CITIES, TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Cities, Tourism and Sustainability
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ABSTRACT

Although beaches and mountains may often come to mind when thinking of tourism, the world's cities are among its most important tourism attractions. There are many reasons for this which will be outlined briefly in the presentation. Furthermore, places that are good to live in are also places that are good to visit for both residents and visitors are looking for similar things: a safe and healthy environment, efficient transportation, lively cultural expressions, good shopping and so on. Thus, at first sight there is compatibility between the interests of residents and tourists and they can reinforce each other. However, tourism can also be regarded as an agent of urbanization for tourists need a place to live, if only temporarily, and are users of scarce resources such as water and energy, and generate more waste per capita than residents. Thus, they place increased stress on infrastructure of all kinds.

Tourism is a major form of global change and is also impacted by other forces of global change. Many of these forces are concentrated in cities where they are superimposed upon one another: population growth, globalization, environmental change, including climate change etc., creating pressing multi-dimensional problems that are focused on cities.

Sustainable development has been proposed, particularly since the publication of "Our Common Future" in 1987, as an enlightened approach to the future and it has been enshrined in much legislation at a wide variety of scales but it has proven to be a difficult concept to work with and operationalize. Single sector approaches, such as sustainable tourism, are focused too narrowly to guide the move towards sustainability adequately. The promotion of sustainable livelihoods is an important refinement but, to date, it has been applied mostly in small poor communities in the developing world and its wider applicability remains to be explored and justified.

Fortunately, urban tourism has some attributes that make it potentially more sustainable than many other forms of tourism: it is less seasonal, many activities are undertaken indoors, it is supported by substantial business and VFR markets, and residents from the broader region and further afield are needed to support many of the high-order functions that are concentrated in cities. At the same time, many cities are located in coastal locations and are, therefore, likely to be exposed to a full range of problems associated with climate change, such as more and more extreme events (such as storms and heat waves), coastal erosion, floods and droughts, and so on. These will be all the more challenging in that the infrastructure available to deal with these situations is often antiquated and designed for an earlier age.

Leaving aside questions of costs and benefits, technical and financial feasibility, political will and so on, at and at the risk of oversimplification, I suggest that questions of urban sustainability, of which tourism is a part, can be subsumed under two major headings: infrastructure and governance. Much infrastructure is out of sight (since it is often under the ground) and often out of mind until it fails, but questions of water and energy supply, waste disposal, drainage, as well as transportation, are fundamental to the operation of urban areas, including tourism. Innovations in governance will be need to deal with the complex multi-sectoral problems that will occur.

Keywords: Sustainable development; urban tourism; infrastructure; governance

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STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

- CITIES AS CENTRES OF TOURISM
- URBAN TOURISM RESEARCH
- WHY DO CITIES WANT TOURISTS?
- SUSTAINABILITY
- TOURISM AND GLOBAL CHANGE
- SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
CITIES AS CENTRES OF TOURISM

CITIES IN ADVANTAGEOUS POSITION AS CENTRES OF TOURISM

1. Possess high order functions (functions with high thresholds and ranges)
2. Cities as centres of demand – distinction between recreation and tourism diminishing – combined demand
3. Cities as nodal centres – foci of transportation (flows of people, goods, services, money, ideas)
4. Cities both destinations and gateways
5. Significance of VFR market
6. Much business travel includes a leisure component (MICE)
7. Lower seasonality than most other destinations
CHARACTER OF CITIES CHANGING

Large hotels of growing importance

Construction of wide range of facilities with partial tourism function

Demand and supply increased synergistically

Economic structure of cities changing and parts of cities changing (clusters)

Results:

- Urban tourism more recognized
- Tourism in cities dominated by variety (main attraction?)
- Facilities rarely produced solely for tourists
- Multi-functional city (and specific sites) serve multi-motivated users; cities multi-sold
URBAN TOURISM DESTINATION RESEARCH

- GAP BETWEEN IMAGE AND REALITY
  - Cities among most important destinations (numbers of visitors and expenditures)
  - Cities cosmopolitan – tourists blend in

- LIMITED DIALOGUE BETWEEN URBANISTS AND TOURISM RESEARCHERS
  - Former ignored tourism
  - Latter focused on coastal resorts
  - Urban tourism long neglected

- URBAN TOURISM EMERGING AS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINCTIVE FIELD
  - European and, more recently, North American focus
  - Beginning to get more attention in Asia
  - Tourism researchers not leaders – globalization, creativity, heritage etc.
  - Growing diversity of topics
URBAN TOURISM TOPICS AND TRENDS

- Importance of urban tourism emphasized when suddenly curtailed e.g. SARS, Beijing environmental quality

- As traditional industrial functions declined, regeneration sought through tourism – seen as growth ‘industry’

- Multiple topics: downtown renewal, urban reconstruction, waterfront rehabilitation, culture industries, conventions, shopping, urban images, place marketing and city branding (not all tourism, but partly tourism)

- In information age, only vibrant cities and high quality environments will attract footloose industries and highly-skilled workers (creative cities movement)

- Similar attributes attract residents and tourists
  - high quality environment, vibrant economy and culture, efficient transportation etc.
THEMES IN URBAN TOURISM

- SHOPPING
  - Tourism activity
  - Expenditure

- CULTURE AND HERITAGE
  - Cultural capital
  - Role of public, private and voluntary sectors

- URBAN REGENERATION
  - Industrial
  - Waterfront

- IMAGE CREATION
  - Including place creation and place marketing

- SPECIAL EVENTS
IMPLICATIONS

- DIFFICULT TO ISOLATE TOURISM
  - Resources, facilities, tourists and other users
  - Individual cities from other cities or regional and national contexts

- DIFFERENT ‘CITIES’ MAY EXIST IN ONE CITY: tourist city, shopping city, culture city, historic city, gay city etc.

