

# Social political and minority narratives in universities' tourist attractions

Narrativas sociopolíticas e de minorias em atrações turísticas universitárias

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## Abstract

Universities are privileged institutions to spread awareness and to start debates about current issues, namely social political and minority topics. Also, recently, certain universities have needed to acknowledge previous (and current) problematic power relations and dissonant heritage within and related to their structures. The purpose of this research is to discuss how tourism is enabling universities to reflect internally and develop external discourses about their past positioning in political and minority issues and their current critical and educational role on the same issues, by identifying tourist initiatives and/or products explored in universities. The collection of examples is based on the consultation of forty-eight institutional websites of universities worldwide and complemented by direct observation in European universities and by previous literature. Results show that several themes are being explored – slavery, ethnic stories and indigenous representation, gender identity and sexual orientation, mental health, challenge to dominant powers, sociocultural diversity within political territories, and other social and territorial marginalised groups – through different tools and strategies. The benefits of the inclusion of minority narratives in university attractions, as well as some concerns and possible directions for future research, are discussed.

**Keywords:** Campus-based tourism. Minority narratives. Political discourses. Inclusive tourism. University museums.

## Resumo

As universidades são instituições privilegiadas para consciencializar e iniciar debates sobre questões atuais, nomeadamente tópicos sociopolíticos e de minorias. Recentemente, certas universidades tiveram a necessidade de reconhecer relações prévias (e atuais) de poder problemáticas e heranças dissonantes relacionadas com as suas estruturas. O objetivo desta investigação é discutir como o turismo está a permitir às universidades refletir e desenvolver discursos sobre o seu posicionamento passado e o seu papel crítico e educativo atual sobre questões políticas e de minorias, através da identificação de iniciativas/produtos turísticos/os exploradas/os nas universidades. A recolha de exemplos baseia-se na consulta de websites institucionais de universidades a nível mundial, complementada por observação direta e pela revisão da literatura. Os resultados demonstram que vários temas estão a ser explorados – escravatura, histórias étnicas e representação indígena, identidade de género e orientação sexual, saúde mental, desafio aos poderes dominantes, diversidade sociocultural

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dentro de territórios políticos e outros grupos sociais marginalizados – através de diferentes ferramentas e estratégias. Os benefícios da inclusão de narrativas minoritárias nas atrações universitárias, bem como algumas preocupações e possíveis direções para investigações futuras, são discutidos.

*Palavras-chave:* Turismo de universidades. Narrativas de minorias. Discursos políticos. Turismo inclusivo. Museus universitários.

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## 1. Introduction

Universities are one of the most ancient organisations that are still relevant today, particularly in Europe (Perkin, 2007). These institutions have evolved with, mirrored and pushed forward the values, beliefs, intellectual knowledge and priorities of nations, and even civilisations, for centuries. Throughout history, universities and their academics have been important supporters and/or objectors of instituted political powers (Zonta, 2002). For instance, the medieval European university was financed by religious and political institutions and its academics greatly influenced the local and (inter)national political panorama. University heritage is, frequently, a reflection of national history and it is not unusual for universities to hold national treasures within their collections. On the other hand, university students are documented as being particularly active and irreverent in defying political powers. From a more controversial perspective, the history of universities, particularly historical universities, is also full of values, actions and political positionings that are contested in today's society, namely those centred on (post and de)colonialism and, more precisely, concerned with slavery and dispossession of Indigenous lands in/universities' construction and growth (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022). To address this, several universities started to acknowledge and act regarding their past role and/or association with these issues.

The long (and not so distant) history of elitism and gender, socioeconomic and ethnic marginalisation in educational institutions and the university's current role as spaces of academic freedom, awareness and vanguard in approaching, questioning and creating positive changes, while at the same time enabling public engagement and discourses/dialogues on these issues, is another interesting contrast. In fact, the formal existence of universities goes back to at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but the democratisation of admission for women, BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic) communities and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups is very recent, mostly from the last century, and is still quite fragile in most countries and non-existent in some geographies (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022; Cronin, 2016).

History and tradition are crucial assets in the branding, legitimacy and competitiveness of elite and historical universities (Stein, 2016; Woodward & Carnegie, 2020). However, to maintain a positive image, universities need to recognise the previous (and current) power relations within and related to their structures that must be discontinued; it is important to create forums for critical debate and discourses about their dissonant and/or controversial heritage and current social, political and minority issues (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022; Minthorn & Nelson, 2018). In fact,

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universities are privileged institutions to spread awareness and start debates about current issues, especially with younger generations, fulfilling their third mission of public engagement and knowledge transfer to society (Jaunis et al., 2021). Tourism and heritage communication are possible soft power mechanisms to negotiate and reframe controversial elements of the university's past, namely related to slavery, the dispossession of Indigenous lands, and gender, socioeconomic and ethnic marginalisation, and to highlight the (past and current) presence and relevance of minorities in their community. There is some debate within the institutions, whether or not to address their problematic past and also if it is better to erase problematic celebratory iconography or to create critical narratives that raise awareness on that issue, but external contestations (mainly from students) are pushing universities to act (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022; Stein, 2016). By reflecting on and confronting their past and by acknowledging forgotten, ignored and/or silenced narratives through interpretation in visitor attractions and through tourist products, universities highlight present democratic and inclusive institutional values (Knox, 2024).

