

The Complementary Role of Urban Design and Tourism Planning in Tourism Destination Management and Development

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the collaborative role of urban design and tourism planning in tourism destination management and development. It makes the case that there is a strong rationale for tourism planners and urban designers to work together to create better quality urban environments for both residents as well as tourists. It recognizes that ensuring a fit between urban design and tourism is a difficult challenge given the nature of many bureaucracies, the complexity of dealing with multi-stakeholder networks and systems. In partial response to this challenge the authors explore the concept of placemaking as an ideal framework to understand the urban design/tourism interface. It examines various dimensions of placemaking including carrying capacity, heritage resource conservation, protecting the sense of place, economic development, urban design as a technique and set of ideas for positioning a city, experience development and the provision of infrastructure. The article is exploratory in nature and is designed to encourage debate and conversation between urban designers and tourism planners.

Key words: Urban design, tourism planning, placemaking, destination management

INTRODUCTION

Within the urban design and planning literature tourism is rarely examined in any detail. Even within the larger societal context very often tourism is seen as a separate activity most often left to the private sector to influence and direct. However, increasingly there is growing recognition within urban management – of which urban design is an essential element – of the need to consider tourism both in terms of its potential to bring about economic, cultural, social and environmental improvement.

Some argue that urban design and tourism are quite separate areas of activity with marginal mutual areas of interest and practice. This can be seen as a reasonable conclusion if tourism is seen as largely a private sector concern with a focus on hotels and restaurants. It is only with a wider understanding of the field of tourism that it becomes evident that urban design is an essential element of helping cities to successfully meet the needs of their residents as well as

tourists. Urban design is slowly being seen as an important dimension of ensuring success as a tourist destination given the concerns that many tourism planners have about the physical qualities of cities and districts, inadequate infrastructure, conflicts between residents and visitors on the use of space, etc.

While urban design has a larger mandate than the aesthetics of the physical environment Richard Florida, author of a number of books has identified that “The aesthetic dimension-the beauty of the place-is critical. The cities with the deepest and truest hold on people have long been those with a strong aesthetic dimension.” He talks of Amsterdam, Istanbul, Portland and many other cities. Their special qualities he would argue are what really draw people in not just tourists but residents themselves (Florida, 2004 and 2009). Another strong voice for the aesthetic dimensions of the city is that of Charles Landry author of *The Art of City-Making* and *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* (Landry, 2006 and 2008). What is important about the work of Florida and Landry is that they tie a number of urban attributes to the creation of successful living environments and provide a strong discussion point for the urban design/tourism partnership.

The article will demonstrate that by looking at commonalities as well as case studies urban design and tourism make a perfect partnership. One can start to understand the partnership by looking at common concerns and objectives of urban designers as well as tourism planners including the following:

- Comprehensive understanding of consumer and user needs;
- Strive to create unique and memorable experiences;
- Look for creative solutions to spatial problems;
- Work in a collaborative environment to achieve objectives;
- Concern for sustainability;
- Recognize the importance of good quality infrastructure for both residents as well as tourists;
- Sensitive to the importance of the intangible values of residents and tourists;
- Deal with issues of image and identity.

What is surprising is that these commonalities are rarely reflected in the academic literature or in public or private sector practice and most certainly not in education and academic research. Very few planning and urban design academic programs deal with tourism as an important phenomenon and few tourism programs consider the urban design dimensions of the tourism policy and planning process. This lack of consideration within academic programs is surprising given such seminal works such as Inskeep’s *Tourism Planning* and Gunn’s *Vacationscape* and *Tourism Planning* that have advocated the need for an integrated planning and design approach (Inskeep 1991, Gunn 1988 and 1994).

Given the significant differences in urbanization and rates of growth between Western and Asian economies this article focuses on the Asian situation. This article is divided into two parts. The first part of the article is designed to provide an understanding of the challenge of achieving responsible urban tourism, and urban design through a brief overview of the nature of urban tourism and assessing the Asian urban design and tourism context. The second part of the article is concerned with understanding the partnership and areas of common interest. Where relevant the article identifies areas for further academic and applied research.

PART 1: THE CONTEXT OF URBAN DESIGN AND TOURISM

Part 1 is concerned with providing an introduction to the “playing field” where tourism and urban design operate.

