Affective practice in the icon-city
Ownership, authenticity and fictionalization of urban space

Anne Klara Bom

PhD, Assistant Professor at University of Southern Denmark, The Hans Christian Andersen Centre, Department for the Study of Culture. She has written her PhD dissertation, articles and book chapters on Hans Christian Andersen as a cultural phenomenon, discourse analysis and heritage tourism.

Abstract

An icon-city is a city where a pervasive narrative about an iconic event or figure is intentionally and explicitly attached to an urban space – an action that supplies the city with symbolic meaning because it is staged and experienced as the city of the specific icon. In this article, the focus of attention is on an icon-city where the icon is a historical person, namely the author Hans Christian Andersen and his city of birth, Odense. The article presents the concept icon-city as a setting for glocal heritage tourism and situates it as an analytical object for cultural studies. Thus, the icon-city is contemplated as an *experiencescape* where people represent themselves through the connection between the icon and the urban space. Methodically, the discourse analytical concept *affective practice* is put to use as a sensitizing concept in an analysis of the inauguration of the itinerary "Hans Christian Andersen's Odense". In the analysis, three significant themes are identified as pivotal research themes in studies of literary icon-cities: Ownership, authenticity and fictionalization of urban space.

Keywords: #icon-city, #Hans Christian Andersen, #cultural studies, #affective practice, #discourse analysis

Introduction

There are people who – because of their life and work – leave an imprint so thorough that their history of effect is reflected in generation after generation. As these people are repeatedly found valuable enough to be integrated in new cultural contexts, they become *more* than their biography and their work. The meaning and value added to them makes them specific signifiers of cultures – and when they are used as representatives of local, national or global narratives, they become iconic (Bom 2014a). All over the world, narratives about iconic events or figures are attached to places, comprising urban spaces. By use of Odense, the world famous fairy-tale writer Hans Christian Andersen's city of birth, as an example, a theoretical and analytical approach to icon-cities will be presented and discussed in this article.

The icon-city can be defined as a city where a pervasive narrative about an iconic event or figure is intentionally and explicitly attached to an urban space – an action that supplies the city with symbolic meaning as it is staged and experienced as the city of a specific icon.

Icon-cities that have obtained their status because of historical, iconic events count for example Berlin, where cultural narratives about the city's "doubly dictatorial past" (Fulbrook 2009) are communicated in a mix of material elements representing both pasts, such as Checkpoint Charlie, The Holocaust Memorial, The Berlin Wall and the stumbling blocks in front of houses of Holocaust victims. Analyses of this category of icon-cities will pay attention to how the past is "distorted" (Hewison 1987; Timothy and Boyd 2003, 244-54) in a specific urban space. As the case presented in this article is Hans Christian Andersen's Odense, the focus of attention is on the dynamic process where a cultural icon's life *and* work is attached to a city.

In this article the icon-city is presented as an object for cultural analysis. With this approach, the icon-city is regarded as a setting where hegemonic battles are fought over the discursive meaning attached to the icon, the city and especially the connection between the two. Geographer Shelagh Squire has argued that the use of the

cultural studies framework in heritage tourism studies enables an approach to tourism experiences as a "form of cultural expression and communication involving the appropriation of images between different symbolic systems" (Squire 1994, 117). This article takes Squire's statement as its point of departure and extends it further, as it is suggested that the distinction between tourism developers and tourists must be ignored, because all articulators can be analyzed as struggling equally to be parts of "the present" that "selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future" (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996, 6). A significant challenge in icon-cities – seen from a cultural analytic point of view – is that the processes where people represent themselves and their imagined communities (Anderson 1983) through "their" icons are global while the cities are local, and every process of representation is loaded with culturally specific feelings (Bom 2014b, 197-98). In the article it is suggested that these processes of representation can be analyzed as *affective practice* (Wetherell 2012). The case used to illustrate this is the inauguration of the itinerary "Hans Christian Andersen's Odense". The affective practice that surfaced at the inauguration is categorized in three themes that all shed light on what is at stake when people represent themselves through the connection between an icon and an urban space.

Approaching the icon-city as a theoretical and analytical concept

Heritage tourism is conducted in icon-cities. For the past decades, heritage tourism has been regarded as one of the most wide-spread and fastest growing forms of tourism (Herbert 1995; Poria, Butler and Airey 2003; Squire 1994; Timothy and Boyd 2006).