These topics and the problematics of representation and narratives of universities have been discussed in heritage and (less) in museology literature, but there are almost no contributions framed within the perspectives of tourism studies related to universities. The purpose of this research is, therefore, to discuss how tourism is enabling universities to reflect internally and to develop external discourses about their past positioning on political and minority issues, and current critical and educational role on the same issues, through the identification of tourist initiatives and/or products explored in universities. The collection of examples is based on the consultation of institutional websites of universities worldwide and complemented by direct observation in European universities and by previous literature. To an extent, this perspective aligns with some of the components that Scheyvens & Biddulph (2018) identify as being structural of inclusive tourism. The theoretical framework is also based on the growing literature about social and political minority narratives in new museology and tourism, especially those framed within (post and de)colonial perspectives and feminist theory.

In this paper, minorities are considered from a perspective of power disparities and exclusion-inclusion dynamics, regarding ethnic, religious, socioeconomic and political matters, as referred in Rey (2020). That includes homeless and economically disadvantaged individuals, (forced) migrants and refugees, women, people with disabilities, individuals from the LGBTQI+ community, minority ethnic groups, and others.

## 2. Literature Review

The section of the literature review that supports the empirical research is organised into three subsections: (1) social political and minority narratives in new museology and tourism, (2) inclusive tourism and (3) cultural tourism in universities.

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## 2.1. Social political and minority narratives in new museology and tourism

Museums and heritage spaces are not socially and politically neutral spaces (Callihan & Feldman, 2018; Murtagh et al., 2017). In the last few decades, these institutions have engaged in critical reflections on their processes and narratives and have been pressured to question and even challenge power dynamics to include more diverse perspectives, particularly framed within postcolonial and feminist theories (Colella, 2018; Thakur et al., 2023; Wijesinghe et al., 2020).

With the 'New Museology' paradigm, museums are increasingly becoming spaces and institutions that (i) question and decentralise dominant discourses and hegemonic understandings of identity, privileging multiculturalist perspectives, (ii) give visibility to marginalised narratives and involve minority groups, (iii) assume a mission of social responsibility, (iv) instigate critical debate between their publics and within the general society, (v) are self-critical and (vi) capable of challenging complicated legacies and heritage through new narratives (Kalsås, 2015; Rey, 2020). This shift is enabling marginalised or silenced social political and minority narratives to emerge, ideally with the involvement of the minority communities represented, in museum and tourism initiatives.

The growth of postcolonial research in the 1980s highly influenced the change of museum practices in displaying minorities' narratives, particularly regarding Indigenous peoples (Kalsås, 2015). Chambers & Buzinde (2015) distinguish postcolonial from decolonial perspectives. The first perspective is concerned with western self-reflexibility that promotes transformation and critical perspectives within the context of the dominant powers, while the second is concerned with the promotion of discourses and agendas that emerge from and with minority and/or subaltern groups, being more emancipatory for these communities. Carrigan (2014) refers particularly to the potential of postcolonial discourses in dark tourism heritage sites to endorse a wider range of representational dimensions and narratives, that expose political and power dynamics. There is a growth in the "plurality of remembrance, memorialisation and commemoration" (Adu-Ampong, 2023, p. 3) of spaces and legacies that relate to past dark histories and minorities, but also of understanding the complexity of contemporary identities and power dynamics (Wijesinghe et al., 2020).

Feminist perspectives are also emerging in museum and tourism practices related to representation issues, gender justice and equity. Intersectional feminism, in particular, is concerned not only with a simplistic representation of women, but with expanding the representation to other marginalised gender groups, such as transgender, nonbinary and gender fluid identities, and in highlighting additional forms of discrimination and oppression regarding LGBTQ+ women, women with disabilities, women of colour, and others (Callihan & Feldman, 2018; Colella, 2018). Postcolonial feminism expands beyond Western and binary perspectives regarding gender, power and colonialism (Wijesinghe et al., 2020).

The exclusion of certain narratives in public and institutional discourses perpetuates social inequalities (Alderman et al., 2016). Approaching these themes through tourism can have a transformative effect by promoting a public collective memory

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(Adu-Ampong, 2023; Alderman et al., 2016) and by, ideally, giving voice to those minority communities in a public discourse (Akbar & Sharp, 2023; Kalsås, 2015), which consequently contributes to empowering minority groups (Knox, 2024). Ownership, self-representation and minority participation are central aspects of this type of effort, that contribute to create distance from simplistic and stereotypical representations (Kalsås, 2015).

