Conceptualizing Heritage Responsibility in World Heritage Sites: Insights from Levinas’ Ethics of Responsibility

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Abstract: The concept of responsibility has always been closely tied to notions of powers and rights. However, current responsibility models such as ‘corporate social responsibility’, ‘responsible tourism’, and ‘destination social responsibility’ are limited in their explanations of stakeholders’ powers and rights in the heritage tourism context. The current conceptualization of heritage responsibility poses a number of challenges, such as complicated subjects, ambivalent direction, and vague logic. Moreover, engaging with problems such as the asymmetric relationship between responsibility and rights, and the vague relationship between subject and object of responsibility, has been hampered by a lack of sufficient philosophical grounding. The paper addresses this gap by reanalyzing responsibility in the heritage tourism context using Levinas’ ethics of responsibility. This study argues the following: a) Heritage responsibility is an ethical responsibility that agents undertake in the process of identifying, interpreting and representing heritage. This type of responsibility points not only to the subject-object (heritage) level, but also the intersubjective level, and consists of not only responsibility-for-the-self, but also responsibility-for-the-other. b) Heritage responsibility, from the perspective of Levinas’ ethics of responsibility, features passivity, infinity, asymmetry, and pre-originariness, which accounts for the unequal distribution of rights and responsibilities in heritage conservation. c) Given these features of heritage responsibility, the discursive power of stakeholders must be recognized in order to ensure that agents with authority assume their share of responsibility. This paper further discusses the relationship between heritage responsibility and self-identity, cultural identity, and discursive power relations, and outlines issues for future research.

Keywords: heritage responsibility, responsibility-for-the-other, heritage tourism
Introduction

Models of ‘responsibility’ in the development of tourism industries continue to attract an ever-increasing academic engagement. Categories of the latter include ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR; Carroll 1979; Carroll 1991; Carroll 1999; Coles et al. 2013; Dahlsrud 2008; Elkington 1997; Henderson 2007; Li and Fu 2014), ‘responsible tourism/tourist behavior’ (RT; Frey and George 2010; Goodwin and Francis 2003; Lee et al. 2013; Stanford 2008; Weeden 2013; Chiu et al. 2014; Caruana et al. 2014; Han et al. 2016), ‘destination social responsibility’ (DSR; Ma et al. 2013; Su et al. 2016; Su and Swanson 2017; Su et al. 2017; Su and Huang 2012), and a broader and more general notion of ‘responsibility’ within the tourism context (Goodwin 2011; Grimwood and Doubleday 2013; Grimwood et al. 2015; Hall and Brown 2006). These models have been formulated to cope with the negative impacts of tourism development and to improve sustainability and tourist experiences alike (Goodwin 2011). However, each of these approaches have failed to respond to the issue of just who should be responsible, the precise nature of their responsibility, and especially the nature of the relationship among stakeholders with respect to this responsibility.’

Heritage tourism involves complex interactions among multiple stakeholders, and can be conceived as a ‘game process’ between responsibility and other competing interest factors, such as tourism income and community or heritage sustainability (Wang and Zhang 2010). This game process is explicit in the process of heritage production, transmission and consumption, in which every stakeholder attempts to harness heritage in their own interest and from their own perspective. Of course, this is unlikely to coincide with good heritage conservation practice, as has been argued in the case of China (Zhao 2014; Zhang and Li 2016). Accordingly, clarifying the responsibilities of each stakeholder in heritage conservation is of paramount importance.

Zhang (2014b) proposes the concept of ‘heritage responsibility,’ based both on international charters to conserve cultural and natural heritage, and on recurring dilemmas that have emerged in the process of heritage protection. He defines it as a “social responsibility of individuals or organizations, and includes the legal, economic, moral and philanthropic responsibility in the process of identifying, interpreting and representing heritage” (Zhang 2014b, p.48). However, this conceptualization still does not address certain important
problems, including the asymmetric relationship between responsibility and right, and the vague relationship between subject and object of responsibility among different stakeholders in the heritage tourism context.

Although the concept of responsibility has become significant in the tourism context, both academia and industries have struggled to characterize it sufficiently due to certain difficulties of a philosophical nature. As Fennell (2008, p. 4) puts it, “this stasis is attributed to a lack of sufficient ontology in structuring a way forward.” In response, this paper adopts Levinas’ ethics of responsibility to conceptualize the nature and features of heritage responsibility in the context of tourism.