The Urban Tourism Challenge

The authors, amongst others, have found the tourism and design literature documenting issues of urban tourism planning, urban design and tourism planning to be inadequate. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognized this inadequacy some time ago and in order to assist in the debate on urban tourism and urban management sponsored three international conferences in Kobe, Shanghai and Buson on the management of urban tourism and produced a monograph *Managing Metropolitan Tourism: An Asian Perspective* in order to begin to meet the knowledge and practice gap that presently exists (UNWTO, 2010). The lead author of this article was the primary author of that publication.

Most tourism professionals and academics recognize there exists a large number of public as well as private activities, all very much involved in the delivery of tourism services and products for tourists. These activities, managed by a wide range of stakeholders, involve large-scale international hospitality companies to locally owned small and medium-sized enterprises, the residents of tourism destinations to the international visitor, politicians and NGOs dealing with a wide-ranging set of social, environmental and cultural concerns. Tourism planning and development has become much more sophisticated in understanding how these various interest groups need to work together to deliver quality tourism that meets a number of objectives including:

- Providing profit and value to an enterprise’s shareholders;
- Supporting regional or local economic development;
- Helping to diversify the economy;
- Helping to increase income levels of residents;
- Increasing tax revenues;
- Generating new employment opportunities;
- Ensuring that the well-being and health of the residents are improved;
- Promoting greater cultural awareness of an area and its people;
- Undertaking stewardship of environment and tourism resources;
- Ensuring that tourism development does not destroy the future basis for sustainable tourism development;
- Furthering political objectives;
- Controlling and guiding the development process associated with tourism.

Attempting to meet this long list of objectives requires a sophisticated approach to decision-making and an ability to balance off a series of interests in what at times can be seen to be competing objectives. The tourism industry and most significantly governments and nongovernmental organizations have discovered the power of tourism to create economic development, meet a range of social, cultural and environmental goals and in fact act as the transforming force within many urban areas. While there have been a number of publications and articles written about the transforming dimension of tourism a publication prepared by

various organizations, Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 provides a unique perspective on the power of tourism. In that publication the UNWTO Organization Secretary-General is quoted as saying “This report highlights the crucial role tourism plays in empowering women politically, socially and economically” (UN, 2011). Another UN report makes a strong case between poverty reduction and tourism further expanding the potential of tourism as a force for change (Jamieson, 2003).

This discussion has attempted to identify that tourism and its associated activities have moved beyond a concern for hotels and restaurants to an area of intervention dealing with a wide range of urban issues. When this expanded mandate is combined with the fact that tourism and its associated activities is either the largest or second-largest industry in the world and employs a significant portion of many countries’ population, tourism must be seen as a major force that should be carefully considered for its ability to increase the quality of life in many tourism destinations.

Distressingly in many destinations (destinations can be entire cities, sections of cities or even specific attractions) the lack of planning and design controls has resulted in haphazard development. A lack of design and development controls coupled with rapid growth have led to destinations increasingly being faced with a wide range of problems which directly impact their competitive nature.

With the rapid rise of tourism there has been a pattern of increased air pollution caused by the intensive use of vehicles for tourism/recreation-related mobility, pollution of water and marine ecosystems due to recreational navigation and peaks in the generation of solid and liquid wastes. It has been documented that tourism facilities are responsible for substantial increases in the consumption of fossil fuels for heating and electricity due to the visitors’ rising quality expectations for services and facilities. Poorly planned and managed tourism destinations disturb birds feeding habitats and wildlife, cause land erosion and damage to vegetation which leads to erosion in ecologically sensitive areas.

Urban tourism therefore can be seen as both providing opportunities for cities to achieve their full potential while at the same time if poorly managed and designed pose a threat impacting many dimensions of the urban condition.

The Asian Urban Design and Tourism Context

Given this understanding of the complexity of tourism in urban areas it is important to briefly understand the “playing field” in which both of these areas of activity occur. What is interesting is that in both the public and private industry debate there is increasing recognition of the importance of cities in the overall development of many countries. At MIPIM, the world’s leading annual real estate event, the Lord Mayor of London highlighted the fact that the future of the world lies in cities (AFP, 2011). Increasingly there is recognition of the power of cities in helping to shape not only national but international economies and social systems. Many are predicting that the rate of growth and change that has been experienced to date will pale in comparison to the surge in urban development that will occur over the next 40 years. Since many countries have identified tourism as a major pillar of economic and social development tourism becomes an essential element in guiding the urban development process with urban design as an important complementary area of intervention.