## 2.2. Inclusive tourism

Tourism can amplify inequalities and the underrepresentation of already marginalised groups in society and be an exclusionary activity (Alderman et al., 2016; Biddulph & Scheyvens, 2018; Tapfuma et al., 2024; Thakur et al., 2023). However, the inclusive tourism approach enables, to an extent, to counterbalance disadvantages generated by the tourism development and to instigate positive outcomes for the local community and, specifically, for marginalised groups within the community that frequently are excluded from tourism activities (Rita & António, 2020).

Scheyvens & Biddulph (2018, p. 592) define inclusive tourism as a “transformative tourism in which marginalised groups are engaged in ethical production or consumption of tourism and the sharing of its benefits”. The transformative aspect is directly related to the present research, as it is assumed in that work that inclusive tourism might address inequalities, challenge generalised images and stereotypes and contribute to a more profound understanding of minorities. The authors acknowledge six components of inclusive tourism that show the range of topics in their conceptual framework:

- Overcoming barriers for disadvantaged groups to produce and/or consume tourism.
- Facilitating self-representations by those who are marginalised or oppressed, in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Challenging dominant power relations.
- Widening the range of people who contribute to decision-making in tourism.
- Providing opportunities for new places to be on the tourism map.
- Encouraging learning, exchange and mutually beneficial relationships which promote understanding and respect between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’ (p. 593).

For this research, despite the relevance of providing strategies to enhance access to different publics, the focus is on the supply side of inclusive tourism, more precisely on the creation of narratives that enhance and/or enlighten social minority and political perspectives, which are prevalent on the components of facilitating self-representations and challenging dominant power relations referred by Scheyvens & Biddulph (2018) but are also intertwined with the other components. Regarding narratives, several dimensions that overlap with minority narratives are addressed in

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inclusive tourism, “such as race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, income inequality and political representation” (Rita & António, 2020, p. 702).

### 2.3. Cultural tourism in universities

Nowadays, universities are optimising their rich heritage, museum spaces and other cultural assets through tourism. Almost 4,000 university museum collections are members of the UMAC – International Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC, 2017). Several ancient and/or prestigious universities are attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors per year (Mangi et al., 2019; Woodward, 2013). Based on the three main missions of universities (education, research and knowledge transfer to society), the tourist assets of universities are consumed by diverse publics: educational publics (schools, senior universities, internal academic community, etc.), scientific publics and general publics (local community, national and international tourists).

Campus-based tourism, as some academics call this niche of cultural urban tourism, constitutes a great and somewhat informal tool to develop the institutional mission of knowledge transfer to society (also referred in the perspective of community engagement); it is also important to communicate with the exterior and, therefore, to propagate strategic messages and to establish positive images of the university (Woodward, 2013).

The institution's history is one of the main aspects optimised by universities for tourism purposes (Albino, 2009). The official narratives normally emphasise the contributions to science evolution and the positive relations to the national and/or regional history; but, recently, problematic aspects of the institutions' history emerged and universities were called to act on that past. Tourism discourses are one of the soft tools used by universities to communicate messages regarding problematic and complex issues of power disparities and dissonant heritage within the past and present of the institutions and, therefore, to negotiate and reframe narratives that affect the image of the institution (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022).

## 3. Materials and Methods

A qualitative exploratory approach was assumed to identify tourist initiatives in universities that explore social political and minority narratives. A data collection was carried out to gather examples of university's tourist initiatives and products and, from that, to recognise themes and tools that are being explored to enable the promotion of the narratives.

The basis for this research emerged from a broader analysis concerned with the contextualisation of the tourist supply of universities worldwide. Considering the data collection's primordial purpose, four criteria were defined to determine the universities to be included:

- Antiquity: Ancient universities appear to be predominant in the supply of cultural tourism experiences and particularly attractive for tourists, because of their tan-

gible and intangible heritage richness (McManus et al., 2021; Woodward, 2013). The oldest universities in the world, as well as by region (Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Europe, Middle East, North America, and Oceania), were considered.

- Reputation/prestige: Reputation and prestige related to the excellence of the educational institution are among the main motivations to visit universities (Albino, 2009; McManus et al., 2021). The top universities in 2020 from three university rankings (QS World University Rankings; Times Higher Education World University Ranking; Shanghai Ranking), as well as the eight Ivy League universities from the United States of America (USA), were considered.
- World Heritage Sites: Being a World Heritage Site frequently implies becoming a tourism brand and/or registering a considerable growth in the volume of visitors (Castillo-Manzano et al., 2021). The five university campuses with the UNESCO label – Monticello and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville (USA), University and Historic Precinct of Alcalá de Henares (Spain), Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas (Venezuela), Central University City Campus of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México – UNAM (Mexico), and University of Coimbra – Alta and Sofia (Portugal) – were analysed.
- The most beautiful/visitable: Empirical research shows that campus beauty and aesthetics are determinant attributes in attracting visitors (e.g., Jaunis et al. (2021) and Mangi et al. (2019)). This criterion was addressed by cross-referencing universities included in lists of reputable online travel sources regarding the most beautiful universities to visit.

