Memoryscapes of the Great War (1914-1918): A paradigm shift in tourism research on war heritage

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Landscapes of War Memories: Identified, Valorised and Visited

1. An empirical quest for comprehension of the current tourismification process of war heritage is the key objective of this interdisciplinary and international research project. Four research tracks were explored:

2. The concept and actual construction or reconstruction of landscapes of memories and contemporary interpretations of the past, inspired by the loud universal call of “Lest we forget”. This also induced more ethical reflections on “the right to remember, the right to forget”, the responsibility to select, to include and exclude, to restore or to destruct.

3. The selective process of valorisation: marking and branding tangible war heritage sites and landscapes, supported by collective memories, individual stories and experiences (intangible heritage); providing a process of branding places and events to be remembered, supported by historical evidence but also by hidden (political) agenda’s; understanding what are the selection criteria, and determining what to remember, what to forget and the reasons why. Divergent interpretations of warscapes, about values of war memoryscapes in different nations and countries and the present impact on war tourism, has not yet been studied empirically in an international context.

4. An explanation of the 21st-Century hype about heritagescapes “remembering and revalorizing” even reconstructing former war sites, infrastructures and landscapes,
supported and explained by narratives and various expressions of intangible heritage through memorial events, ceremonies, arts, folklore, etc. The results of an international survey online (multilingual) open new ways of identifying the variables affecting the process of heritagisation.

5 The need to question the sustainability of war tourism development, to anticipate the future demands of an expanding cultural tourism market, while assessing and monitoring the impact of visitation patterns to war heritage sites and memorial events. Writing the biography of war sites is a new challenge for interdisciplinary research, policy makers, planners and marketers (Sorenson, 2015). Clearly the ongoing mutation from landscapes of memories to tourismscapes, above all the implications of new dynamics, is subject of an academic debate. What is the actual knowledge and genuine interest of the 21st century global community in the “Great War”?

6 With these questions in mind, the World Heritage Tourism Research Network (WHTRN) launched an international survey (in four languages) online in 2012, which elicited an international response (www.WHTRN.ca). This resulting invaluable database allows an in-depth study of cross cultural and national differences in the valorisation of WWI sites, landscapes and narratives.

**Landscapes of War Memories: Context, Concepts and Methods**

7 The Centenary of the Great War (2014-2018) has mobilized many communities, governments and tourism officers, war and/or peace related organizations. Several countries once involved in the First World War (WWI), referred to as the Great War, developed a centennial agenda. The increased interest in historical events and the meaning of the past for cultural identities today also explains the exponential growth of war related research and publications (Kovacs & Osborne, 2014). Despite the high citation score of war related publications, there still are important knowledge gaps, in particular, about the cultural and national divergence in interpretation and meanings of the Great War today. A shift from descriptive studies about war sites to more complex process analysis implies new methodological challenges, such as the mapping of intangible values and linking images of the past with landscapes of today. Looking at the mental maps of WWI in the mirror of the 21st century community also requires an understanding of present day political stakes, both at an international and regional scale.

8 One hundred years later, there is a renewed interest in war landscapes: battlefields, trenches, frontlines, military infrastructure and artefacts are being re-explored and re-defined in the process of constructing heritage landscapes. The question is where and how these landscapes of memories are imbedded in the social and economic dynamics of the 21st century.

9 Interdisciplinary studies in the field of war and tourism introduce new concepts and research methods to analyze the interaction between cultural, social, economic and political processes and to assess the roles of national and regional governments, and moreover the motivations of stakeholders and residents in the “re-creation of war memories” (Butler & Suntikil, 2013).

10 The 21st century paradigm refers to emerging views, methods and interpretations of warscapes and created values as introduced by various scholars in their search to
understand the past and its impact on societies today (Winter 1995, Offenstadt, 2010, Clark, 2011, Sorensen, 2015). Geographically balanced and comparative research reveals the complexity and diversity of the present memoryscapes and the way nations and people valorise tangible and intangible war heritage of the previous century. Public opinion regarding ‘the freedom to remember, the freedom to forget’ has induced a process of selection and differentiation in the planning and design of post war landscapes of memories (Jansen-Verbeke & George, 2013). In fact, war landscapes are not seen as an object or a territory or as a textbook to be read, but as a process by which social, subjective, national or regional identities are formed. Tourism to former war landscapes and sites has become an important partner and stakeholder in today’s revalorisation and commoditisation of war memories (Iles, 2008). The process is strongly based on remembrance, narratives and the multiple images of the war, evoked or re-imagined by the current hype of centennial events. Numerous war heritage sites mainly along the Western Front (France and Belgium) are now landmarks on the tourist maps (Vanneste & Foote, 2013).

The process of identification of landscapes and sites of the Great War began while the war was still in progress, but over the past 100 years, and with another world war occurring between then and now, the valorisation of WWI warscapes has gradually focused on selected landscapes and iconic sites. National and regional priorities, the presence of tangible heritage and the strength of historical facts and numerous narratives have played an important role in the reconstruction of war heritage landscapes of the 21st century. This process of inclusion and exclusion and of competition for media attention raises a number of questions that we argue ought to be addressed through research. The awareness of war heritage among different nations and particular groups and the subsequent visits to war sites and memorials events are key questions in this project.