The Limited Explanatory Power of Responsibility Models in the Heritage Tourism Context

Discussions of responsibility in relation to heritage arose in the wake of tourism conflicts at heritage sites, especially World Heritage Sites. Among the responsibility models found in the tourism literature, corporate social responsibility, responsible tourism, and the recently proposed destination social responsibility have received the most academic attention. However, these models offer little engagement with power dynamics in the heritage tourism context.

Corporate social responsibility, as an evolving and socially-constructed concept, has been interpreted in a variety of ways (Dahlsrud 2008). According to Li and Fu (2014) the three most representative are the “three concentric circles definition of social responsibility” proposed by the Committee for Economic Development (Carroll 1999), the “pyramid of corporate social responsibility” proposed by Carroll (1991), and the “triple bottom line” conception proposed by Elkington (1997). In contrast, CSR research has emphasized the responsibility of enterprises and has focused more on social responsibility in regard to public welfare. The environmental aspect remains relatively underexplored, although some scholars have argued that enterprises should bear more social responsibility for heritage and environmental protection because of their heavy reliance on heritage resources, especially during heritage tourism development (Zhang et al. 2015). However, multiple stakeholders who are involved in heritage conservation and enterprises cannot address the issue of public participation during tourism development alone.
Responsible tourism is a concept that directly links responsibility to tourism, and is often used interchangeably with sustainable tourism, ethical tourism, ecotourism, and alternative tourism (Fennell 2008). Based on their different perspectives, scholars and international tourism organizations interpret responsible tourism differently, as it pertains to products, scale, ethics, exploitation and doctrines of behavior (Zhang 2006). These diverse interpretations contribute to misunderstandings between stakeholders. Moreover, the subject and content of responsibility still remains vague, and is therefore ineffective in explaining the relationship between stakeholders’ responsibilities and tourism development.

Destination social responsibility aims to account for the perceptions of accountability and the responsible activities of all stakeholders at the destination (Su et al. 2017). Su et al. (2016, p. 5) describe it as “the collective ideology and efforts of destination stakeholders to conduct socially responsible activities” with the rationale that “destination sustainability can be achieved if the stakeholders work together with a common goal to act for the benefit of the society at large.” Destination social responsibility recognizes the destination as a single entity (Su and Swanson 2017), and consists of social, economic, environmental and stakeholder responsibility (Su et al. 2017). However, ambiguity still remains in DSR with respect to the subject and content of responsibility. As with responsible tourism, DSR cannot explicate the relationship between stakeholders’ responsibilities and the model of tourism development.

In summary, these responsibility models fail to illustrate the asymmetric relationship between responsibility and rights, and the vague relationship between the subject and object of responsibility among different stakeholders, and thus offer limited utility in the heritage tourism context.

The Complicated Nature of Heritage Responsibility and Outstanding Research Dilemmas

Following a series of paradigm shifts in tourism studies (Bianchi 2009), issues of fairness, power, responsibility and morality have received increasingly prominent attention (Caton 2012; Zhang 2014a). Heritage responsibility was proposed in response to three trends: a) legally, all World Heritage Site charters and related documents reiterated the role of responsibility in heritage
conservation; b) practically, recent tourism development and heritage
conservation conflicts have raised public awareness of heritage responsibility;
and c) in regard to theory, current empowerment research in heritage
tourism without any public awareness of responsibility has been criticized
for making few contributions to the field. Zhang (2014b, p. 48) defines
heritage responsibility as a kind of “social responsibility of individuals or
organizations, and includes the legal, economic, moral and philanthropic
responsibility in the process of identifying, interpreting and representing
heritage.” This conceptualization, however, is not entirely satisfactory in its
capacity to clearly address the research dilemmas identified above.

The Complicated Nature of Heritage Responsibility Research

Complicated Subject

Accounting for the types of heritage responsibility subjects and the
relationships among them is very complicated. Unlike the CSR model,
heritage conservation involves multiple stakeholders, including international
organizations, central/local governments, heritage managers, tourism
enterprises, tourists, and community residents (Zhang 2014b). These
stakeholders can be further subdivided into organizational and individual
actors.

These stakeholders often have very distinct values. Value conflicts revolve
around the discourse of “what is heritage and whose heritage is it” (Zhang
and Li 2016). This causes intrinsic competition between multiple sets of
values and interpretations and creates a multi-dimensional space for the
production and consumption of heritage (Graham et al. 2000; Hu 2011). Apart
from their different values, people also perceive heritage responsibility
differently, thus creating further difficulties.