Data collection occurred through the consultation of institutional websites, between June and October 2021, from which several examples of social political and minority narratives started to arise. From the list of institutions identified through the four criteria previously mentioned, universities without evidence of tourist promotion on their institutional website were excluded. Forty-eight universities at a global scale were analysed, corresponding to more than 180 university attractions and tourist services. Nevertheless, it should be noted that only a part of the universities (33%) considered showed indications of promoting these types of narratives in their tourist attractions and activities and, consequently, they are evidenced and discussed in the next sections. The consultation of institutional websites was complemented by the inclusion of examples from previous literature and by direct observation in several European universities.

## 4. Findings

The examples of initiatives identified are presented and analysed in this section, by theme.

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#### 4.1. Slavery

The first theme emerges from the literature and concerns slavery on the university campus (Table 1), particularly in the United States of America (USA). During the past two decades, US universities have been increasingly recognising how the institutions and their founders ideologically supported and directly benefitted from colonisation and slavery (Stein, 2016). Besides official apologies, there are institutional efforts for the memorialisation and critical discussion of these issues as an act of reconciliation (Alderman et al., 2016; Stein, 2016), including through tourist products. In fact, the visitation of historical sites of human suffering memorialisation is increasing and aggregates multiple layers of contested historical, cultural meaning and social memory and can be an educational resource (Murtagh et al., 2017).

The case of the University of Virginia (EUA), a World Heritage Site, has been analysed in previous literature (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022; Stein, 2016). The tourist narratives of the university largely evoke its founder, Thomas Jefferson, an enslaver. The previously uncritical celebration of Thomas Jefferson and the history of the institution, that benefited from enslaved work in its construction, has been criticised and challenged by students (Stein, 2016; Woodward & Carnegie, 2020). Carnegie & Woodward (2022) analysed the role of student guides at the University of Virginia as mediators and promoters of dissonant heritage discourses. The institution is encouraging student guides to include those topics on their tours. The university sponsored a brochure entitled “Slavery at the University of Virginia: Visitor’s Guide”, which was developed by students’ initiative. Despite the effort, Stein (2016) presents several critiques of the brochure as an incomplete and benevolent picture of the violence regarding enslaved people on campus. Additionally, the university’s receptiveness and openness to address the topic was not immediate, but rather the result of long-term pressure from the student community.

Similarly, the Princeton University Art Museum developed an interpretative guide that, through a walking tour, enables the visitor to understand in which ways slavery shaped the university campus and its history (Princeton University Art Museum, 2024).

A temporary exhibition was launched at The Fitzwilliam Museum (from 8 September 2023 to 7 January 2024) on the role of the University of Cambridge and its academics in the transatlantic slave trade. The exhibition begins by acknowledging that the museum’s founder inheritance benefited from the slave trade and proceeds to reflect on silenced and untold stories through historic objects and contemporary art (The University of Cambridge, 2024).

#### 4.2. Ethnic stories and aboriginal/indigenous representation

The ethnic stories and aboriginal/indigenous representation theme are recurrent in North American (USA) and Australian universities. Akbar & Sharp (2023) acknowledge Aboriginal Peoples as one of the marginalised groups in society and tourism, as a result of colonisation. On this theme, Carrigan (2014) discusses the relevance of postcolonial approaches to question national and institutional narratives

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**Table 1.** Initiatives related to slavery

<b>Initiative/Topic</b>	<b>Institution (Country)</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b>Slavery at the University of Virginia</b>	University of Virginia (USA)	Various	Various initiatives highlight the role of slavery in the construction of the university.
<b>Art and Slavery at Princeton</b>	University of Princeton (USA)	Interpretative guide	Interpretative printed guide
<b>Black Atlantic: Power, People, Resistance</b>	University of Cambridge (UK)	Temporary exhibition	Initiative that confronts the role of the University of Cambridge and its academics in the transatlantic trade

*Source:* Authors.

that are selective and partial in the way they communicate dissonant heritage and their impact on Indigenous or ethnic minority visitors' groups.

For universities, including tourist narratives related to indigenous representation and displacement allows "campuses an opportunity to decolonise the institution's historical narrative and understand the role institutions may have played in the displacement of Indigenous peoples" (Minthorn & Nelson, 2018, p. 84), even if it is an uncomfortable process. Most Australian institutions acknowledge on their websites the dispossession of Indigenous lands to build the university.