Bridging the gap between disciplinary views on the process of re-creating spaces of memory also requires a reconsideration of the semiotics of war tourism, sites and landscapes (Waterton & Watson, 2014). The challenges today are to manage the on-going tourismification of warscapes. This implies an analysis of the multi-dimensional vectors of change embedded in specific spatial, cultural and economic contexts and geared by organizational networks and political agendas at local, regional and national levels. Finding adequate methods to research the experiences of visitors to war sites and memorial events is indeed a major challenge, as indicated by numerous case studies on this topic. Apparently, there is a limited cross-fertilization of empirical research results, to the extent that the impact of many ‘unique’ and often small-scale field surveys can be seriously questioned. However, the validity of an international online survey also raises questions.

Former battlefields, war cemeteries, museums and visitor centres, memorial sites and events, are the preferred locations for interviewing visitors and register ‘live’ their experiences. For many visitors, former battlefields and memorials of the Great War hold a special meaning and memories and are even regarded as sacred places by some. Even though most of the evidence of war has long been removed, the temporal and spatial effects of the landscape can nonetheless create intense experiences for visitors (Gatewood & Cameron, 2004). A great deal of research has been conducted on-site, some of which are based on very small samples in order to capture and understand visitors’ motivations and experiences (Dunkley, Morgan & Westwood, 2011; Seaton, 2000). Although it is possible to collect a large sample size using on-site survey methods, the cost and time involved is
considerable and subject to specific limitations (Winter, 2009, 2011). Yet, the strong point of on-site research is the possibility to identify very close associations between visitors and the landscape.

14 In the period leading up to the Centennial (2014-2018), the survey team² of WHTRN took a somewhat different approach to the research because it sought to understand more broadly the ways in which a representative global sample may perceive the Great War landscape, even without ever having been involved with a former WW1 site. The feature of this project was the use of an online data collection instrument which captured a large (N= 2,472) and diverse sample (in terms of nationalities, age, professional background, etc.) that provided a range of benefits for the analysis. In addition to this, the WHTRN survey questionnaire was formulated with the assistance of an international advisory group and delivered in four languages (English, French, Dutch and German). The WHTRN survey opened a wide range of opportunities in terms of sampling and data interpretation. One of the requirements of a large and representative sample (which provides data for analysis using statistical techniques) is that the research participants should be surveyed within a reasonably comparable context. This is difficult to achieve with a large on-site survey on the Great War sites because of the impact that landscape, memorials and commemorative ceremonies can have on visitor emotions and experiences (Poria, Butler & Airey, 2004).

15 Many commemorative events are large scale and attract high numbers of visitors at various times of the year. In other words, some visitors may have experienced deeply moving impressions because of their particular connection with a site, while others may not have had the same experience at the time. Some nationalities, such as British, Belgian, French and Dutch, visit the battlefields widely and in large numbers. For them, these issues are perhaps not so critical, and a representative sample in situ is relatively easy to collect. However, it is not the same for many other nationalities that visit, in much lower numbers. Australian visitors can illustrate this point. They visit memorial war sites in Europe in good numbers over a year and can be difficult to locate amongst the much larger proportion of visitors from other countries as noted above. They do however congregate at particular places on determined dates for national commemorations (for instance on Anzac Day) which means that a sufficiently large sample could be studied (Winter, 2012). This then creates a second issue, the sample can be homogenous with attitudes partly influenced by the memorial ceremony and the specific setting, which may not represent those people who visit at other times and at other places (Winter, 2011). Even age cohorts can be attracted to some sites more than others. Gallipoli is a good example, with some large on-site samples showing almost half in the younger (18-29 years) groups (Hyde & Harman, 2011 ; Hall, Basarin & Lockstone-Binney, 2010) while most surveys in Europe tend to show an older (50-59 years) grouping.

16 In the WHTRN survey response group, there is a good overall spread by age groups. From the perspective of sampling, an online survey is less subject to the spatial and temporal effects of sensitive sites compared with on-site surveys. The collection of data on site presents other issues, not the least being that at some places, such as cemeteries and during special events, the surveying may detract from the visitor’s experience, and may even be inappropriate. Large bus tours tend to have quite strict time constraints and visitors may simply not have the time to give to a survey. Importantly, large social groups of people are unable to visit the battlefields, even though they may have a strong interest.
People who live at great distance from the battlefields may also have time and cost issues that prohibit their travel.

The Great War was a global conflict that affected many countries worldwide and this might explain why people from different nations have an interest in the commemoration of the war. The responses in the WHTRN survey (2012) – by country of residence- appear to differ from those in on-site surveys. For example, the sample includes proportionately fewer British respondents (7%), but more Americans (10%) and Swiss (10%) than on-site surveys. The survey has opened another perspective on how the world may view the Great War in the centenary period that complements previous research that has rather focused on specific sites and memorial events. An online survey therefore gives a more equitable opportunity for people to express their views, although the profile of respondents might differ in many respects from that of visitors interviewed on site.