Asymmetric power relations between actors also exist in heritage discourse.
Heritage is essentially a selective (re)production of history based on current
purposes and values (Olsen and Timothy 2002). Its core problem
characteristic is “selectiveness,” i.e. who decides what is heritage and what
the criteria are for this selection (Zhang and Li 2016). Authorized heritage
discourse (AHD), as advanced by governments, social elites and enterprises,
influences the articulation and identification of heritage, whilst other actors
such as community residents are often marginalized (Ashworth and van der Aa 2002). These asymmetric power relations add further complexity to the issue of heritage responsibility.

**Ambivalent Direction**

Existing research on heritage responsibility emphasizes the responsibility the subject bears for the object – heritage in this context. However, the direction of responsibility is ambivalent.

There are two kinds of responsibility in ethics, according to Schlenker et al. (1994). The first is ‘imputation’ or ‘self-responsibility,’ whereby actors choose to assume responsibility for an intended return, which is basically oriented towards individual benefits. The second is ‘answerability,’ which refers to duties arising from our social roles, and generally regarded as collective responsibility. These two types of responsibility can be applied in heritage tourism contexts. On the one hand, it is our common responsibility to safeguard heritage and to ensure that it is handed down to future generations. That is, it is our collective responsibility to protect our heritage as members of society. On the other hand, tourism is a short-term activity, which undermines any expectation of return benefits for altruistic acts (Fennell 2006). As a result, tourism essentially emphasizes the value of one over the value of others (Fennell 2008). Characterized as an act of individualism, touring can transcend one's normal everyday life spatially, temporally and perhaps behaviorally in the satisfaction of primarily hedonistic ends (Fennell 2008; Wheeller 2009).

As a result of this ambivalence, a tradeoff between self-responsibility and collective responsibility frequently occurs in the process of heritage tourism development, which damages heritage conservation efforts (Wheeler 2009). The responsibility of subject to object (heritage), therefore, ineffectively resolves practical issues that emerge during heritage conservation, for example, those which occur when authorized heritage discourse stresses the responsibility of marginalized groups in heritage protection.

**Vague Logic**

The ‘norm activation model’ (Schwartz 1977; Schwartz and Howard 1981) and the ‘value-belief-norm model’ (Stern et al. 1999) are two major theories
for environmentally responsible behavior, and are widely used to explain pro-social/environmental behaviors (Han et al. 2015). The norm activation model theorizes that one’s altruistically pro-social/environmental intention or behavior is activated according to one’s own personal norm, which is in turn influenced by awareness of consequence and ascribed responsibility (Han 2015; Han et al. 2015). The value-belief-norm model, which is derived from the norm activation model while integrating value theory (Stern et al. 1999), theorizes that there are three types of values, e.g., egoistic value, altruistic value, and biospheric value, concerning pro-social/environmental behavior or intention (Snelgar 2006). Altruistic value and biospheric value tend to cluster as a single factor in empirical research (Stern et al. 1995), and so one can safely categorize motives for environmental protection roughly as either self-interest or altruism. However, altruism per se is a logic of self-interest, since actors choose to assume responsibility altruistically for benefits in return (Trivers 1971). As a kind of ethical consumerism, altruism “is too broad in its definition, too loose in its operationalization, and too moralistic in its stance to be anything other than a myth” (Devinney et al. 2010, p. 9).

The logic of self-interest covers few responsibility narratives in heritage conservation practices, in which authorized heritage discourse reiterates other stakeholders’ responsibility for heritage in an increasingly clear manner (Zhang 2014b). Other stakeholders, pressured by moral public opinion, passively bear the responsibility for heritage. This kind of responsibility is by no means a self-interested responsibility, but rather a responsibility-for-the-other.

**Heritage Responsibility Research Dilemmas**

*Asymmetric Relationship Between Responsibility and Rights*

The asymmetric relationship between responsibility and rights creates tensions between individual benefits and collective responsibility, especially when stakeholders act primarily for hedonistic ends (Fennell 2008; Wheeller 2009), e.g., self-interest. Because of imbalanced power relations, authorized heritage discourse stresses the responsibility of marginalized groups in heritage protection, and the latter, pressured by moral public opinion, passively bear this responsibility. Moreover, moral and ethical conflicts remain a persistent facet of heritage tourism development (Zhang 2014b).
Since “the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than competing rights” (Gilligan 1982, p. 19), authorized heritage discourse overtly stresses the role of responsibility, while de-emphasizing the rights of others in heritage conservation.