Carnegie & Woodward (2022) referred to the case of student protests in order to remove statues that celebrate individuals linked to colonialism in two universities, the University of Cape Town (South Africa) and the University of Oxford (UK), which is as common act of challenging landscapes of memory (Alderman et al., 2016). In the second case, instead of removing the statue, the institution decided to fund activities that address the issue from a decolonial perspective. Instead of erasing history, a new critical perspective is added to raise awareness on the matter (Knox, 2024).

Considering specific tourist and/or museum initiatives, the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection (University of Virginia, USA) and the Fowler Museum (UCLA, USA) develop several activities, projects and materials. The first one promotes artists residencies for indigenous Australian artists and has courses freely available online (Aboriginal Art 101 and Cultural Appropriation 101). The Fowler Museum is mapping the Indigenous Los Angeles (LA) and has several projects with Indigenous communities ("Carrying our ancestors' home" and "Engaging Lived Religions", for example). At least two Australian universities are collaborating with Aboriginal communities to develop guided and self-guided tours/trails (Table 2).

The universities of the USA are also acknowledging narratives of contemporary ethnic minorities on the university campus, such as African Americans and Asian or Asian Americans (Table 2).

Table 2. Initiatives related to ethnic stories and aboriginal/indigenous representation

Initiative	Institution (Country)	Format	Brief description
<b>Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection</b>	University of Virginia (USA)	Museum collection	Several initiatives for awareness and promotion of Aboriginal voices and narratives
<b>Fowler Museum</b>	UCLA (USA)	Museum collection	Several initiatives for the research and inclusion of Indigenous communities of Los Angeles
<b>African Americans' at the University</b>	University of Virginia (USA)	Guided tour	Guided tour of the campus (only by reservation)
<b>Princeton self-guided trails</b>	University of Princeton (USA)	Self-guided tour (app)	App or printed information for self-guided tour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ African American Life at Princeton</li> <li>▪ Stories of Asians and Asian Americans at Princeton</li> </ul>
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Heritage Trail</b>	Australian National University – ANU (Australia)	Interpretative trail	Trail developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities for self-guided visits
<b>Indigenous Heritage Walk</b>	University of Sydney (Australia)	Guided tour	Guided tour by an Indigenous guide, promoted by the Chau Chak Museum

Source: Authors.

### 4.3. Gender identity and sexual orientation issues

The topic with the most initiatives identified is gender identity and sexual orientation issues. Universities from Europe and North America are exploring the theme through diverse formats and strategies (Table 3).

The majority of the examples focus on approaching the neglected history and (mis)representation of achievements of women in that particular university. The results are concurrent with the patterns identified by Xu (2018) that current research on gender and tourism mostly encompasses women and are conducted in Western contexts.

One way of exposing these issues and to stimulate audiences' awareness is to promote new interpretative and curatorial approaches to previously existent museum collections and heritage attractions (Callihan & Feldman, 2018). This approach is being highly implemented on the initiatives identified (Table 3), as it happens with

the “Queer Antiquities: A museum trail” (University of Cambridge, UK) that added interpretative notes to artefacts about queer narratives. Part of the initiatives, mainly those related to guided tours, are promoted and offered by associations and volunteer groups of academics, as is the case of the Bridging Binaries project (University of Cambridge, UK) and the Rainbow Tours at the University of Vienna (Austria).

**Table 3.** Initiatives related to gender identity and sexual orientation issues

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Institution (Country)</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b>Women at the University of Vienna</b>	University of Vienna (Austria)	Guided tour	Tour of the campus focused on the role of women in the university's history
<b>The Feminine Side of Science</b>	ETH Zurich (Switzerland)	App	Tour of the campus available on app focused on the role of women in the university's history
<b>Princeton self-guided trails</b>	University of Princeton (USA)	Self-guided tour (app)	App or printed information for self-guided tour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Women at Princeton</li> </ul>
<b>History of Women</b>	University of Virginia (USA)	Guided tour	Tour of the campus focused on the role of women in the university's history (only by reservation)
<b>Bridging Binaries</b>	University of Cambridge (UK)	Guided tours	LGBTQ+ tours by volunteers in several university museums
<b>Beyond the Binary</b>	University of Oxford (UK)	Interpretative trail	Interpretative trail at the Pitt Rivers Museum
<b>GLAM Tours</b>	University of Oxford (UK)	Self-guided tours	App or printed information for self-guided tour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Out in Oxford</li> <li>▪ Shout out for women</li> </ul>
<b>Rainbow Tours</b>	University of Vienna (Austria)	Guided tour	Tour of the campus by volunteers (only available during June or by reservation)
<b>Queer Antiquities: A museum trail</b>	University of Cambridge (UK)	Interpretative trail	Interpretative trail at the Museum of Classical Archaeology
<b>Women at Yale</b>	University of Yale (USA)	Self-guided tour	Self-guided tour of the campus with information and map of interest points
<b>The feminine side of the university</b>	University of Coimbra (Portugal)	Guided tour	One-time initiative for collaborators of the university

Source: Authors.