Survey on the Great War Remembrance: Profile of the Respondents

Comments on the profile of the respondents are briefly summarized. First of all, the country of residence is an important indication of the biased 'global reaction' to the online call for participation in an international survey. The efforts to reach as many countries as possible with a questionnaire in four languages resulted in a sample of 2,472 respondents (from 61 countries). In fact, 90% of the response came from 13 countries, 70% from European countries (mostly Western Europe). The most important non-European reactions came from US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and South Africa (Fig.1.). The mapping of respondents also reflects the dispersion by language group: English (47.6%) Dutch (25.3%), German (14.3%) and French (12.8%). It is likely that language limitation was one explanation for a low response from countries once deeply involved in the Great War, such as the Balkan countries, Turkey, Italy, Poland and Hungary. The relatively high response from neutral countries such as the Netherlands and Switzerland can be explained by the geographical proximity and awareness of historical war sites in this part of Europe.
The age profile of visitors interviewed previously on war heritage sites tends to be slightly different from the online respondents in this survey (Winter, 2011). Over 10% of the survey respondent did not reveal their age. Of those responding to this question, over 55% were less than 50 years of age (Fig. 2). Those between 50 and 59 formed the single largest group of respondents (21.5%) with the 40-49 age group as the second most common one (19.9%). Only slightly over 6% were above the age of 70. The impact of age on the answers to specific questions leads to interesting nuances. In fact, two variables – age and highest educational level – significantly marked the content of the responses.
Respondents were also asked about their highest level of education obtained; 40% hold a graduate and 25% a post graduate degree. Obviously with this online survey, we did not reach a general public, but rather selected interest groups through academic and professional links. Consequently, the educational profile of the sample is rather biased. The overall high level of education is also reflected in their fields of professional interest, sources and level of knowledge about the Great War and above all in the high response rate to the 26 open questions.

The survey generated about 10,000 answers in four languages, including several remarkable quotes and personal views. For a more in-depth analysis of the survey responses and cross tabulations, three proximity factors were constructed, related to indicators of geographical, emotional and professional proximity of the respondents. Without going into details of this analysis, we briefly sketch the headlines. Variations in the first proximity factor, “Geographical Proximity,” or geographical awareness of war sites are based on five characteristics of the respondent, being their current country of residence, their country of birth, or the fact that family has lived in a combat zone in 1914-18 (26%), or now residing in a former war zone (14%) or family living in a former war zone (35%). Living in an area with a war history makes a difference; various sources of information and local narratives affect the knowledge, awareness and interest and eventually the participation in memorial events.

The second proximity factor, “Emotional Proximity,” refers to personal and family connections with the military in war time e.g. a family member who served in the military in WWI (51%) and/or a relative was killed in war (21%). An interesting outcome of this analysis is the high score in terms of ‘emotional proximity’ in France, New Zealand, UK, Australia and Germany, whereas the Netherlands and Switzerland (neutral countries in war time) show a much lower score. Although Belgium has been the scene of dramatic battles along the Western Front, the emotional factor seems less important than
in other countries. Although the Belgian army in war was small, i.e. 200,000 soldiers, the fact that 26,338 of them died in the battlefield (also a high number of civilians was killed) might explain the difference with other allied countries and with Germany.

23 On the graph below (Fig.3), countries were sorted from low to high mean score on “Emotional proximity.” Forest plots showing the mean score and its lower and upper confidence limits of the factor “emotional proximity” by country.

**Figure 3. Emotional Proximity**

![Graph by Heerwegh, D., 2013.](image)

24 The third factor, “Professional/institutional proximity”, refers to current associations of the respondent with the military, governmental departments related to war history, teaching or guiding to war sites and not in the least management of war sites, memorials, museums, etc.

25 In fact, the strongest influence on the responses is indeed exerted by ‘institutional proximity’, followed by emotional proximity. The three dimensions of proximity are one way of analysing and understanding some variations in responses to the survey questions.

A Trajectory of Valorisation: Landscapes of WWI...100 years later

26 Memoryscapes are contemporary interpretations of the past, inspired by the loud universal call of “Lest we forget”, also leading to more ethical reflections on “the right to remember, the right to forget”, the responsibility to select, to include and exclude, to restore or destruct (Osborne, 2001). Wasserman defined a memorial landscape as a
landscape of tremendous cultural significance. It reinserts sacred stories into public open space: stories that reveal and heal.

These stories can have a positive impact on a community and teach lessons of history and place. As such, a memorial landscape serves intellectual, emotional, spiritual and communal functions, including a place for memory and for mourning, for reflection and for healing (Wasserman, 1998).

Thus the real history of WWI (pleasant or unpleasant, for better or for worse) has remained buried and hidden. I feel I owe it to my contemporaries and the memories of the participants to challenge the comfortable myths that have perpetuated and reveal that ‘real’ history, uncomfortable as that may be, so that we can hold up a mirror to ourselves and accept that “we did this” (Wasserman, 1998).

Figure 4. The Great War: Top Keywords in the Mind-set of Respondents

Questioning global memories and (universal) values of the Great War implies an analysis of interacting processes in time and space. Our exploration of memoryscapes of the Great War was structured along three main research tracks:

1. What does the “Great War” mean to you? This leads to an interesting empirical input regarding the process of creating memoryscapes.
2. What are the perceived outstanding universal values of the ‘GREAT WAR’? This allows a better understanding of the concept and construction of heritagescapes.
3. What is the role of TOURISM in preserving memories of the past? This provides empirical data on patterns of visits to memorial sites and events, which are crucial for planning and managing tourismscapes.