The vague relationship between the subject and object of responsibility

The complicated subject and ambivalent direction of responsibility lead to a vague relationship between the subject and object of responsibility. Who should bear responsibilities in heritage tourism? What kind of responsibility should they assume? Many researchers claim that all stakeholders should be responsible for heritage conservation (Leslie 2012; Sin 2010). Others argue that different stakeholders should assume different obligations, reflecting their different levels of power in deciding on the development model for a destination. According to these authors, certain stakeholders should be completely exempted from responsibility (Haukeland 2011).

What Causes the Research Dilemmas?

“Not knowing, having neither a sufficient knowledge or consciousness of what being responsible means is of itself a lack of responsibility” (Derrida 1995, p. 25). As mentioned above, both academia and industry struggle to characterize responsibility due to what Fennell (2008, p. 4) identifies as “a lack of sufficient ontology in structuring a way forward”. Levinas’ ethics of responsibility offers a sound philosophical base for tourism research in at least three ways: a) by positing that being responsible is not an attribute of who we are personally, but rather fundamental to human behavior; b) by emphasizing the ethical importance of difference between Self and Other; and c) by demonstrating how face-to-face encounters are personal and intimate, and thus how this intersubjective responsibility can be observed at a relational scale of lived experience (Grimwood and Doubleday 2013).

Levinas’ Ethics of Responsibility

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a French philosopher of Lithuanian Jewish ancestry, known for his teachings on individual responsibility towards the other (Grimwood and Doubleday 2013). One of the greatest ethical thinkers of the 20th century, Levinas reversed the tradition of responsibility “from intentionality to passivity, from the ego to the other, from freedom to
subjection, from the spontaneous will to the accusation and persecution of the self” (Raffoul 2010, p. 31), to the extent that he re-conceptualized responsibility from self-responsibility to responsibility-for-the-other. As Levinas put it, “Usually, one is responsible for what one does oneself. I say, in Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, that responsibility is initially for the other” (Raffoul 2010, p. 13). Also, as Derrida observed:

Levinas wants to remind us that responsibility is not at first responsibility of myself for myself, that the sameness of myself is derived from the other, as if it were second to the other, coming to itself as responsible and mortal from the position of my responsibility before the other, for the other’s death and in the face of it (Derrida 1995, p. 46).

**Intersubjective Responsibility**

Levinas broke decisively from the traditional Western concern with ontology (the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being), as is articulated in his breakthrough 1951 text “Is Ontology Fundamental?” For Levinas, ontology constitutes the mainstay of the entire western philosophical tradition, from Parmenides to Heidegger. This tradition assumes an egological enclosure, and “is a thinking of the Same, a logos of being that reduces otherness to the Same by the very power of its theoretical comprehensiveness” (Raffoul 2010, p. 166-167). Seeking to exceed the egological enclosure of this interpretation of responsibility, he postulated the recognition of ethics as absolutely fundamental. He articulated ethics as a form of individual responsibility that is always pre-assigned (Levinas and Nemo 1985). As ethics is situated in one’s relationship to other people, Levinas’ notion of responsibility is an intersubjective or relational one.

Levinas defines the ethical experience of responsibility as the face-to-face encounter with the other. Once you meet somebody face to face, you are ethically responsible for the other, which is expressed insofar as “the face speaks” (Levinas and Nemo 1985, p. 87). The face speaks, and conveys codes and commands for one’s responsibility. “Responsibility is no longer set within the sphere of ego, but arises out of the astonishing alterity of the other, or the subject’s pre-originary openness to the other” (Raffoul 2010, p. 32).
The other in Levinas’ philosophy is totally different from the other in ontology. The other in ontology is a shadow of I, or ‘alter ego,’ and an understanding of it must be based on the transcendental ego (Sun 2008, p. 1-2). The other in ontology can be possessed because it can be reduced and totalized to the same (Levinas and Nemo 1985). “While the other in Levinas’ philosophy is higher than I in ethical status, exterior to me and never appropriable by me, yet calling me to responsibility” (Raffoul 2010, p. 17).

**Features of Responsibility-for-the-other**

Responsibility-for-the-other is marked by passivity. Instead of arising out of voluntariness, subjectivity and rational agency, Levinas stresses that responsibility is not chosen but is pre-assigned before free will, rendering one in a situation of obligation (Raffoul 2010, p. 17). Responsibility in this sense is never an inclination, but a demand laid on the subject in the form of a duty, an ethical obligation and a call one has to answer. The subject does not constitute the meaning of the other, but is instead affected and exceeded by the other, and thus the subject becomes a hostage to the other (Raffoul 2010, p. 19). This passive responsibility characterizes “a guilt without faults, an indebtedness without loans, a responsibility as ‘persecution,’ ‘obsession,’ and ‘substitution’” (Raffoul 2010, p. 33).

