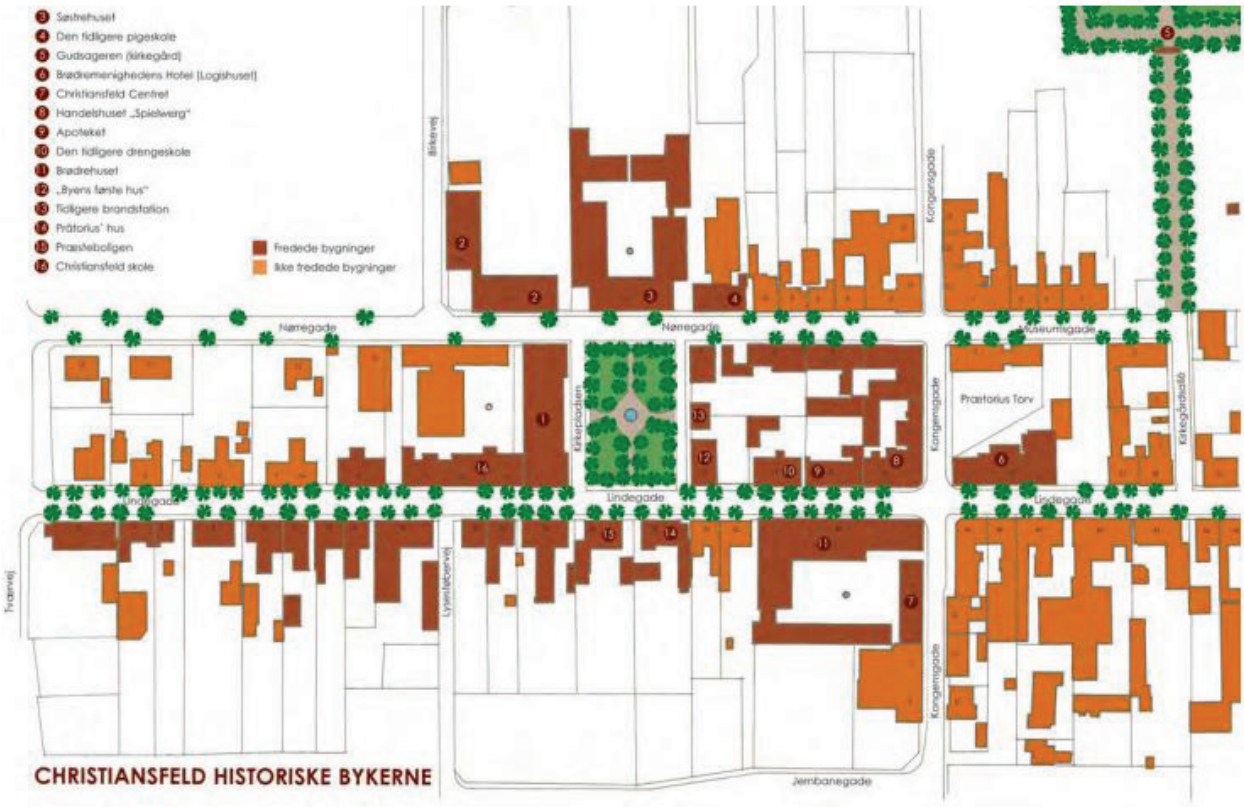

Figure 9: *Map of Christianfeld's historical town centre (Christiansfeld Forvaltningsplan 2019-2022. https://christiansfeldcentret.dk/media/attachments/2019/10/25/christiansfeld-forvaltningsplan-2019-2022---reduceret-strrrelse.pdf, © Museum Kolding, Christiansfeld)*

Thus, in order to maintain the life of the church, the church should be free to carry out its activities in any way it wants to, regardless of tourist or secular demands or needs. Such a demarcation of responsibility came up during an interview with a former (municipally employed) site manager for Christiansfeld, when the question of government interference in Moravian religious matters was discussed. The manager quickly stated that, 'We would never, never ever interfere in that (Moravian religious life)'. This emphatic statement shows that the manager was acutely aware of the limits of her authority. No one outside the church should, formally or theologically, have any say as to the religious conduct of the Moravian Church.