In Asia, many countries are in the very early stages of development and simply lack the financial and human resources to provide basic infrastructure and services. They also lack the capacity and experience in managing urban areas let alone tourism development. One must recognize that corruption often distorts decision-making processes and siphons off much-needed financial capacity. There are also bureaucracies in place which are ill-suited to dealing with the complexity of managing urban areas. Other dimensions of the urban challenge are illustrated in Figure 1. There are even more factors that could be included but the objective in this discussion is to illustrate the magnitude and complexity of the environment within which tourism and urban design must operate.



Fig. 1: *Asian Urban Challenges (Source: Walter Jamieson).*

Within urban planning and design it is commonly felt that cities are simply a platform supporting different types of tourism attractions and the role of planning and design is to provide the necessary transportation infrastructure to link these attractions and in some cases create tourism districts. However, those involved in tourism planning and development have long recognized that in many situations the cities themselves are the attraction. Consider Paris, Venice, London, Bangkok and the images and drawing power they have in their own right. Very often the tourist is motivated to visit cities for their overall ambience, identity, quality of life, diversity, intangible heritage and so forth. While there can be no argument that visitors are motivated to visit various elements of the city (museums, parks, historic districts) they are looking for a package of attributes that a city offers and that creates memories and opportunities for self development.

Increasingly the visitor is seeking experiences that are authentic, self-fulfilling, memorable, personal, involve all the senses, and make a connection on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level. Urban designers working with tourism experts need to refine their ability to understand new visitors and respond to them accordingly. While often the very elements that make a city unique and interesting for the tourists are unplanned and not the result of design activity there is increasing evidence that in order for these crucial elements to be maintained and protected planning and design must be introduced within the overall tourism management process.

In summing up this section it is useful to look at a November 2003 publication from the World Bank Institute, in which Jeffrey Sachs talks about three distinct policy dimensions that must be addressed in Asian cities: urban planning, an urban development strategy and urban

governance. While there is an ever present dialogue on the role of the market in helping to guide the future of urban areas, Sachs among others has argued that there is an essential role for the public sector to help structure and direct urban development. This is particularly true of urban design as part of the “need for conscious and articulated development strategies” on the part of the public sector. If the tourism potential and challenges of urban areas are to be effectively dealt with, interconnected approaches to urban planning, urban design, public policy and responsible urban governance must be adopted. A selected set of dimensions of achieving this interconnection is explored in the next section.

PART TWO: THE TOURISM AND URBAN DESIGN INTERFACE

The second part of the article is concerned with first understanding the role of tourism and urban design with an integrated approach to overall urban management. This is especially relevant to understand the role that tourism and urban design in what at times seem competing entities for resources and attention and then examines the concept of place making where urban design and tourism have common areas of concern.

Tourism and Urban Design within an Integrated Urban Management Structure

The literature on urban management is filled with calls for integrated approaches to managing urban areas. These integrated approaches have been called a number of things from corporate urban planning to urban environmental management but in each case the objective is to ensure that the various activities are integrated into a final plan and set of policies. When one considers the various dimensions of urban management, as illustrated in Figure 2 the complexity becomes increasingly evident.



Fig. 2: *Urban Management Dimensions (Source: Walter Jamieson).*

As many practitioners and academics have discovered achieving any form of public and private sector integration at the urban scale is extremely difficult because of budgetary and bureaucratic constraints, lack of innovative and creative thinking, protection of turf, etc. Possibly a better understanding of how particular areas of intervention can effectively work together can help to foster a wider scale of integration.

Possibly Charles Landry’s concept of the creative bureaucrats may help to begin create more effective structures for implementing urban change. “Creative bureaucrats” in Landry’s

lexicon are high-level functionaries skilled at countering rigidities in their organizations and opening them up to more information. Although people tend to use the word *bureaucracies* in a pejorative sense, they are necessary for coordinating efficient action across complex systems. Landry points out that bureaucracies have gotten a bad name because they have a tendency to become self-reinforcing, reliant on compartmentalized expertise and unable to accommodate fresh information. This rigidity can be broken up only by creative individuals who know how to operate inside the structure; finding ways to support them has become one of Landry’s defining missions” (Helgesen, 2010). Looking for better connections between urban design and tourism planning can be seen as a start to put into place these creative bureaucracies.

It is useful to consider the response of the tourism community to deal with the urban challenges discussed in this article. Both actual practice and much of the literature has concentrated on better understanding and creating destination management models where usually all elements of the destination are considered as part of the overall process of dealing with tourism. In many cases these destination management organizations are at one level at least creative bureaucracies. They bring together a number of stakeholders attempting to tie together a range of planning, design, economic, marketing and branding activities. In its simplest form the destination management process has the following dimensions as illustrated in Figure 3.