Studies of heritage tourism have grown and dispersed thematically concurrently with the rapid growth and dispersion of heritage tourists. Traditionally, the scholarly focus has been on either the supply of *or* the demand for heritage tourism. Apostolakis (2003) has argued that these different foci have transformed into two different paradigms within heritage tourism studies: The descriptive, product-oriented and the experiential, customer-oriented paradigm (799). Roughly put, scholars within the descriptive paradigm are concerned with the tangible aspects of heritage

tourism, focusing on different kinds of resource management (Fyall, Garrod and Leask 2003; Leask and Fyall 2006; Maitland 2006; Nuryanti 1997; Shackley 2001) and scholars within the experiential paradigm concentrate on the intangible aspects, paying attention to motivation and segmenting visitor markets, but also to how the individual tourist experience can be seen as a co-constructing factor on heritage sites (Dahles 1998; Herbert 2001; Poria, Butler and Airey 2003; Prentice 2001; Prideaux and Kininmont 1999;). Significant contributions to the field have originated from both paradigms, but the division has also had at least one unfortunate side-effect, namely the positioning of tourism developers as a concern for the descriptive group and of the individual tourist as a concern for the experiential group.

Within the field of heritage tourism, the situation in cities that contain some kind of attractive heritage has mostly been handled as a matter for management studies (Ashworth and Tunbridge 2000; Hubbard and Lilley 2000; Maitland 2006; Murray and Graham 1997; Vong and Ung 2012). Very few heritage scholars have pointed to the otherwise obvious fact that heritage sites are also evident objects of analysis for cultural studies, because of their functions as stages where culture is produced, consumed and transformed in processes that concern the representations of identities and values (Herbert 2001, 317; Squire 1994, 106) expressed in dialogues "between folk experience, elite interests and actions of commodification and commercialism" (Harvey 2001, 332).

In the examination of icon-cities, however, it is pivotal to surmount this dichotomy between the tangible and the intangible, the developers and the tourists, as the icon-city is constructed in the tension field between the two: It is a tangible urban space that gains its significance through the affective and symbolically loaded discursive constructions of "its" icon. Using a term from O'Dell, the icon-cities can be perceived as *experiencescapes*, because "while experiences may be ephemeral, they are organized spatially, and generated through the manipulation of the material culture around us" (O'Dell 2005, 15). Following the lead of O'Dell, it can be argued that tourism developers, tourists and the population in icon-cities are all equal participants in the constant processes of (re-)construction and (re-)definition of the connection between the icon and the city.

3.1 Km

H.C. ANDERSENS
ODENSE

Methodology

On the 24th of June 2014 an explicit connection between the urban space of Odense and Hans Christian Andersen was presented when the itinerary "Hans Christian Andersen's Odense" was inaugurated. The itinerary consists of 13 locations in the center of the city with historical relation to Andersen. The locations are connected with 2350 footprints. This concrete staging of the connection between Hans Christian Andersen and Odense is the object of analysis in this article.

The analytical approach is grounded in Neo-Gramscian cultural studies (Storey 1999; 2001). Cultural studies co-founder Stuart Hall, who was one of the most famous Neo-Gramscian scholars, defined culture as "sites of struggle", where individuals struggle to obtain hegemony with their meanings; meanings that can always be re- and de-articulated (Hall 1981, 233). Furthermore, Hall has suggested that culture is conjured up and systematically organized in representational systems of "shared meanings" (Hall 1997, 2): "(…) we give things meaning by how we *represent* them - the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them" (3). In line with Hall, Leurs has argued that Antonio Gramsci's "hegemonic class struggles" and the "meaning struggles" in cultural studies are compatible and that Neo-Gramscian cultural analysis therefore can use as guideline the threefold question of cultural studies presented by communication researcher John Corner: "What meaning is being construed, why is it this particular meaning and how does this particular meaning relate to power, knowledge and identity?" (Leurs 2009; Corner 1991). These questions and Hall's approach to cultural analysis work as guidelines in the case study below, as specific attention is paid to how people represent themselves through the icon, the city and especially the connection between the two, thereby adding symbolic meaning and value to the icon-city.

The two main characteristics of cultural studies analyses are that they are cross-disciplinary and multi-perspective in their attempts to understand and shed light on complex and composite cultural processes and phenomena (Sørensen et al. 2010, 116). Therefore, in analytical practice, the object of analysis will always be of more significance than the approach to it. Thus, the most important thing in

the analysis in this article is to make sense of what is at stake when different people from different positions represent themselves through the connection between Hans Christian Andersen and the urban space of Odense, and how these representations reflect the cultural processes where Odense is articulated as an icon-city.

