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Title:
Psychogeographies and the Experience of Scripted Heritage.

Abstract:
Heritage tourism sites use forms of material culture as a means of creating brand recognition. These forms, be they maps, postcards, brochures or stock photographs not only draw attention to elements of the particular site that are seen as delineating its significance of place, but also seek to affect a scripting of the site's experience on the part of visitors. Visitors are guided to seek out particular elements of a heritage site that they have seen in tourist material culture, affecting in part what has been termed a 'tourist gaze'. The results of this process is an experience of place that can be said to be real-and-imagined; real in the sense that the site is experienced phenomenologically in the present, and imagined in the sense that there is a pre-cognized vision of the site that is enacted through the consumption of tourist material culture.

Using the heritage site of Annapolis, Maryland as a case example, this paper seeks to complicate this process by drawing out a dialectic based on the experience of place from the views of tourists and residents of the historic district. Issues addressed within the paper will focus on the materiality of tourist literature and the scripting of a tourist experience within the heritage district; psychogeographies of the historic district as experienced by long term residents; and the political problems that emerge through Annapolis' contested definition as a heritage place.

Introduction

The paper that I present today is primarily concerned with what could be termed structures of feeling centered on the experience of authenticity in historic preservation contexts—namely within the historic district of Annapolis Maryland. As part of my ongoing PhD project within the Department of Anthropology at UCL, this research focuses on the experiential qualities of the Annapolis Historic District–and includes debates that structure the physical character of the Historic District.

Annapolis is a relatively small town located off of the Chesapeake Bay, along the eastern coast of the United States. By and large, it is popularly known as the home of the United States Naval Academy; the Capital of the State of Maryland; and, as a regional tourist destination. In many ways the city may be read as comprised of two distinct areas—first) the Annapolis Historic District—a roughly one square mile historic core of the city; and second) the city of Annapolis proper, including substantial late nineteenth and twentieth-century sprawl, surrounding the Historic District. Originally settled in the mid-seventeenth century, the city of Annapolis (again, now the Historic District) took its unique city plan from European baroque ideals—resulting in an early eighteenth century

town plan that utilized a pattern of circles and radiating streets to create a symbolic cityscape based on divisions of church, state, and capital.

Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, Annapolis' significance in terms of acting as the primary base of regional politics and commerce, rose markedly—acting as a magnet for the political elite and the resultant capital that followed them. Numerous large Georgian town homes were constructed at this time, along with lesser scaled eighteenth century vernacular artisan and commercial architecture—giving rise to the moniker of the mid eighteenth century as the "Golden Age of Annapolis." By the nineteenth century, regional commercial interests had begun to shift away—still leaving the city as the seat of state power, but also leaving it in a form of quasi-developmental stasis—meaning that large amounts of eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture would remain intact and relatively undisturbed.

During the twentieth century Annapolis witnessed a rather significant reflexive shift—namely from being what was popularly seen at the time as an old city, to becoming a politically charged 'historic' city. Based in part due to the popularity of the colonial revival movement that had swept the United States, the preservation of Annapolis' eighteenth century 'historic' buildings took on the status of cause célèbre among city socialites, resulting in the creation of the Historic Annapolis Foundation in 1952, a private non-profit entity committed to historic preservation in the city. Annapolis' change from an underdeveloped provincial state capital, to a site of nationally recognized 'historical' value was fully realized in 1965 with its designation as a National Historic Landmark, by the Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

Arguably, the most significant factor creating this reflexive shift within the city occurred in 1968, with the creation of the Annapolis Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), a regulatory body committed to historic preservation; and in1969, a ratified Historic District Ordinance that effectively gave teeth to this regulatory body—by delineating the boundaries of the historic district and laying out both the rational and rules of procedure by which the HPC would conduct themselves and would hold district residents accountable to.