Memory (land)scapes of the Great War: The last of the veterans died… It’s not a case that we’re going to somehow, today, forget about what the war means, but I do think we’re changing. We’ve moved from the razor’s edge of lived memory; and now it is something firmly in the past (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

The re-creation of WWI memoryscapes raises questions about how, why, and what people from different nations remember of the Great War today (Fig. 4). Fig. 5 gives an image of divergent attitudes towards creating and preserving memoryscapes. Further analysis of
these data, e.g. by country, reveals national differences, which eventually also relate to the variable ambitions regarding the development of war tourism.

**Table 1. Keeping Memories Alive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keeping memories alive for:</th>
<th>Agree +Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding events that changed world history (n = 2400)</td>
<td>93 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering the sacrifices of millions of people in WWI (n = 2404)</td>
<td>91 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving as a deterrent to future conflict between countries (n = 2404)</td>
<td>86 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging visitation to WWI war sites (n = 2398)</td>
<td>58 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening feelings of national identity (n = 2398)</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHTRN Survey 2012.

Questions regarding the respondents’ sources of knowledge about the Great War resulted in an interesting range of answers and intriguing differences. A distinction can be made between groups of respondents according to their actual experiences with visits to former war sites.

The impact of storytelling and personal inheritance is outspoken in countries such as France, Belgium and UK. For a majority of the respondents, the most important sources of knowledge about the Great War are television (77%), literature and art, school teaching (72%), movies (58%) and Internet (57%). Open questions about this issue resulted in numerous personal views on the memorial hype of the Great War.

**Former war landscapes- World Heritage?**

Heritage landscapes are coherent landscapes with a history, connecting events in time and place, with values that can connect people and places and are considered worth conserving, albeit with a mixed range of motives, sometimes with contradictory agenda’s or even incompatible ambitions (Di Giovine, 2008). This certainly applies to sensitive war memorial sites where there are multiple examples worldwide (Miles, 2014).

How does one explain the 21st-century hype about war heritagescapes, remembering, revalorizing, and even reconstructing former war sites, structures and landscapes? Narratives and various expressions of intangible heritage and above all memorial events and ceremonies, are strongly supporting a process of understanding and valorisation (Jansen-Verbeke, 2009 a,b). There is a direct relationship between the very notion of World Heritage and World Wars. In fact, the original idea of creating an international movement for protecting (cultural) heritage emerged after World War I. Scholars have described the process ‘heritagisation’ through which the values and aesthetics of a particular historic period are imposed upon a space. Nominations related to war or famous battlefields should remain extremely selective in order to emphasize the significance of those selected.
In any case, we would favour an extremely selective approach towards places like “famous battlefields”, where there are no architectural features of note within the area in question. We must also consider the suitability of certain “places” without architectural merit, which were the scene of a positive historical event, such as a great scientific discovery, or a legend or fabulous event (ICOMOS, 2008, p. 65).

37 The heritagisation of war sites and landscapes moved from private inheritance to collective claims and became increasingly institutionalized –one-way top down- following the ambition to be nominated as World Heritage. Certainly also bottom-up ambitions of regional stakeholders play an important role in the creation of war memorial landscapes and sites, preservation or reconstruction of war-related buildings, infrastructure and tangible artefacts. Clearly, the Centennial of the Great War is an incentive to reflect on values associated with this past event, the heritage to be preserved for the future as “Landscapes and sites of war memories.”

38 There is an emerging interest in past wars and war heritage/history (e.g. battlefield tourism) in general and a remarkable move from images of dramatic battles and national sacrifices to new symbols, imaginaries and icons, to the performance of emotionally evocative memorial events at sites of historic battlefields. Developments such as these have nurtured a growing cultural interest in, and are an incentive for, new and imaginative approaches to heritage tourism (Salazar, 2012 a,b). Interest in and interpretations of the First World War (1914-1918) have dramatically changed over the last 100 years, as have the terms and boundaries of geo-political spaces (Ashworth, 2009). The military and civilian involvement of so many countries led to divergent views on the world map of WWI heritage sites and to competitive political agenda’s of the 21st century stakeholders. As quoted by one respondent (WHTRN Survey, 2012), “By categorising war as ‘heritage’ we remove it from the realm of current politics.”

39 In addition, the interpretation and valorisation of intangible heritage assets supporting the memory landscapes complicates this debate even more (Hertzog, 2012). War heritage landscapes connect historical events in time and place, connect people and places of memory and therefore considered worth conserving, albeit with mixed motives. This certainly applies to sensitive war memorial sites, of which there are multiple examples worldwide. The values ascribed to the heritage of the Great War in particular, reflect a wide range of mixed affinities. The connection between “war memories and peace” so often emphasised today in media and event marketing, is no longer evident, as suggested in the reactions to the openended questions.
### Table 2. Values Ascribed to War Heritage Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place for remembrance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness about human suffering in WWI</td>
<td>2258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education in history</td>
<td>2221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For serving as a deterrent to future conflict between countries</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places for reflection</td>
<td>2242</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembrance of millions who believed their countries were ‘worth fighting and dying for’</td>
<td>2216</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efforts for international solidarity</td>
<td>2212</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of Peace</td>
<td>2224</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military history</td>
<td>2212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>2234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHTRN Survey 2012.