In the case study, each element in the empirical material is analyzed as a representation of the connection between Hans Christian Andersen and Odense. The material is collected on different platforms around the time of the inauguration of the itinerary. One specific staging of this connection between icon and city has been chosen in line with discourse analyst Norman Fairclough who has suggested that fruitful material for discourse analysis can be selected from "moments of crisis" (Fairclough 1992, 230). Fairclough refers to "moments in the discourse where there is evidence that things are going wrong". In this article, moments of crisis are perceived as moments in discourse where things are put at stake, as it is expected that "visible aspects of practices which might normally be naturalized, and therefore difficult to notice" (230) surfaced when Hans Christian Andersen was explicitly and materially connected to Odense via the itinerary.

The empirical material consists of the author's observations carried out on the day of the inauguration, textual material, such as speeches given at the inauguration, the museum's application for funding of the route, the tourist material developed as a part of the initiative, and semi-structured interviews with the curator responsible for the itinerary and the director of the performance group who was a part of the inauguration.

All of these representational practices are founded on emotions and ideologically rooted conceptions – not facts. Therefore, these actions of representation are perceived as *affective practice*, a term coined by social psychologist Margaret Wetherell: "Affective practice focuses on the emotional as it appears in social life and tries to follow what participants do" (Wetherell 2012, 4). The analytical aim of this concept is to integrate the affective in the discursive because "affect is about sense as well as sensibility. It is practical, communicative and organized" (13).

The analysis unfolds as a discourse analysis. I have argued elsewhere (Bom 2014a, 34-71) that discourse analysis can be a fruitful analytical tool in Neo-Gramscian cultural analysis if concepts are

chosen and used as "sensitizing concepts" that can tell the researcher "what to look for and where to look" (Carpentier 2010, 259; Carpentier and De Cleen 2007, 273). The primary sensitizing concept in the analysis below is *affective practice*. As a sensitizing concept, *affective practice* can be used to examine the affective as a powerful element that embraces and intensifies feelings in discursive practice (7) and the discursive as the realm that very frequently makes affect powerful (19).

The sensitizing concept *affective practice* can be situated in the tension field between hegemonic *interpellations* (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 115) and *interpretative repertoires* (Wetherell and Potter 1992, 92), which consist of versions of "reality" available for the individual (Bom 2014a, 63). Thus, every articulation in the empirical material is perceived and analyzed as expressions of the dialectical relation between the structuring forces of society and people's actions in everyday life (cf. Wetherell 2012, 56). This methodical approach can be summed up in an analytical model (Bom 2014a, 63):

Interpellation

Affective practice

Interpretative repertoire
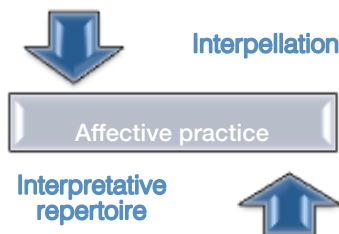
As it will be illustrated below, the model can function as a frame when research questions inspired by Corner are asked:
- What meaning about the icon-city is construed in representational practice?
- How is this / these particular discursive practice(s) justified and constituted?

The analysis is structured around three themes that were specifically dominant in the case of the inauguration of Hans Christian Andersen's Odense: Ownership, authenticity and fictionalization of urban space.

Hans Christian Andersen's Odense

> In these places, a visitor can still walk out of a house and into landscapes which have barely changed since the writer drew breath from them and breathed literature into them (…) We walk in our writers' footsteps and see through their eyes when we enter these spaces (Marsh 1993, xixv).

With the 2350 footsteps in Odense, the city presents an organized itinerary that weaves the city, Andersen's early life there and even his fiction together in one image. This specific offer of route-based tourism (Hardy 2003; Murray and Graham 1997) makes it possible for footstep-tourists (Sjöholm 2010; Waade 2013, 64) to conduct literary tourism (Herbert 1995; 2001; Squire 1994; 1996; Timothy and Boyd 2003, 40-3).

When the historical part of Odense and a tourist-oriented offer were connected explicitly at the inauguration of the route, a local affective practice about the icon and its city surfaced. This affective practice is here categorized into three significant themes that can be relevant in future cultural analyses of icon-cities. The three themes are ownership, authenticity and fictionalization.

1. The contested ownership

It has been argued that when local residents express negative feelings towards iconic fellow-townsmen it can be contemplated as a contestation of space (Hubbard and Lilley 2000, 229) but also as a contestation of who the "rightful owners" of the icon are: the tourists or the residents, the global or the local? (Bom 2013) of course, nobody owns the icon or the city in a legal sense. Any contestations of ownership are solely reflections of feelings and convictions, and can thus be analyzed as affective practice.