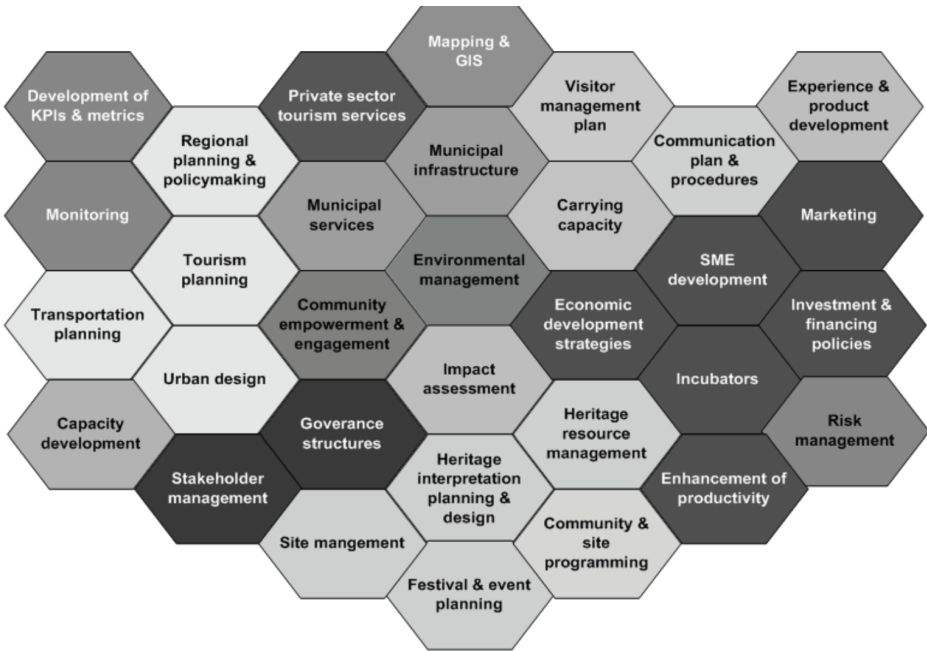


Fig. 3: *Dimensions of the Destination Management Process (Source: Walter Jamieson).*

This particular approach is examined in *Managing Metropolitan Tourism: An Asian Perspective* (UNWTO, 2010). The concept of destination management is further discussed in *Community Destination Management in Developing Economies* (Jamieson, 2006). Destination management is a complex process that has been extensively discussed in the literature but very often from a marketing perspective. The approach presented above quite clearly argues

for a much more interdisciplinary and systemic approach to understanding all dimensions of managing a tourism destination and which will be developed in a forthcoming publication on the design and management of responsible tourism destinations.

The destination management approach seeks to create an understanding of urban areas as complete systems where actions and interventions at one level have an impact throughout the urban area. While urban managers have long advocated this approach, using a systems approach, is especially important if tourism is to effectively contribute to the development of urban areas. It is important to note that tourism destinations such as Seoul, Hong Kong and Singapore have adopted a form of an integrated approach, which is discussed in *Managing Metropolitan Tourism* (WTO 2010).

Clearly two essential elements of the much larger process of urban management relate to finance and stakeholder management. This article will not examine these two elements other than to identify that innovative urban management must carefully consider the use of creative financing, public-private partnerships, micro-lending, if the challenges of urban design and tourism are to be dealt with.

Often the only way to ensure that innovative tourism related urban design programs can be instituted is by developing or repositioning agencies with flexible and open mandates. One such initiative was created by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration, which has renamed the Old Arts Commission formed in 1998 as the Design Commission. The Commission had a wide number of activities from approving works of art and architecture to plans for the public domain, helping to turn seven blocks of Broadway into a pedestrian plaza and signing on world-class architects for firehouses and police stations. The Department of Design and Construction was responsible for getting city structures designed and built. In order to influence the environment, urban designers must find ways to work closely with appropriate urban bodies to ensure that the urban design visions that have been developed are actually implemented.

Developing A Tourism and Urban Design Interface: Placemaking

In looking at a possible context for the urban design/tourism interface it first must be recognized that urban design and tourism planning will continue to have their own specific set of concerns and driving forces. Each discipline has a well developed set of theories, concepts and best practices that will continue to evolve within each of these areas of intervention. What is of particular interest in this article is the intersection between common areas of interest and concern. In the introduction to the article a number of these similarities were recognized.