In relation with official management plans, the Moravian pastor has managed to negotiate with the heritage authorities that no guided tours would enter the church or church square on Sunday mornings, although visitors are always welcome to visit the church outside mass for similar religious reasons as cited earlier for Roskilde. That pastor, with a PhD in theology, is crucial for the Moravian congregation to keep some control over the site, by arguing that the Moravian religion constitutes an Intangible Cultural Heritage, without which the material heritage would become inauthentic and hence meaningless. Moravian congregants followed their pastor's argument. One of these were a retired Lutheran priest, Jakob, who referred in detail to UNESCO's statement on Christiansfeld as a World Heritage Site. Jakob thought that UNESCO's criteria for listing Christiansfeld supported his and the pastor's argument that the intangible cultural (and especially religious) values of the Moravian community were a prerequisite for the material value of Christiansfeld as a World Heritage Site:[13]

> The first criteria is the cultural traditions, I can't remember the exact phrasing, but they emphasise that there is a living tradition. The other is the architecture, a stage in the history of humanity, as they say. The two things are connected. But if we must stay on UNESCO's World Heritage List, it is the first one [that] is the most important. Because this criterion supports the architecture, you see. Because it's no longer living cultural heritage, if the Moravian Brethren shut down … if the Christian foundation is gone, there is no heritage anymore, and then the two criteria no longer add up, and then Christiansfeld is no longer worthy of the World Heritage List. That's why it's so crucial that there continues to be a Moravian community.

Thus, using UNESCO the rhetoric of Intangible Cultural Heritage Jakob and the pastor strive to "take back some control" over the heritage management for the Moravian congregation. However, this comes at the price of defining Moravian religious traditions in terms of Intangible Cultural Heritage without which the material heritage would become meaningless. The deal made here is to expand the logic of heritage instead of disputing it. The Christiansfeld congregation's solution to the challenges of heritagisation of its religious practices is simply to call it *their* cultural heritage. This manifestation of ownership and argument for authenticity is at once a political ploy and an expression of sincere concern and affinity for the religious life of the church as an integral part of a World Heritage Site. Arguably, however, this form of heritagisation of the sacred (cf.

[13] Christiansfeld was inscribed on the World Heritage List because it meets two of UNESCO's ten criteria for listing (only one is needed for listing). *See* https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1468/

Meyer & de Witte, 2013) secularises and, ironically, potentially profanes something deemed holy or held sacred, like a funeral. To the extent that Intangible Cultural Heritage turns specific cultural practices into a spectacle and hence a performance, one cannot expect tourists to look at a funeral otherwise than as 'putting on an act,' as Simon put it. In Christiansfeld, the situation is compounded by the fact that the townscape is a public place, while the church is deliberately, for theological reasons, open to the public.

For the Moravian constituency that claims its religious space as a sacred site of worship or even a holy space of touching the divine, this constitutes a localised claim to religious sovereignty enacted through religious and ritual practice in the present. Simultaneously, however, as heritage, the site becomes a spectacle for a secular public made up mostly of domestic tourists, who do not share the same ideas about the holy and whose notions of the sacredness of these places are not religiously motivated or enacted. Instead, the church as heritage site becomes a focal point of another, secular constituency, sacralised as cultural heritage, and in Christiansfeld the supposedly exotic Moravian congregation even becomes itself the object of a heritage gaze on the part of cultural experts and of tourists seeking a culturally "authentic" experience of the heritage site.

The considerable investment by Danish foundations in the restoration of the Moravian church and other buildings in Christiansfeld suggest that some form of heritage appreciation had been apparent well before the World Heritage inscription in 2015. However, the increased government oversight of the heritage and the growing number of visitors following UNESCO recognition enhanced the sacredness of the church and other Moravian buildings for both religious and secular publics. As in Jelling and Roskilde, what happens in these processes of heritagisation (which involves the tourist gaze) is a curious secular valorisation and spectacularisation of churches as heritage spaces and of the religious congregation who use them daily for their religiously sacred purposes. In the absence of religious and heritage purification, in Christiansfeld, we find a situation of hybridisation of not just the religious places, but of the religious congregation itself, who in the face of their relative lack of power attempt to engage the tourist onslaught by rebaptising themselves Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Spectacularising religious heritage

While the religious character of the Jelling, Roskilde and Christiansfeld sites are arguable a partial basis for their heritage nomination, at all three sites, heritagisation entailed spectacularisation, as World Heritage inscription invites a combined tourist/heritage gaze focusing on the material heritage, and in Christiansfeld also on the congrega-

tion. To make the cultural heritage literally stand out, this sometimes involves spatio-temporal separation between heritage publics and religious congregations in order to respect the solemnity and authenticity of the religious experience, and the holiness of the place or practice. While this can be considered a form of religious purification, heritagisation can itself generate a process of spatial purification. In Jelling this amounted to a form of spatial cleansing, as archaeological remains hidden in the ground were made to stand out by clearing the environment of human habitation and evoking an architectural fantasy version of the past in "artistic" concrete. However, most of the time, less drastic measures were employed towards a "peaceful coexistence" between religious and heritage gazes and uses, or better: between the religious sacred and the heritage sacred, through hybridisation.