Real-and-Imagined Maps

In the years that have followed, the idea of Annapolis as a 'historic' place has given rise to commercial industries based not only on preservation and the creation of a 'historic' atmosphere (ex. builders and restoration advisors), but also a lucrative tourist industry that by default seeks to script the experience of the Historic District through a controlled use of iconic imagery. A number of these iconic images show up repeatedly in tourist oriented maps, postcards, brochures, and stock photographs used on a diverse array of material culture from refrigerator magnets, to children's coloring books.

A brief tour of Annapolis' iconography includes: ubiquitous overhead photos of the city's baroque town plan; panoramic photos of the 18th century State House cupola, and the Historic District's skyline; detail photos of 18th century Georgian architectural features;

watercolor paintings of the city dock and surrounding sailboats; images of costumed interpreters and guides mixing with the tourist public; nostalgic Norman Rockwellesque images of the city's main street shops.

Underscoring these images are a constant references to the idea of Annapolis as Maryland's "Ancient Capital"—A Museum without Walls; Historic Tours; Three Centuries Tours; and the word heritage used in every conceivable context. An example from a brochure produced by the City's Mayor and the Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Conference and Visitor's Bureau, gives a brief insight into this form of iconographic scripting:

> Capitan John Smith, the first European to see the upper Chesapeake Bay, wrote in 1608 "Heaven and earth have never agreed better to frame a place for man's habitation." Our shores have been gracefully settled ever since. Share in the atmosphere that has drawn visitors to Annapolis from points international for over 300 years.
>
> Mayor Ellen Moyer

Combined, the use of these iconographic images and forms of textual underscoring script a very pointed experience of the Annapolis Historic District based on vague notions of heritage and nostalgia. Eighteenth century architecture is prominently displayed; watercolors are used to paint a gloss on contemporary urban scenes; and the historic District en masse is written as being uniquely intact—an architectural heritage version of a Coelacanth if you will.

By and large this scripting seems to be fairly effective. In the course of my fieldwork I repeatedly asked tourists to describe the Historic District; and almost always got the same response: 'It's quaint'. When asked to expand on the idea of the Historic District as 'quaint', more often than not I was told: 'You know, it's old', 'It's got all of this brick', 'It's historic'.

The use of iconographic images in the Annapolis Historic District can be equated with a rather successful attempt at the setting up a scripted 'tourist gaze'—a carefully thought out and branded experience of place. Moreover, a branded experience of place that seems at odds with the Historic District's mandate to 'preserve' significant historical, architectural, and archaeological features. Preservation is the key word used in this mandate—a word that is underscored repeatedly with expectations of authenticity on behalf of Historic District tourists.

Borrowing an analytical term from geographer Edward Soja, the experience of the Annapolis Historic District might best be described as a real-and-imagined place. Real in the sense that, yes, the Historic District exists as a phenomenological reality in the present; but, also, imagined in the sense that the phenomenological reality of the Historic District plays to popular conceptualizations of local history and heritage. In short, if the

iconographic images found in so much of tourist material culture of Annapolis present a material map of the city—a map that tourists expect to see when they visit the historic district, then this image would seem to be at odds with the branding of the Historic District as a uniquely preserved and wholly authentic place.

I would like to take the time to draw out a specific case example that seeks to problematize this reading of the Historic District as real-and-imagined. And in doing, illuminate some of the Historic District's material elements that might be said to equate to a mental map of the district's historicness.

Landscape of Governmentality

Much of the day-to-day practical maintenance that goes on in the Historic District is done by the Annapolis Department of Public Works (DPW). Areas of the historic district that fall within the domain of the DPW effectively include all city property—sidewalks, roads, light poles, city parks, etc—in effect all of the public rights of way within the historic district. During the course of fieldwork I was able to interview the director of the DPW by walking the historic district with her—discussing the varying forms of materiality that give the Annapolis historic district its sense of place.

Beginning our walk I asked if there were any problem areas in the Historic District—places that seemed to require more attention than others. She replied matter of factly that "the whole place is a problem area." She said that she constantly has 10 full time and 5 part-time employees doing street and sidewalk 'beautification' work in the Historic District and that it's a never ending cycle—emphasizing the point that its something that has to be done to keep up with the expectations of the tourists and the businesses that they patronize.