Responsibility-for-the-other utilizes a notion of infinity. Openness to the other is an openness to the infinite, “the subject welcomes the other beyond its own finite capacities of welcoming” (Raffoul 2010, p. 178). In this sense, “responsibility is excessive, hyperbolic, and overwhelming” (Raffoul 2010, p. 179). Besides, one is chosen or elected by the call of the other to be responsible. It is one alone who carries the weight of responsibility, since this ethical responsibility is indeclinable and “the responsible I is irreplaceable, noninterchangeable, commanded to uniqueness” (Raffoul 2010, p. 202).

Responsibility-for-the-other is also characterized by asymmetry. Responsibility is first and foremost a response, according to its etymological origins, that upholds the law of asymmetry (Raffoul 2010, p. 16). The other is higher than I in ethical status, exterior to and never appropriable by me, yet calling me to be responsible (Raffoul 2010, p.17). This dissymmetry between the infinite other and the finite subject, together with its passivity and non-
interchangeability, make responsibility a “dissymmetrical expropriation” (Raffoul 2010, p. 180).

Responsibility-for-the-other is also marked by Levinas’ concept of the pre-originary. Being responsible is not an attribute of who we are, but is essential to the human condition. Responsibility is pre-assigned and cannot be refused. What is more, the relationship between responsibility and action is severed, e.g., responsibility-for-the-other is not a responsibility based on my actions, “I have not done anything and yet I am responsible,” insofar as “I do not even take responsibility for the other, but rather the responsibility is incumbent on me” (Raffoul 2010, p. 196). This responsibility takes place before action, expressing a pre-assigned responsibility for the other (Raffoul 2010, p. 197).

Conceptualizing Heritage Responsibility in World Heritage Sites

A Holistic Framework of Heritage Responsibility

Levinas theorizes that responsibility-for-the-other characterizes the logic of being for the other and arises out of face-to-face encounters or intersubjective relationships. This type of responsibility can resolve the dilemma between self-responsibility and collective responsibility, which is caused by the direction of subject to object (heritage) and the logic of self-responsibility. According to Gu (2006), responsibility-for-the-other transcends the dilemma between self-responsibility and collective responsibility in three ways: a) the other is per se different from I and the collective, is what I am not, and cannot be reduced to the same; moreover, the other is exterior to I and possesses higher ethical status than I; b) self-responsibility and collective responsibility are based on free will and subjectivity, and will eventually lead to egological enclosure, while responsibility-for-the-other arises out of the subject’s pre-originary openness to the other in an infinite way; and c) responsibility-for-the-other constitutes the premise of self-responsibility and collective responsibility, which are based on self-interest oriented by nature, whereas responsibility-for-the-other is pre-originary and authentic.

Heritage responsibility, when defined according to Levinas’ ethics of responsibility, involves interactions among multiple stakeholders and presents a complex network of responsibilities. This paper defines heritage responsibility as an ethical responsibility that agents undertake in the process
of identifying, interpreting and representing heritage. A holistic framework of heritage responsibility (Figure 1) consists of two types of heritage responsibility. The first type, as shown by lines 1 and 2, is the responsibility of subject to object (heritage), pertaining to an actor’s direct responsibility to heritage. The second type, as shown by lines 3 and 4, is a kind of intersubjective responsibility, which depends on relative power relationships with others. Enlightened by Levinas’ ethics of responsibility, heritage

![Figure 1. A holistic framework of heritage responsibility](image)

Note: ①②: Responsibility toward heritage  ③④: Responsibility among stakeholders

responsibility points to not only the subject-object (heritage) level, but also the inter-subject level, and consists of not only responsibility-for-the-self, but also responsibility-for-the-other.

**Features of Heritage Responsibility**

In heritage conservation practices, authorized heritage discourse stresses the responsibility of marginalized groups in heritage protection due to an imbalance of power relations. These marginalized groups, pressured by moral public opinion, passively bear the responsibility for heritage as a response to this ethical call. Moreover, authorized heritage discourse
(as conducted by international organizations, central governments and social elites) overtly stresses the role of responsibility and downplays the rights people possess in heritage conservation.