Sometimes, as in Roskilde and Christiansfeld, the religious congregations felt a theological duty to open up their church to visitors who, after all, are *potential* believers. In the Danish Lutheran state church, hybridity is a structural part of the religion-heritage nexus, as it is the parish councils that employ the UNESCO site managers (Salemink, Poulsen & Ahl, forthcoming). When addressing the impact on the position of the local Moravian congregation of the fact that in Christiansfeld the municipality employs the UNESCO site manager, a senior member of the Moravian church responded that the UNESCO site manager manages nothing, because the buildings were *owned* by the Moravians. He admitted, however, that the Moravians did not own nor control the public spaces in the town. However, by calling the Moravian faith Intangible Cultural Heritage, he claimed a prominent position for the Moravians, but simultaneously submitted to an ultimate form of hybridisation by which the faithful themselves become part of the heritage. The converse of this claim to cultural authority is that Moravians themselves become the object of a tourist gaze in their own environment—something resented deeply by local Moravians, such as Simon and Per (see above).

We could question to what extent this is a new phenomenon; after all, Goethe in his Italian Journey turned his gaze in Rome towards the peculiarities of Catholic liturgy and those embodying and enacting it, including the Pope. To the extent that ritual—including religious ritual—is performative, as Victor Turner (1987) argued, it is intended (if not designed) to attract the attention of participants and spectators. However, it is often ignored that religious ritual is also hoped to attract the attention of the divine, whether of one god, of plural divinities or of saintly and angelic beings. In other words, the spectacular nature of much religious ritual enables the faithful to connect with the divine and is, therefore, an integral part of its holy nature, much like the spectacular nature of

many religious temples is felt to be made holy by either mirroring the divine or facilitating a connection with the divine. The heritagisation of religious sites, objects, and practices—and the attendant heritage gaze—subsumes the religious domain referring to a sense of the holy as a constituent and necessary part of its domain, defined as by UNESCO as "humanity", while simultaneously predicating its assessment of so-called heritage values on secular, technical, universal principles that are not derived from the religious character of the site, the buildings, the objects.

In other words, religion becomes an *object* of heritagisation, and may, to some extent, be subjected to a heritage regime. The afore-mentioned heritage manager in Roskilde, Johannes, articulated this equation between religious and heritage dimensions at the cathedral as follows:

> It is important to understand that, when you talk about Roskilde Cathedral and the monuments, then UNESCO is very interested (and we are too), that the monument is only a monument because it is being used for what this monument was built for. Which means that Roskilde Cathedral can only be preserved for the future by continuing to be a church, and that is one of UNESCO's primary interests. Which means that the locals, the natives, the population are not pushed out of the monument, because you have now made it World Heritage and a lot of tourists come in.

What is new with the incorporation of religious sites into heritage regimes (cf. Geismar 2015) is perhaps not that religion is an object of heritagisation, but rather that within UNESCO's World Heritage criteria religious viability, vitality and piety constitute a *necessary* argument for the authenticity of religious sites. This was so aptly understood by Christiansfeld's Moravian pastor when arguing for his religion to be considered Intangible Cultural Heritage, without which the material cultural heritage has no meaning. Whatever the intentions and eventual outcomes, framing religion *as* cultural heritage inadvertently hybridises religious piety by privileging the secular, immanent frame of heritage: it subjects the holy to the secular sacred frame of heritage regimes.

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Povzetek

Na podlagi idealno tipičnega razlikovanja med "svetim" in "cerkvenim" ta članek obravnava učinke vzpostavljanja kulturne dediščine verskih prostorov na treh danskih mestih svetovne dediščine Jelling, Roskilde in Christiansfeld. Verska območja so pogosto namenjena spektaklom, ki navdihujejo versko strahospoštovanje med verniki, ko pa postane dediščina, postanejo spektakel za drugo javnost, za katero sakralnost kraja ni nujno motivirana z versko pobožnostjo. Namesto tega je cerkev kot dediščina lahko sakaralizirana kontaktna točka za ontološki ponos v imenu drugega, posvetnega volilnega okrožja, kot je regija ali narod, ali za posredno nostalgijo turistične javnosti. Verska skupnost bi lahko postala predmet dediščine kulturnih strokovnjakov in turistov, ki v ospredje postavljajo "pristnost" verskih izkušenj v prostorskem okolju kraja v skladu z načeli UNESCO. V prispevku kažemo, da prekrivanje pogleda kulturne dediščine nad verskim pogledom povzroči potencialno hibridizacijo religije kot kategorije dediščine. To ne samo hibridizira versko pobožnost, temveč jo nehote oblikuje kot kulturno dediščino skozi sekularni, imanentni okvir dediščine.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: svetovna dediščina, verska dediščina, cerkveno, sveto, Danska

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