In addition to the responses above referring to the present values of war heritage, the search to understand what really ‘touches’, requires an in-depth analysis of numerous reactions to the open-ended questions. These display a much more nuanced response and more insight into why people consider the heritage of WWI to be important (Fig. 6).

### Places for remembrance

Interestingly, 94% of the respondents thought that it was important to safeguard the material heritage of WWI now that all those who actually experienced the war have passed. The concept of memoryscapes seems key to the process of commemoration of a war that otherwise risks to be rapidly forgotten:

World War I seems to be a forgotten war, overshadowed by World War II...
The memory of past events of WWI are important because they are places of memory and common heritage...
WWI is an inevitable part of our history and heritage (Respondents, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

### Global scale

A second rationale is related to the size of the events that WWI heritage landscapes are referring to. Many respondents stressed the importance of WWI because it was the first
‘World War’. Not only was WWI fought out on battle fields across the globe, also those engaged in the heavy battles in Flanders and France came from many parts of the (colonial) world. As one respondent (WHTRN Survey, 2012) framed it:

It will be important if it interprets the impacts on former colonies that provided the fighting power and if the descendants and aging survivors in those countries are recognised. Western colonial mythologies need to be probably reinterpreted and untold stories need to be told if it is to be called a “World War”. Then the technical terms of World Heritage inscription such as authenticity and integrity will mean something honest to history.

While some recognized the transnational aspects of WWI (going far beyond the traditionally recognized allied countries), others kept on stressing the national importance of the most ‘iconic’ battlefields (Estelmann & Müller, 2009; Petermann, 2007).

Il est important de faire du champ de bataille de VERDUN, le plus grand au monde, le lieu symbole de la Grande Guerre à mettre en valeur, notamment avec le classement à l’UNESCO. Il ne faut pas oublier qu’en 2012, près de 49 millions de Français ont au moins un ascendant, qui a combattu lors de la bataille de VERDUN en 1916. C’est incontournable pour une Nation (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

Historical importance

Closely related to the previous expressions of valorisation are the views expressed on the crucial importance of WWI as a turning point in contemporary history (Clark, 2011).

WWI was THE most important event in world history in the last 150-200 years. It marked the beginning of industrialised mass warfare; empires fell and rose in its wake; ideologies that are still shaping the world today were forged by it; the social, gender and cultural impacts of WWI were colossal and are still felt today. Even the pattern and techniques of warfare developed during WWI are much the same as found in warfare today. The sheer sacrifice of the participants transcended the normal boundaries of society and changed the relationship between people and rulers. It touched every part of the globe both directly and indirectly and in both cases, it did so profoundly... The importance of WWI seems so self-evident that to ask the question ‘why memories should be kept alive?’ is almost bafflingly absurd (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012)!

WWI changed the course of world history, eliminating empires that had stood for centuries. It had a tremendous impact on the history of the 20th and 21st centuries especially in Europe, North America and the Middle East.’ ‘WWI brought the empires to an end and paved the way of independent nation states, further it can be seen as the beginning of anti-colonial uprisings (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

This rationale is also reflected in the responses emphasising the WWI heritage sites as places for education in history. While the survey did not directly probe into the issue of ‘outstanding universal value’ some respondents indirectly commented upon this in the open questions. One respondent (WHTRN Survey, 2012) made a direct (quite critical) comment:

Just a remark: the use of the phrase “universal values” seems inappropiate. It is not established that there are such things as universal values. Also, the WWI, even if many countries and continents were involved, was not truly a “world war” and was a lot more important to Europeans than to anyone else. Therefore, speaking about “its value to the world” also seems biased.

Many stressed that, from a military perspective, the use of ‘trenches’ was unique. Some respondents (WHTRN Survey, 2012) gave concrete suggestions as to what is so unique that it deserves to be preserved. These ranged from the very general to the very specific:
Preservation of actual sites is vital to the understanding of the battles. For example, the view from Hell Fire Corner at Ypres shows why a small rise in ground is important. It is very important that we preserve some sites and it is important to remain balanced in the view that the world must go on. The struggles in France and Belgium with new development destroying old battle sites and graves is a tough one. Perhaps more Vimy’s and more Menin Gates etc. and some preserved great cemeteries like Tyne Cot could become the main UNESCO type places preserved forever.

War memories and peace

Although the word ‘peace’ does not appear all that frequently in answers to the open questions there are respondents who stressed the importance of keeping WWI-related heritage in order to promote ‘international peace’, as a tool of peace education for the generations to come. Many reminded us that the main international resolution after WWI was the clear message of pacifism, “Never again war”… “Nie wieder Krieg” (WHTRN Survey, 2012).

One Flemish respondent requested more interest in the role of the common little man in the war and the ‘losers’ who were also not asking for a war, well illustrated by a postcard of a German soldier sent to his parents with the hard cry, “Liebe Eltern: “WENN GIBT ES ENDLICH FRIEDEN !!!”

Some comments are very explicit about the peace message in war-related heritage:

Remembering war should be about promoting peace… Aim for young generations to grasp the devastation wars cause, to understand the suffering of young soldiers in the trenches and the real politics behind wars (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

One respondent (WHTRN Survey, 2012) argued why nominating WWI heritage landscapes on the World Heritage list would make a particularly strong case:

I think a transboundary WH site focusing on the battles of the first world war could, if contextualized correctly, be a very compelling and powerful world heritage site. It would also be different, I think, from the WH sites pertaining to WWII (Auschwitz and Hiroshima) which are entirely ‘negative WH sites’ (Di Giovine, 2008) that portray victimhood and man’s inhumanity to man. There still needs to be a peace-making narrative to the WWI site, but I think it needs to have a qualitatively different narrative.