After examining a number of concepts the idea of place making as defined by a number of urban experts was felt to be an appropriate umbrella to capture the common elements running through urban design and tourism intervention. Urban designers are familiar with the concept and have long been concerned with creating places that meet the needs of a variety of stakeholders. There is a long history of leading urban writers, practitioners and thinkers about the urban condition exploring place making including William Whyte, Jane Jacobs, Donald Appleyard and Ronald Fleming (Whyte 1980, Jacobs 1961, Appleyard 1981, Fleming 2007).

At the same time some tourism planners have long advocated this approach but with little success in translating the concept into academic activity or actual practice. One of the earliest tourism proponents was Clare Gunn in his book *Tourism Planning*. In that book he defines place making as "not merely the manipulation of materials of architecture and the landscape.

Rather, it is the creative adaptation of given site characteristics to many uses, such as for the visitor. ...Place making is the retention of the essence of place while giving the new physical and psychological meaning” (Gunn, 1994).

Place making is a term that began to be used in the 1970s by architects and planners to describe the process of creating squares, plazas, parks, streets and waterfronts that would attract people because they are pleasurable or interesting.

According to Bernard Hunt, an architect practicing in London: “We have theories, specialisms, regulations, exhortations, demonstration projects. We have planners. We have highway engineers. We have mixed use, mixed tenure, architecture, community architecture, urban design, neighbourhood strategy. But what seems to have happened is that we have simply lost the art of placemaking; or, put another way, we have lost the simple art of placemaking. We are good at putting up buildings but we are bad at making places.”

In order to better understand the civic dimensions of place making as it relates to urban design and tourism selected dimensions presented in Figure 4 will be explored.

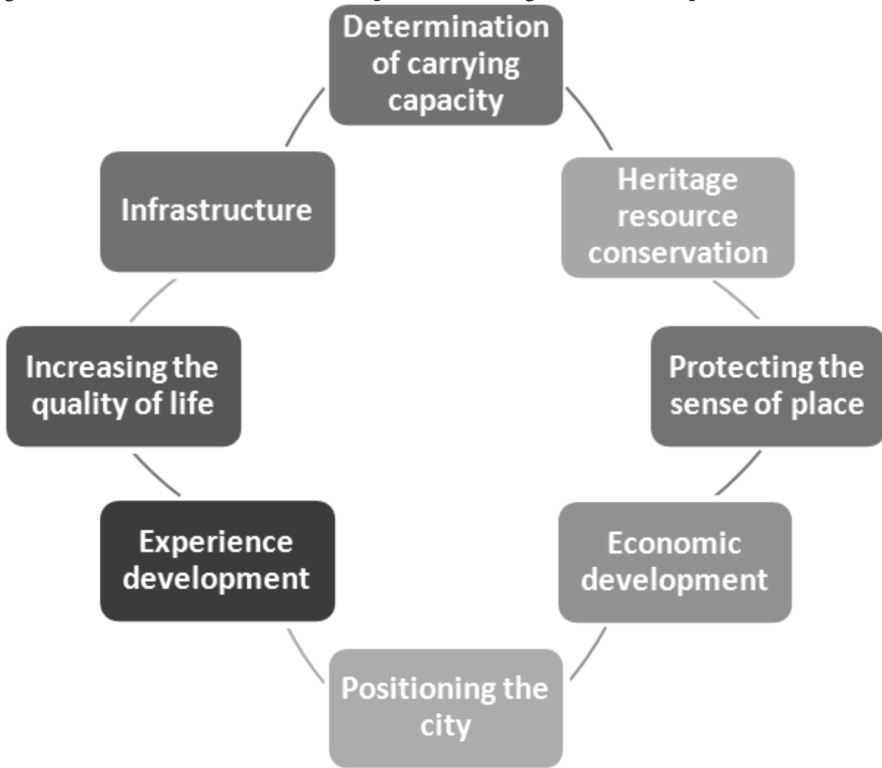


Fig. 4: *Selected Dimensions of Placemaking (Source: Walter Jamieson).*

The Provision of Infrastructure

Urban designers play a key role in helping to structure the urban landscape in such a way that public transportation is feasible and vehicular movement is facilitated for both residents as well as visitors. Urban designers can also help to create clear and legible pathways from one tourism

attraction to another. An urban pattern that allows for low impact forms of transportation including movement systems such as electric trams and bicycles can go a long way to replacing the ubiquitous tour buses that produce significant levels of pollution and congestion are a serious visual blight in many tourism cities. Accomplishing ease of movement is obviously a partnership between a number of stakeholders but in particular those responsible for transportation, planning, urban design and in the best possible scenario tourism planning.