For several decades, the population of Odense has produced and re-produced a "very negative local self-understanding" (Kortbek 2013a, 136) and perceptions of Odense as a city that can do nothing right were hegemonic for years. These ideological convictions have also surfaced in connection to Hans Christian Andersen and thus, Odense has a very difficult and conflict-ridden history when it

comes to staging itself as Andersen's city of birth (Bom 2013; Frandsen 2007; Kortbek 2013b).

Recently, however, several stakeholders, politicians, researchers and citizens in Odense joined forces in what can be analyzed as a *hegemonic intervention* (Laclau 1993, 282f) by initiating a change in the affective practice of Andersen's Odense from negative to positive.

To name the route "Hans Christian Andersen's Odense" can be perceived as another attempt to settle the ownership in a positive manner. This was also expressed at the inauguration when the responsible curator addressed the local audience in this way: "'Hans Christian Andersen's Odense', it says in the invitation. You could be tempted to ask: (…) Hasn't Odense always been Hans Christian Andersen's Odense?' Maybe! – for us locals. But for tourists, Odense has just been a city with a Hans Christian Andersen Museum" (Lübker 2014). In this quote, the local ownership is articulated without reference to the "Hans Christian Andersen-sickness" that permeated the population just a few years ago (Bom 2013, 101). Instead, the curator uses the word "always" about the ownership and he constructs a "we": "us locals". Thus, he appeals affectively to an "imagined" local community that proudly owns and preserves its historical heritage. By positioning "the locals" in an imagined community glued together with the Andersen-heritage, the residents are reminded that a part of their local identity resides in the Andersen-legacy.

In the application for funding of the itinerary it is clear, though, that the locally oriented affective practice has a global dimension as well for the tourism developers. It is formulated like this in the application: "Andersen became a world citizen in his time and as an attraction he is a world citizen today. But the beginning of it all was local. Therefore, the project expresses a union of local cultural heritage with a global perspective" (Odense Bys Museer 2013). Thus, this initiative can also be perceived as an act of *glocalization* of heritage, in Robertson's sense of the concept (Robertson 1995, 30). The use of the route as an opportunity to generate meaning about being a resident in a glocal heritage attraction became even clearer in articulations concerned with the second significant theme: authenticity.

2. The negotiable authenticity

Every icon-city has reached its status because a cultural icon or an iconic event once was attached to it and thus, it holds a heritage that can be contemplated as authentic. At the inauguration, the local ownership of something authentic was a significant part of the affective practice. In her speech at the inauguration, The Head of Regional Development in Southern Denmark explicitly attached the local conviction of ownership to tangible, historical elements in the urban space: "We (…) don't have to invent new attractions. We already have the authentic surroundings from Andersen's time. (…) We have the authentic locations and buildings that meant so much for his childhood and later authorship" (Lohse 2014). The retention of the process where the local Andersen-legacy is passed on from one generation to another depends on both generations appraising it as a signifier of culture. By attaching this legacy to more than convictions and situating it in the city's "authentic" environment, the connection between the local icon and his city becomes a matter of both tangible and intangible heritage preservation.

Representational practice can be seen as a way of *doing* culture. In the presentation of their quadruple concept of culture, Sørensen et al. have argued that when people do culture, they show what they "have", "are" and "can" (Sørensen et al. 2008, 30). At the inauguration, the itinerary was articulated as a reminder of what Odense *has*. The Councilor of Culture in Odense expressed it like this:

> (…) I think we will realize that the big HCA-park we have talked about for so many years actually already exists. We have the authentic settings, we have Odense City Museum's great knowledge about Andersen and now we have got 'Hans Christian Andersen's Odense' to tie it all together. (Jegind 2014)

Of course, the authentic cannot be objectively captured and defined (Cohen 1988; Moscardo 2001; Taylor 2001) as everything is more or less conveyed and staged for the sake of tourists (MacCannell 1973). The design of the itinerary, however, does its part to appeal to authentic experiences as the footsteps are all Andersen's exact shoe size, 47, and the distance between each step is consistent with the estimated actual length of Andersen's strides.

Scholars have recently argued that the authentic experience does not necessarily stem from the confrontation with authentic objects. Rather, it surfaces in a complex mix between cultural values, ideological convictions and individual preceding perceptions of the place / icon (Herbert 2001; Jansson 2002; Sjöholm 2010; Squire 1994; Wang 1999; Waade 2013). As Teo and Yeoh put it: "As more and more tourists are attracted to a place, its authenticity will be put at stake. Tourists will select a destination not according to its intrinsic values of authenticity, but based on their expectations of the destination" (1997, 193).