Clearly, several open questions were also an outlet for expressions of criticism.

A focus on WW1 to the exclusion of other conflicts – both more recent and more distant – provides a convenient locus for us to ‘dump’ concerns about war and other forms of military action. We can then no longer worry about the morality of war or of other forms of mass violence or our implication in it as civilians – the horrors of war are safely relegated to the period 1914 to 1918, and we can get on with our lives without having to actually think about issues that really matter in the world today by categorising war as ‘heritage’ we remove it from the realm of current politics (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

Some respondents (WHTRN Survey, 2012) were of the opinion that listing WWI heritage would somehow ‘sanitize’ the atrocities that marked the war and its political connotations:

I don’t believe that UNESCO World Heritage should be so much speculated for the First World War. It’s a sensitive term and period, this period can provide a lot of
sources in relation to education, remembering memories and so on, that is why it’s worth preserving...

War museums do not bring a peace message!

Some argued against nomination. They thought it would not help the agenda of preservation, either because the sites are already well maintained or because the WWI heritage landscape is simply too big and in addition UNESCO listing cannot enforce conservation. Others were totally against the idea of preserving war-related heritage as a German respondent (WHTRN Survey, 2012) stated:


First World War Sites “Remembered”

The global importance of the Great War inheritance is beyond discussion, but there is and never will be a consensus on how to remember the war, the conflicts and the human tragedies. The way WWI is remembered today is a contemporary interpretation and valorisation of historical facts, events, places and narratives and this is certainly not universal. It is a mission for the scientific community to understand the on-going process of inclusion and exclusion in creating memoryscapes, using iconic images and branding specific landmarks. A recognition as World Heritage cultural landscapes could play an instrumental role, not only in safeguarding heritage but also in promoting tourism as a generator of economic development and all the challenges associated with trying to combine both of these agendas.

In the wake of the Centenary hype, there is an emerging interest of local communities to (re) identify war heritage in their region, to publish and promote local stories and to revalorize any tangible artefact, site or landscape of memories. This bottom-up revival of interest is supported by an intensive media attention for the Great War. The question on what WWI means today is no longer merely an academic issue; it is about understanding the impact of visiting the past and opening a window on the global meaning of WWI, about creating more affinity with cultural divergences, and more interest in history and in peace. A challenging research track is to identify the mental map of respondents, whether they visited World War I sites or not i.e., questioning the mental map of an international group of respondents.

Respondents were invited to indicate the top five sites or events in their remembrance of the Great War. This resulted in 8187 responses. Apparently, many respondents have a rather vague geographical map in mind, referring to countries only, or spatial categories such as “the Western Front” (Fig.7). Generally, the level of knowledge about the geography of the First World War is limited to specific battlefields along the Western Front or iconic cities, such as Verdun and leper.

The mental map of former war sites is closely linked to the actual experiences with visits and/or attending memorial events. More detailed questions about remembering “important war heritage sites” led to a long list of places or regions, clearly with a variable level of knowledge about place names and the geography of war landscapes.
Heritage of the First World War on the tourist map

One hundred years later, there is a renewed interest in the Great War and former war landscapes. Battlefields, trenches, cemeteries, frontlines, military infrastructure and artefacts are being developed as potential tourism destinations and re-defined in the process of constructing heritage landscapes. This trend to re-valorize the past is induced and selective; facts and places are remembered, others are forgotten. Surely the Centenary of the Great War (2014-2018) has mobilized many communities, governments and tourism officers, war and/or peace related organizations, in numerous regions and sites once involved in WWI, many with long memorial traditions and various agendas regarding memorial events. Tourism is clearly one of the main vectors in the mutation of former war landscapes to landscaped parks of memories, tourist routes along the frontline, museums and places for memorial events. The setting for emotional ‘tourist experiences’ takes various forms, branding former war zones, sites and landscapes with old and new narratives. The “war maps” have been redone for visitors’ purposes!

Visits to war heritage sites or to places where memorial events are organised in France and Belgium are increasingly becoming more popular. In many cases (37% of the responses) the visit to former battlefields, memorial sites, cemeteries is a secondary motive to travel, in combination with other destinations and activities, whereas participation in memorial events tends to be a primary motive for travel, at least for about 25% of the respondents. Attending war memorial events is a long established tradition in countries as Belgium, France, UK and of course the ANZAC DAY, mainly attended by New Zealanders and Australians.