Sometimes, these themes are included in more subtle ways, such as the reference and reflection about the year women started to be accepted in a certain institution

during a broader guided tour of the university, or the installation of the first women's busts in the Long Room (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland) in 2023.

#### 4.4. Mental health

Two of the initiatives identified are spaces with the mission of giving voice to and of creating awareness regarding mental health issues (Table 4).

Following the perspective of giving individual and collective voices to the marginalised groups (Akbar & Sharp, 2023; Kalsås, 2015), the Dax Centre (University of Melbourne, Australia) only exhibits artists who experienced mental health issues, to raise awareness of this topic and to facilitate the integration of these individuals as producers of tourist or cultural products. Lived experience narratives contribute for stigma reduction, mental health literacy and as inspiration for recovery processes (Yeo et al., 2021). The Casa da Dona Yayá (USP, Brazil) describes itself as a 'place of memory for gender and mental health issues', in honour of Dona Yayá who lived there secluded for forty years after being diagnosed with mental illnesses.

Table 4. Initiatives related to mental health issues

Initiative	Institution (Country)	Format	Brief description
<b>The Dax Centre</b>	University of Melbourne (Australia)	Art gallery	Art gallery that exhibits artists that experience(d) mental health issues
<b>Casa da Dona Yayá</b>	USP (Brazil)	Museum; interpretative centre	House museum focused on mental health awareness

Source: Authors.

#### 4.5. Other social and territorial marginalised groups

Several museums from the universities of Oxford (UK) and Pennsylvania (USA) are promoting projects that put (forced) immigrants and refugees in the centre of the mediation between visitors and museum artefacts (Table 5). This type of approach might be particularly interesting for university collections and objects related to the migrants' cultural background that were "obtained under dubious circumstances" (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022, p. 687) and to showcase plural perspectives on (problematic and/or with a European-based perspective) representations of cultures in ethnographic museums (Kalsås, 2015). Similar initiatives in tourism, mainly in the hospitality sector, show that the creation of opportunities for social interaction between refugees and the host community helps the integration of the former (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

The example of Casa da Dona Yayá relates directly with the component (5) – Providing opportunities for new places to be on the tourism map – of Scheyvens and Biddulph's framework for inclusive tourism, as the institution enables the integration

of lower socio-economic neighbourhoods near the university on the tourism map through guided tours.

**Table 5.** Initiatives related to other social and territorial marginalised groups

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Institution (Country)</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b>Multaka</b>	University of Oxford (UK)	Mediation project	Guided tours by forced immigrants to create a platform for cultural dialogue and reinterpretation of artefacts
<b>Global Guided Tours</b>	University of Pennsylvania (USA)	Mediation project	Guided tours by immigrants and refugees at the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
<b>Casa da Dona Yayá</b>	USP (Brazil)	Guided tours	Guided tours within socio-economic disadvantaged neighbourhoods

*Source:* Authors.

#### 4.6. Acknowledging socio-cultural diversity within political territories

The sixth theme is similar to the outputs of the previous one regarding collections originally with a European-based and predominant perspective presented with different “eyes”, but this time in the perspective of dominant powers and narratives within a geographically and politically delimited territory.

It is frequent for the narratives of a place to crystallise and intensify stereotypes and a homogeneous, majoritarian image of a community that is, most of the time, multicultural (Rey, 2020; Thakur et al., 2023). In this regard, the project Enlaces ‘links’ in English) promotes the diversification of interpretations and meanings assigned to university museum objects that are related to national history and culture through the mediation role of students from different regions of Mexico (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Initiatives related to acknowledging socio-cultural diversity within political territories

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Institution (Country)</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b>Enlaces</b>	UNAM (Mexico)	Mediation project	Mediation of exhibitions by students from different regions of Mexico

*Source:* Authors.

#### 4.7. Challenge and critical thinking about dominant powers

The last theme is concerned with initiatives related (i) to remembering past students’ movements of challenging and positioning against political dominant powers and (ii) to the present role of universities’ organisms in promoting discussion about provocative themes through exhibitions and other types of interpretative ef-

forts, which are directly linked to the component (3) – Challenging dominant power relations of Scheyvens & Biddulph (2018) inclusive tourism framework.

Three initiatives that concur to preserve a social memory that honours students' efforts to challenge dominant powers were identified (Table 7). The Australian example refers to students' protests against the Vietnam War, the German example is related to the memorialisation of student martyrs that opposed the Nazi government, and the Portuguese example remembers the role of students in ending the period of authoritarian government in Portugal. From a contemporary perspective, the role of student guides in approaching slavery narratives at the University of Virginia (USA) or the protests to remove colonial statues at the universities of Cape Town (South Africa) and Oxford (UK) are also examples of critical thinking and action against dominant powers or institutional narratives.