This little snip of a conversation between two members of the audience at the inauguration illustrates how the itinerary appealed to their sense of authenticity:

> *Listener 1*: Your shoes are almost as big as his, aren't they?
> *Listener 2*: No, they are only a 45. But I *have* tried the footsteps through the pedestrian street. I had to see if I could keep up – and I could, but only just. But one shouldn't get too lazy – then he'll get ahead of me.

In this exchange of words, the listeners express an affective practice where they position themselves close to the historical person Hans Christian Andersen. On a local scale, the footsteps around the city can thus work as 2350 "unmindful reminders" (Billig 2001, 219) of the iconic fellow-townsman who once walked the "same" streets. On a global scale, the route invites any tourist in the city to walk in Andersen's footsteps and relate affectively to it in a way consistent with his or her individual interpretative repertoire. Thus, the glocal dimension in the itinerary is also present in negotiations of authenticity.

3. The fictionalization of urban space

The third significant theme that surfaced at the inauguration was the staging of a connection between the urban space and Andersen's world-famous fiction. One of the locations, for example, is the reconstruction of the place by the river where Andersen's mother worked as a washerwoman before she died of delirium tremens. In the folder published with the route, this location is described as follows: "Back then, the poor poet couldn't help her, but many years

later he restored her justice in the fairy-tale 'She was Good for Nothing'" (Odense Bys Museer 2014). In this way, Odense is staged as the city that generated the fairy-tales and thereby as a literary place where "imagined worlds vie with real-life experiences" (Herbert 1995, 33). This way of connecting life and work in the literary icon-city is a way of greeting the one thing tourists know Andersen for: His fairy-tales.

At the inauguration, a performance group contributed further to this fictionalization of the urban space (Sandvik and Waade 2008) as they performed actual incidents in Andersen's life at the exact locations. When Andersen was presented in Sct. Hans Church as a baby, he cried so much that the vicar bursted: "He screams like a cat!" This short historical anecdote was performed by the actors, and thus, the urban space and Andersen's life was transformed into fiction. In a subsequent interview, the director from the group said this about the fictionalization of urban space:

> …when people walk through their city they will have some markers where they say 'Once, I saw a young woman dressed in a tutu standing in that gateway on one leg, isn't that funny? I can still see her before my eyes.' It stays there, like a memory trace, and in that way, the city becomes vibrant, even when the magic has left again. (Juul 2014)

By the use of fictional markers on the itinerary it can be argued that Odense demands ownership of both Andersen and his work by constructing a material connection between the person and the fairy-tales. As the responsible curator stated in a correspondence with the author after the inauguration:

> The close connection between the biographical and the magical allowed this walk around Odense that has the historical as its launch pad but at the same time points to the magical. My hope is that people in use of the itinerary not only get a sense of the depths of history in the places (…) but that they also meet the trans-historical, existential qualities in the fairytales. (Henrik Lübker, email message to author, July 5, 2014)

This fictionalization of the material environment in the icon-city adds an imaginary, magical layer to the urban space, where tourists and citizens walk around in the "real life" Odense and an augmented version of the city, simultaneously (Sandvik and Waade 2008, 5).

Conclusion and perspectives

Icon-cities can be contemplated as managerial challenges or as generators for multi-faceted experiences. However, the purpose of presenting cultural studies as a framework for analysis of icon-cities resides in the scarcely explored tension field between these two paradigmatic approaches to heritage sites.

In this article, the representations that surfaced at the inauguration of the itinerary "Hans Christian Andersen's Odense" were examined as affective practice. The affective practice of Odense's Andersen and Andersen's Odense was categorized into three significant themes: Ownership, authenticity and fictionalization. These themes can also be analyzed as elements in a dynamic process where locals represented themselves through a glocal heritage attraction – the icon-city: In the representational practice, they positioned themselves as members of an imagined community that owns Hans Christian Andersen, and this feeling of ownership was materialized in the staging of authenticity and in the fictionalization of the urban space.

The itinerary Hans Christian Andersen's Odense is loaded with local symbolic meaning and value *and* presented for a global audience with its own preceding perceptions of the cultural icon Hans Christian Andersen. This glocal dimension in the affective practice of icon-cities can be further explored by focusing more on residents in icon-cities, but it can also be fruitful to extend the scope to international tourist experiences of ownership, authenticity and fictionalization of urban space, as people represent themselves through "their" icons no matter where they come from and no matter where they visit. The main challenge for icon-cities as heritage tourist attractions is to serve as tangible settings for these meetings – or collisions – between different discursive constructions of the icon.

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