The tradition of commemoration ceremonies on the 11th of November and Armistice day – topping the list of events attended – is geographically widely spread. How memorial events are anchored in historical war sites or linked with memorial monuments or cemeteries is most relevant in view of the geography of war tourism today. Several World War memorial sites are deeply embedded in the national mythology. The foundation of nations remains a strong point of remembrance and attracting large groups of visitors yearly. Verdun is by far the most notable destination for battlefield tourism in France, but also on the map of top memorial sites visited are the Somme, Arras – Vimy (Canadian memorial), Thiepval, Chemin des Dames (Hertzog, 2012).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WWI sites « remembered »</th>
<th>Total references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRANCE (not specified)</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdun</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somme</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versailles</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimy Ridge</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemin des dames</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many cities in Belgium remember the invasion of the German troops in August 1914, the lost battles in Liège and Antwerp, and the burnt down or heavily damaged cities with high casualties among civilians and multiple deportations. These cities on the way west of the German troops are now remembered as ‘les Villes Martyres’ (e.g., Leuven). Two months later, military activities concentrated in the Westhoek, behind the river Ijzer where the battles went on for 4 long years. This explains not only the clustering of war heritage sites (Fig 9) but also the density of memorial events (Fig 8).

The most notable event memorializing WWI at a fixed location is the daily ceremony of the “Last Post” at the Menin Gate in Ieper, paying tribute to the victims of the Great War. The Last Post Ceremony is growing in popularity. People from all over the world gather under the Menin Gate each evening to listen to the haunting melody of the bugles. Seven per cent of the respondents to the survey attended this ceremony to pay their respects to those who lost their lives in the war that was supposed ‘to end all wars’.

### WWI sites “remembered”
WHTRN Survey 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Various sites in France</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (not specified)</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ieper</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flandres/Flanders’ Fields</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ijzer (River)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhoek</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passendale (Tyne Cot)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last post-Menin gate</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various sites in Belgium</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (not specified)</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallipoli</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarajevo</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Front (not specified)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various sites worldwide</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the analysis of the survey data, a distinction was made between respondents who did participate in a First World War Memorial event or ceremony held in their home country (50%) or abroad (23%). Clearly the geographical proximity plays a role in the patterns of participation. Based on 670 responses regarding events, the participation in memorial events in Belgium and France has been mapped also indicating a typology of events (Fig 8). Beyond the Western Front line, with a high concentration in the region of Ieper, important places of memorial events are Verdun, Arras and Vimy. Paris also remains a meeting place, frequently mentioned for memorial events and ceremonies related to Armistice Day.

Far away from the Western Front, the remembrance of the Battle of Gallipoli (Turkey) has become a top annual event (Hall & al, 2010, Scates, 2006), attracting many visitors from Australia and New Zealand and increasingly, more Turkish visitors, which apparently, has created some problems as indicated by the following quote:

> The politicisation of Gallipoli and the annual circus that it has come to be is very unattractive and has destroyed the site’s evocative integrity. If the two wars has taught us anything, it is the danger of nationalism. Encouraging visits to these sites by ‘tourists’ encourages nationalism (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).
Geoproximity is indeed an important factor in explaining the visitation pattern of respondents to memorial sites. Fifty-five percent of the respondents have never visited a WWI memorial site. Mapping visits to war memoryscapes can be an efficient tool in understanding the process of selective remembrance, but also the impact of an extensive policy of re-imaging the past in the battlefields along the Western Front. Figure 9 presents the actual visits to destinations in France and Belgium and is constructed on the basis of 4,600 answers, referring to different and sometimes overlapping spatial categories. The map shows the clustering of various points of attraction in top destinations, such as the cities of Ieper, Verdun, Arras and Diksmuide. They are landmarks on the map, together with the rivers, Somme and Marne (Fr) and the Yser (Be). It is interesting to also register the important role of war museums in the spatial clustering of visits. The London Imperial War Museum is leading in visitations, followed by Flanders Field Museum (Ieper), the Peronne Museum (Historial de la Grande Guerre), the Memorial Museum of Passendaele, the “Musée des Chemin des Dames” and the new “Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux” (Fr).

Memorial sites, monuments, cemeteries and numerous visitor centers or small museums (also private museums) are widely spread along the Western Front and beyond. They are the nexus of war tourism development. Tyne Cot in Zonnebeke tops the list for cemetery visits, as does the German cemetery of Langemark (Be). The Menin Gate (Ieper), the Canadian Memorial in Vimy, Thiepval (Somme-Fr) and the Yzertower (Diksmuide) are the most cited and visited monuments. Special places of interest for visitors such as the “Chemin des Dames” and the trenches in Diksmuide are also notably marked on the map of places visited. Comparing this map of known and/or visited sites with the official tourist map of the “1914_18 memory-landscapes”, is indeed a challenging exercise for tourism marketeers in the region. In combination with the information on the profile of
respondents, this offers interesting opportunities for a strategic marketing plan for visitations to war memoryscapes.

From the survey responses, there are clear indications of a growing attraction of memorial events and visits to war heritage sites during the WWI Centennial (2014-2018). However there also is an increasing competition between the many sites and events, between the (new or renewed) museums in the region. Eventually the very sustainability and comparative advantages of this kind of war tourism can be questioned. Meanwhile also some criticism is building up concerning management of war heritage sites.

From previous experiences, these sites should not be over-managed for tourism. As many people as possible should be able to experience, largely as they are now. The nature of these places is that they engender respect and appropriate behaviour by visitors and too much management can be intrusive (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

Tourismification of war heritage

Understanding and managing the dynamics of tourism in preserving war heritage has indeed become a challenging research mission. Tourism is a driving force, yet the touristic approach ought to be very cautious and not a primary aim of reflection and actions. As expressed by one respondent (WHTRN Survey, 2012) “The remembrance and the sacrifices of our forebears should not be devalued to a commercial and touristic commodity.”