In relation to exhibitions with provocative themes, one particular initiative was identified during this preliminary collection of examples: "Defaced! Money, Conflict, Protest" at the Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge, UK). The researchers believe that further (more profound) search on past temporary exhibitions in university museums may reveal more examples.

**Table 7.** Initiatives related to challenge and critical thinking about dominant powers

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Institution (Country)</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b>Graffiti Tunnel</b>	University of Sydney (Australia)	Permanent installation	Attraction of art expression started by students as a protest
<b>Weiße Rose Pavement Memorial</b>	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (Germany)	Memorial	Memorial of a group of students executed by peacefully protesting against the Nazi government.
<b>Student activism of the 1960s as heritage</b>	University of Coimbra (Portugal)	Self-guided tour (app)	One of the interpretative paths available on the self-guided tour of the university
<b>Defaced! Money, Conflict, Protest</b>	University of Cambridge (UK)	Temporary exhibition	Temporary exhibition focused on money as a vehicle of protest.

*Source:* Authors.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Overall, this paper provides a broad reflection and agenda for future research in social political and minority narratives in universities' tourist attractions, which is an underexplored topic in tourism and, more precisely, in campus-based tourism. In terms of managerial implications, the identification of good practices, themes

and formats/tools to develop tourist activities, as well as some ethical concerns to consider, might help other university managers in developing strategies adapted to their institution's reality.

The results enabled to identify several themes that are being explored by universities regarding social political and minority issues through (or associated with) tourist activities: (1) slavery, (2) ethnic stories and indigenous representation, (3) gender identity and sexual orientation, (4) mental health, (5) other social and territorial marginalised groups, (6) socio-cultural diversity within political territories, and (7) challenge to dominant powers.

The marginalisation of groups and minority dynamics are highly influenced by the complexity of political, economic and sociocultural contexts and territorialities (Kalsås, 2015). As assumed by Scheyvens & Biddulph (2018, p. 592), “who is marginalized will vary from place to place”. Therefore, the results show that universities from different geographies focus on different social issues and minority narratives. For example, gender identity and sexual orientation narratives are mainly approached in European and North American universities. Considering the impact of colonisation and Indigenous dispossession of lands on these territories, ethnic stories and indigenous representation are predominant in USA and Australian universities.

The interpretation tools and products that are being used/created to materialise the discourses and narratives identified are diverse: sporadic guided tours, autonomous tours (supported by printed brochures, signalised trails, apps, and others), interpretative centres, exhibitions and curatorial work in university museums and galleries, educational tools and courses, talks, roundtables and open spaces for debate, and others. In many of the presented cases, there was no need for massive investment in new facilities to display the narratives, which should encourage more related projects. Most of them are based on creativity and on the (mostly voluntary and not paid) inclusion of interested and/or represented communities and groups regarding the interpretation of pre-existent university's museum collections and also by unveiling forgotten/devalued stories of the institution's history. These tools and products enable to evidence narratives in the campus landscape that were silenced or forgotten in the dominant (authorised and institutional) heritage discourses (Adu-Ampong, 2023). However, most of the examples identified were/are temporary or low-profile initiatives that might have low impact and adherence. That can be contra balanced with more coverage in the institution's main platforms (website and social media), in the regional and local media, by collaborating with influencers (in some cases, students from the university) and by inviting target groups in the local community (schools, associations, minority groups).

The role of students in pressuring the institutions to take action and to change their agendas and discourses, acting as mediators between institutional narratives and heritage and the university's visitors, and creating their initiatives, previously discussed by Carnegie & Woodward (2022), was evidenced in several examples of initiatives. That shows that, generally, universities are integrating these themes in their tourist (and institutional) discourses as a response to external stimulus and not proactively, which is not new for the historical dynamic between institution and

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academic community. Academics (and, now, the general society) are the ones with the power and interest to pressure these themes into the agenda.

In terms of benefits for the institution, previous research highlights that the promotion of social political and minority narratives through tourist products in universities enables the institution to enhance its (positive) brand image and, in some cases, to address controversial heritage in a soft but critical manner. Also, the promotion of spaces for critical reflection on those matters responds to the three missions of universities – education, research and public outreach – in a meaningful way (Albino, 2009; Carnegie & Woodward, 2022; Stein, 2016). Nevertheless, some warnings and concerns for a proper, responsible presentation of the narratives are being outlined by academics, as this approach is not clearly being adopted in many cases. For instance, universities must consider that their cultural and tourist activities are consumed by different publics and the way narratives are provided (information, discourse and tools/channels) should be adapted to the characteristics and needs of each group. Furthermore, while developing and providing content, the institution should be aware that the narratives will be consumed by the minority groups represented (insider perspective) and by other individuals (outsider perspective) that might not have a previous context of the issue. In that sense, it would be relevant (i) to identify the target publics when developing projects, (ii) to monitor if and how these (or which) publics are being reached and, finally, (iii) how visitors/participants are experiencing and reflecting on the discourses presented.