- URBAN ENVIRONMENT A “LEISURE PRODUCT”

- CITIES ‘SOLD’ LIKE OTHER PRODUCTS
ANALYSIS

Tourism facilities and supporting elements

Inventories (length v breadth, quantity v. quality)

Nodes, areas and routes
URBAN TOURISM AND LEISURE SETTINGS

Primary elements

Activity place
- Cultural facilities
- Entertainment facilities
- Events and festivities
- Exhibitions, craftworks

Leisure setting
- Physical setting
  - Historical pattern
  - Monuments
- Art objects
- Parks, green spaces
- Waterfronts, canals, harbor
- Social/cultural characteristics
  - Liveliness of the place
  - Language, local customs, folklore
  - Way of life

Secondary elements
- Catering facilities
- Shopping facilities
- Markets

Conditional elements
- Accessibility, parking facilities
- Touristic infrastructure (information bureau, signposts, guides)
Figure 4: Diagram illustrating the relationship between Functional Mix and Morphology, with categories of Monuments, Places, and Complexes, and subcategories of No Tourist Functions, Mixed: Tourism +, and Monofunctional Tourism.
Figure 2

Breadth

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<th>Other......</th>
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Figure 2

G. Wall
Quality versus Variety

Figure 3
WHY DO CITIES WANT TOURISTS?

- TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF RESIDENTS

- DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS HAVE DIFFERENT ANSWERS
  - END IN ITSELF
  - MEANS TO ADDRESS OTHER PROBLEMS
  - Jobs, incomes, taxes
  - Other reasons e.g
    - Growth ‘industry’ (in spite of fluctuations)
    - Attract business investment
    - Support heritage, open space and natural areas
    - Supplementary market for culture, sport etc.
    - Possible use of declining industrial areas
    - Component of waterfront redevelopment etc.
IMPLICATIONS

- TOURISM PLANNING ABOUT MORE THAN TOURISM
  - “Ends” should be addressed directly
  - Tourism planning about residents as well as visitors

- SPECIFICATION OF CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
  - Goals should be specified in terms of “end” not “means”
  - Not simply in terms of number of visitors

- IF GOALS EXPRESSED INAPPROPRIATELY PLAN LIKELY TO BE INAPPROPRIATE TOO!
SUSTAINABILITY

- SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
  - WIDELY ACCEPTED BUT OF LIMITED PRACTICAL VALUE (Without further development)

- SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
  - TOO NARROW TO ENCOMPASS COMPLEXITY

- SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS
  - MORE TANGIBLE BUT YET TO BE APPLIED TO URBAN AREAS

- OTHER APPROACHES?
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Figure 1. Sustainable rural livelihood: a framework for analysis. Adapted from Scoones, 1998, p.4
TOURISM, CITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY

- TOURISM IS A FORM OF URBANIZATION
  - Temporary ‘homes’
  - Uses land, labour, capital, water, electricity, wastes

- TOURISM IS A FORM OF GLOBALIZATION
  - Largest human movement in history (with massive transfer of goods, money and ideas etc.)

- GLOBALIZATION FORMS SUPERIMPOSED upon each other, especially in cities, many of which in coastal locations

- CONSIDER GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE
  - Locational change in greenhouse production
  - Importance of the travel phase
CLIMATE CHANGE

■ URBAN TOURISM RELATIVELY RESILIENT
  ■ Large local market
  ■ Attracts diverse market segments
  ■ Many indoor attractions
  ■ Less seasonal etc.

■ BUT

■ Increased temperatures (heat waves, energy)
■ Rising seal levels
■ More extreme weather (storm magnitude and frequency)
■ Changes to hydrological cycle (tourism and other sectors)
QUESTIONS?

- IS TOURISM A SUSTAINABLE ACTIVITY?
- COULD THE POLICY RESPONSES BE MORE DAMAGING TO TOURISM THAN CLIMATE CHANGE ITSELF?
SUMMARY

- Cities and tourism complex
- Tourism but one function in cities
- Not easy to undertake research in urban settings
- Multiple overlapping tourism roles: gateways, staging posts, destinations, sources of demand
- Complexity gives rise to both challenges and opportunities, practically and in research
- Important to create clear image out of heterogeneity and market city as a product
- Tourism is a “means” rather than an “end”
- Tourism planning about residents as well as tourists
- Environmental issues create challenges
CONCLUSIONS

- IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS / GOVERNANCE
  - Roles of tourism and other sectors
  - Both complementary and competitive
  - Varies from place to place

- CRITICAL ROLE OF INFRASTRUCTURE
  - Much old – decaying and built to old standards
  - Much hidden from view
  - Much related to water and waste
  - Infrastructure shared