Assessing the pro-active role of tourism and destination managers, promoters and visitors in preserving WWI heritage and memories of the past is a first step in search of a sustainable development model. Intelligent visitor management is a prime condition for serene commemoration visitor’ experiences. Authenticity of the historical setting and the integrity of war memories are indicated as the most important conditions for a sustainable tourism development at war heritage sites. Ninety percent of the survey respondents agreed on this priority.

A second management issue, important to 81% of the respondents, concerns the ethical standards for commodification of war heritage. Critical reactions came regarding the ethics of some war tourism products (e.g. souvenir industry, entertainment agenda's, etc.) and the imaging of war stories in the media and in some museums. Many (77%) expressed a real concern regarding the conduct of visitors on cemeteries and war memorial sites. There is a call for more visitor management on war heritage places and attention on behalf of site managers and tourist guides for the optimal carrying capacity (in time and space) to guarantee silent and respectful remembrance experiences.

Past events must be portrayed in their correct light without any bias so as to preserve the truth no matter how bitter the events, and serve as a guiding light for future generations. Heritage sites must maintain the sanctity of ‘what really happened there’ (Respondent, WHTRN Survey, 2012).

Conclusion

A growing interest among local and national organizations, supported by the drive of the tourism agents to create new tourism “experiences”, is now shaping the war heritage geography. The strategy to launch numerous memorial events, relying on authentic
narratives and with a high degree of cultural creativity, linking past with present, connects locals with visitors and brands places of memories. In addition, the basic assumptions concerning a sustainable tourism potential of war memoryscapes, war landscapes and memorial events needs to be investigated in depth.

76 Comparative and interdisciplinary studies in divergent national and cross border war settings and respondent groups are crucial in the process of understanding the sensitivities of ‘War Heritage Tourism’ (Hartmann, 2014). Despite the impressive contribution of numerous case studies in the last decade and progressive field research on the complex interaction of war heritage and “memory-tourism”, our knowledge about the dynamics of ‘scapes’ is limited.

77 The confusion in definitions and in the use of new topographical metaphors such as heritage-scapes, tourism-scapes, war-scapes, memory-scapes, experience-scapes might be indicative of a paradigm shift to new models and alternative concepts (Salazar, 2012b). This search for a better understanding of the way people ‘see, experience and value’ places is essential in order to identify and manage the development of coherent and inspiring links between past and present, to (re)connect tangible heritage sites (artefacts and landscapes) with intangible (memories and narratives), taking into account the local-global nexus in the atypical war site visitor experiences.

78 The results of this online international and multilingual survey are by definition biased. The researchers only reached respondents with an active or latent interest in the history of WWI and /or in the present economic opportunities of ‘war tourism’. The non-response by country, by language or by age group also needs to be assessed. Taking into account the technical, cultural, linguistic and, above all, the financial limitations of this international pilot project of WHTRN, we hope the experiences of this empirical pilot project may inspire future cross border and interdisciplinary research ambitions.

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NOTES

1. World Heritage Tourism Research Network (www.WHTRN.ca). Online survey 2012 Capita Selecta by Myriam Jansen-Verbeke (University Leuven, BE) & Wanda George (Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, CA) Director of WHTRN. A project in collaboration with:
   * Anne Hertzog (Cergy Pontoise, Paris) Analysis and mapping participation in war memorial events
   * Dominique Vanneste (University Leuven) Mapping of visitation patterns to war heritage sites
   * Noel B. Salazar (University Leuven) Reflecting on the heritage value of war memoryscapes.
   * Caroline Winter (Ballarat University Australia) Visitors' profile survey methods
ABSTRACTS

Research on the process of tourismification of former war sites and landscapes is by definition interdisciplinary. The challenge is to introduce new concepts to link past and present, heritage sites and memorial events, in time and place, to critically reflect on the content and trendy use of vaguely defined “scape” concepts in relation to heritage. The need to anchor heritagescapes in time and space, explains the association with geographical terminology and spatial references at different scales. The question arises on how to identify the vectors of change induced by tourism to historical war sites. The added value of an international online survey completed by the World Heritage Tourism Research Network (WHTRN) in 2012 results from both the conceptual and interdisciplinary approach, questioning the interdependency of cultural, social, economic and political processes within the context of war memoryscapes, and the empirical data resulting from this multilingual survey.

New tourism landscapes emerge in which the interests of national and regional governments, local and global stakeholders play an important role. Geographically balanced and comparative research is required to better understand the complex relationship of the 21st-century nations and people with the tangible and intangible war heritage of the previous century. Since tourism has become an important partner and stakeholder in the process of revalorizing the past, the focus is on the current practices of selecting and (re) creating memoryscapes of the Great War (1914-1918). Strongly based on remembrance, narratives and multiple images of the war, evoked by the centennial ‘hype’ in events and media attention, numerous places with tangible and/or reconstructed war heritage are now marked on the tourist map. The inclusion in the survey of a number of open questions regarding values, experiences, memories from over 2,400 respondents (61 countries) resulted in a huge database, which allows the identification of some relevant variables in the ongoing tourismification process of former war landscapes. This paper focuses on selected issues and results stemming from the survey.
INDEX

Keywords: memoryscapes, heritage values, memorial events, tourismification, great war, international online survey

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