This type of heritage responsibility is a responsibility-for-the-other, features passivity, infinity, asymmetry, and pre-originariness, and severs the relationship between responsibility and action. In other words, all stakeholders in any field of heritage must equally bear infinite responsibility for that heritage. This interpretation of heritage responsibility successfully deals with the responsibility narratives that overtly emphasize the role of marginalized groups in heritage conservation practices.

**Conclusion**

As moral and ethical conflicts become a persistent facet of heritage tourism development, the issue of responsibility stands as key to resolving such conflicts in heritage tourism (Zhang 2014b). What is more, all world heritage charters and similar legal documents reiterate the role of responsibility in heritage conservation. A critical deconstructive analysis is therefore required to shed light into the darker corners of this debate. Unlike earlier work, this study recasts the concept and features of heritage responsibility in the context of tourism.

Levinas’ ethics of responsibility provides a useful philosophical basis for tourism research (Grimwood and Doubleday 2013). This paper has incorporated Levinas’ ideas in an attempt to revisit heritage responsibility, and maximize the value of this concept both in theory and practice.

The study concludes that: a) Heritage responsibility refers to an ethical responsibility that agents adopt in the process of identifying, interpreting and representing heritage. This type of responsibility points to not only the subject-object (heritage) level, but also the intersubjective level, and consists of not only responsibility-for-the-self, but also responsibility-for-the-other. b) Heritage responsibility, from the perspective of Levinas’ ethics of responsibility, is marked by passivity, infinity, asymmetry and pre-originariness, which accounts for the unequal distribution of rights and responsibilities in heritage conservation. c) Given these features, the relative
discourse power of stakeholders must not be neglected to ensure that agents with authority assume their share of responsibility.

**The Relationship Between Heritage Responsibility and Self-identity**

Ethical responsibility arises out of the interruption of the work of identifying the ego—a process that Levinas calls the “ethical experience” (Levinas and Nemo 1985). In other words, responsibility is discursively constructed by the self (Massey 2004). People who have a stronger sense of identification with heritage show greater resilience to the pressure from moral public opinion initiated by authorized heritage discourse. This argument is supported by Grimwood and Doubleday (2013), who discuss the effect of self-identity on individuals’ perception of their ethical responsibilities. Thus, given that heritage is generally believed to be a socially constructed concept, self-identity has an important effect on heritage responsibility.

**The Relationship Between Heritage Responsibility and Cultural Identity**

Heritage captures those traces of the past a society chooses to preserve. As such, it is more likely to correspond to ‘selective memories’ in the form of monuments, museums and symbolic architectural sites. With respect to cultural identity (Van Gorp and Renes 2007), these common memories act as static and permanent reminders of the past that are concretized in the present, and are often derived somehow from the identity of those in authority (Graham and Howard 2008; Van Gorp and Renes 2007). Therefore, heritage also provides a way of defining oneself (Van Gorp and Renes 2007). In other words, if our cultural identity is bound up with a heritage site, we will more likely strive to construct a positive social identity for our culture and be more willing to bear heritage responsibility.

**Heritage Responsibility and Discursive Power Relations**

Power relations among stakeholders have a significant influence on people’s willingness to assume responsibility for heritage sites. According to Smith (2006, p. 17), “heritage emerged in late nineteenth century Europe and has achieved dominance as a ‘universalizing’ discourse in the twenty-first century. One of the consequences of this discourse is to actively obscure the power relations that give rise to it and to make opaque the cultural and social work that ‘heritage’ does.” Zhang (2014b) also asserts that the nature of
heritage is based on power relations, and these power relations are embodied at each stage of heritage selection, performance, and interpretation. Sin (2010) also discusses such power relations based on geographies of responsibility and equal relationships in the context of volunteer tourism. Power relations operate within the discourse of responsibility, influencing whether individuals engage in positive or negative actions, whether they care about or dismiss others, and whether they promote social justice or injustice.

In conclusion, this paper serves as an exploratory attempt to conceptualize heritage responsibility in the tourism context. Future research should consider heritage responsibility from both the subject-object (heritage) level and the intersubjective level, recognizing both responsibility-for-the-self and responsibility-for-the-other. In addition, since heritage responsibility features passivity, infinity, asymmetry, and pre-originariness caused by authorized heritage discourse (Smith 2006), the nature of power relations remains a key issue in heritage responsibility research. Future research should also incorporate the results of other critical heritage studies to reveal different representations of heritage responsibility from the perspectives of various stakeholders (Harvey 2015; Naidoo 2016). Finally, additional interdisciplinary work will expand our understanding of the complex and changing nature of responsibility in heritage tourism.

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Notes

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