That unveils (an)other question(s): Who is promoting and pushing forward the initiative? Are these initiatives being developed with the knowledge and collaboration of the represented groups? Are these meaningful, critical, self-representative and research-based discourses or shallow attempts to show 'effort' and a contemporary, democratic image (maybe façade?) of these institutions? Firstly, in relation to the purpose of the actions undertaken, the initiatives developed by universities, primarily those related to their contested legacies, must be analysed from a critical perspective (Stein, 2016). Some authors warn against the instrumentalisation and crystallisation of the narratives for the benefit of the institutions (Carnegie & Woodward, 2022).

Secondly, it is important for the display of social minority and political narratives in university attractions to be accompanied and, ideally preceded, of research efforts that enable a meaningful discussion of the themes and promote public and students' awareness (Stein, 2016). Equally important is the transition from a hegemony of postcolonial perspectives to also embracing decolonial perspectives on the interpretation and discussion of university museum collections and legacies, meaning that narratives and knowledge, in general, are produced and disseminated by (or in partnership with) the minority groups instead of by the dominant powers, as referred by Chambers & Buzinde (2015). This relates to the process of stepping aside from superficial (mis)representations from the perspective of the dominant powers to meaningful self-representations (Alderman et al., 2016; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018) and promoting equality of representation through different viewpoints (Carrigan, 2014; Knox, 2024). It is suggested for universities to take advantage of their critical mass and to collaborate with researchers and internal and external associative groups and/or minority communities that work or are directly involved with the topics

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outlined in order to create critical, self-representative discourses through initiatives that have continuity and community involvement.

If that path is created, for the internal community and external publics, these initiatives will, ideally, provide an increasing sense of belonging, security, representation and self-esteem of the represented groups and the visitor or consumer of the experience will be instigated to critically reflect about social political issues. Additionally, as Biddulph & Scheyvens (2018) refer to, inclusive tourism and, in this particular case, self-representation of social minority narratives enable marginalised groups to gain more control over the discourses disseminated about them and to promote more sociocultural understanding.

The European examples, in particular, approach themes mainly from an historical perspective (for example, the role of women in the university's scientific history and the students' challenge to dominant powers in the past) apparently without creating bridges to critically understand and question contemporary social and political issues. With the exception of the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, no examples of contemporary major European social-political issues (such as forced immigration and refugees, and socio-economic disadvantaged groups) are integrated in the tourist narratives. Considering the antiquity and origin of universities in Europe and the relevance of the navigations from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century onwards for the scientific development of universities, but also for their economic and political empowerment, there is a lack of acknowledgement of these institutions' dissonant colonial legacies. It is fundamental for the European university's problematic heritage to be the basis for a dialogue between past and present, in order to understand and warn against current risks and to assume social responsibility.

The current global social and geopolitical context – (military, economic, information, etc.) wars, increased violence and discrimination against minority groups, threat and loss of freedom of expression, increasing discrepancy between rich and poor – is both a barrier (and even a threat) and a loud request for universities, as pillars of innovation and critical free thinking, to take a louder voice in these matters, to educate and raise awareness among different audiences, to instigate cultural dialogue and social equity, and to assume a critical role of challenging (certain) dominant powers. Tourism might be a soft, flexible tool for universities to disseminate messages to a broader public and reach those goals.

## 6. Research limitations and further research

As an exploratory research that emerged from a broader investigation on the topic of cultural tourism in universities, two main limitations are contemplated in the research. Firstly, the criteria for the selection of universities to be integrated were not defined considering the relevance of social political and minority narratives. Secondly, the results are mostly based on descriptive information provided by the universities on their institutional website, with a lack of more profound considerations possibly originated from on-site data collection and from the inclusion of stakeholders' perspectives through qualitative techniques.

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Several directions and recommendations for further research are presented to address the limitations of this particular research and to deepen the academic reflection on an underexplored theme. Firstly, it is recommended to explore the perspective of different stakeholders – tourism managers and museum curators, university representatives, students, visitors, and groups represented within the narratives displayed and/or explored – through interviews and focus groups. Some topics that might be relevant to include in those meetings are: (i) (favourable or unfavourable) perspectives on the relevance of addressing certain topics, (ii) inclusion of stakeholders in the process, (iii) (mis)representation of minorities and social groups, (iv) perceived benefits, and (v) how to reach the target audiences.

Secondly, to define criteria for the selection and analysis of universities' attractions and tourist supply aligned more so with the topic of social political and minority issues and narratives. For instance, to identify universities with particularly controversial elements of their history and/or located within geographies in which certain political and social issues are current major concerns.

Finally, to analyse and to compare more profoundly disparities in terms of themes, approaches and tools privileged between universities of different geographies and cultural contexts.

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