Walking the streets of the Historic District I asked about the politics of working for the DPW, in particular how the department dealt with the varying preservation groups in town. My reason for asking this question came from attending a Historic Preservation Commission meeting months earlier where she had testified about a project to replace low-lying curbs along Church Circle with more highly visible granite curbs. Ostensibly this wouldn't have been a problem had it not been for workmen finding human remains in the project's early stage—an event that triggered concern from local citizens and preservation groups. She replied that all of it was politics. The whole process, including the public hearing, was about Preservation groups trying to wrestle control from the city. Apparently the DPW had already gotten everything cleared before hand, and no one had a problem. It was only in the middle of the project, when it became a little more visible, that Preservation Groups said anything. According to the director what transpired was a show of force—a way for the HPC and local preservationists to place a check on what the City did in the Historic District. In the end, she said the City got what it wanted anyway; a beautified public space, keeping more in character with the rest of the town.

In the course of the walk the director made an effort to point out varying projects that she said made the historic district feel more like an integrated whole—granite curb cuts, re-bricked sidewalks, planters and flowers. At one point she stopped and pointed out a series of nineteenth century light poles—remarking that these were a good example of the sorts of problems she has to deal with on an everyday basis. She leant over and knocked her knuckles on one of them—'plastic' she said; you'd never know. Apparently they had been replaced some time back—if they were cast iron, they could pose potential public safety issues, in the rare case that one of them fell down. But, plastic, no one would ever know.

Throughout the course of the walk I was impressed with the fact that she seemed generally concerned about the artistic character of the Historic District, without trying to gloss it in 'historical' rhetoric. Her projects in the Historic District seemed to be designed for the City to look better and to lend itself to a better quality of life. I got the impression that in the end they were a pragmatic balance between dealing with a historic city under constant decay, and the subsequent need for constant preservation and improvement. I asked her if she goes into these sorts of City projects with the express idea that they are to be geared to recreating the past. "No. None of this looks the way it used to. If people wanted I could open up the sewers. It looks better now that it ever did." I was convinced that she was right. I have to admit that I was actually quite amazed to hear her talk about the Historic District in terms of scale and volume and texture, without it being set into some general discussion of historicness. To the director of the DPW the city's character stemmed from maintaining an image—in effect making the Historic District look good was more important than any sense of authenticity.

Conclusion

The extended illustrative case study that I draw on in this paper—a pragmatic aesthetic vision of the Historic District espoused by the Department of Public Works offers a glimpse into a governmentalized process of historic preservation within Annapolis. At heart is a question of what it is that gives the Annapolis Historic District its sense of place. In short, does the Historic District's sense of place come from an authentic and historic materiality that needs strictly managed preservation; or does it come from an aesthetic image that needs constant management and repair. I asked this question to the head of the Annapolis Historic Preservation Commission in an interview during the course of my fieldwork, and was given a rather complicated answer. I was told that the reason why people come to the Annapolis historic district, at least in his estimation, was because it is the preservation equivalent of going to see part of the true cross.

At first, this answer seemed rather flippant to me, and I have to admit that I didn't know what to think of it at the time. Did he mean that Annapolis was really some sort of wholly authentic place? I don't think so. I think in this particular context, he meant that the Annapolis historic district is both a form of materiality and an idea or expectation of materiality. History within the historic preservation context in Annapolis is less about preserving a diachronic materiality than it is about presenting a carefully managed sense

of historicness. In this sense preservation within the Annapolis historic district seems less about reconciling a past than it does reckoning a future—in a very real sense using the ambiguities of the idea of authenticity to form a structure of feeling based on a form of *Imagineering*.

Returning to idea of the historic District as a real-and-imagined place, the conscious play on iconographic imagery as a basis for presenting a form of historicness begs several political questions. To what extent is the idea of authenticity either mapped or challenged on landscapes from our perceptions of that authenticity? What constitutes historicness in a material sense? And, what iconographic forms underwrite psychogeographies of authenticity?

Note—Citations upon request.