Too often infrastructure developments follow models developed in Western countries or are based on tried and true technologies that have not changed in decades. There are very few examples where municipal governments have taken a risk in enriching the environment for its residents as well as the visitor.

One notable exception is Seoul, Korea. In Seoul, the Cheonggyecheon River (the original name of the Cheonggyecheon stream is 'gaecheon' meaning "open stream") has been 'rediscovered'. In this "out-of-the-box example" is a 6.8 kilometer rivulet where a riverbank area cuts through the heart of the city creating a recreational and cultural place with sculptures, fountains, historic bridges and waterfront decks dotting various stretches. It was not always this way.

For nearly half a century until 2003, the stream was covered by a four-lane highway used daily by 170,000 vehicles. In 2002, the mayor Lee MyungBak announced the highway would be demolished, the river would be restored and a 400 hectare park created beside it. The project cost an estimated US\$386 million and was as ambitious as it was meticulous. The restoration was a marriage of technology and creativity. Sculptures, fountains and murals now dot the riverbanks and long-buried bridges and foundation stones were restored and reinstated. Fish and birds started migrating to this sanctuary. Thanks to scientific work the stream has become almost like an air cooler and purifier throughout the city, credited with reducing the temperature of the surrounding area by between 2° and 3° Celsius. Before and after photographs of the project can be found in Figures 5 and 6.



Fig. 5: *Cheonggyecheon River Area before Restoration (Source: Google Images).*



Fig. 6: *Gyeonggyecheon River Area After Restoration (Source: Wikipedia).*

The value of nearby land and apartments reportedly increased by over 40%. Cafes, restaurants and other lifestyle businesses mushroomed. In the first 16 months after restoration, more than 40 million people visited the river, drawn by attractions, e.g. 22 historical bridges, nine fountains and many other features. There is even a Cheonggyecheon Museum that chronicles the history of the river. At Cheonggye Plaza—where the Cheonggyecheon river begins—crowds throng cheek by jowl to see the tri-colored fountain and a beautifully lit waterfall cascading four meters.

This is an excellent example of turning an eyesore into a tourism attraction and an amenity for its residents. Urban areas will have to continue to invest in environmental and urban improvement and think strategically about increasing the quality of life for residents and tourists if they are to remain competitive. Urban designers are key actors in ensuring that such visions are developed and implemented within cost and infrastructure constraints.

Product and Experience Development

There can be little argument that tourism and urban design effectively come together in the creation of products and experiences. Urban designers and tourism practitioners have long recognized that it is very difficult to create unique tangible and intangible experiences and memories. They recognize that carefully designed urban spaces which meet all of the well-known urban design criteria may not work effectively for both residents and tourists. On the other hand other urban places which have had minimal or little urban design intervention often are the very places that provide delight to both residents as well as visitors. It can be argued

that tourism planners with their understanding of visitor motivations and expectations working along with urban designers and their well developed methodologies for user participation can begin to protect, define and help create successful places that contain both a form of design and development guidance while allowing for spontaneity and flexibility. This dilemma is very well illustrated by the fact that while many people admire the order and ease of movement within Singapore, Bangkok in one survey was identified as the best tourism city in Asia. This survey indicated that people welcomed the chaos, disorder, diversity, unexpected surprises at every turn, and the lack of order and regulation of Bangkok. How to reconcile these two ends of the continuum is clearly an area for further development by both academics along with practitioners.

Quite often urban designers and even tourism planners are not aware of the rapidly changing landscape of consumer preferences and the newly emerging forms of tourism that can help to make a destination attractive to its residents and tourists. Too often conventional models of tourism development are used without taking into account the creativity and innovation that exists within the global tourism environment. Figure 7 provides an overview of a wide range of different tourism products and experiences that are both tangible and intangible in nature. While some are more conventional others are designed to capture specific niche markets often with dimensions that are of benefit to the local community. There is not space in this article to discuss each of these special niche markets but clearly planners and designers now have multiple opportunities to create unique experiences that are authentic and in keeping with the spirit and character of an urban area.

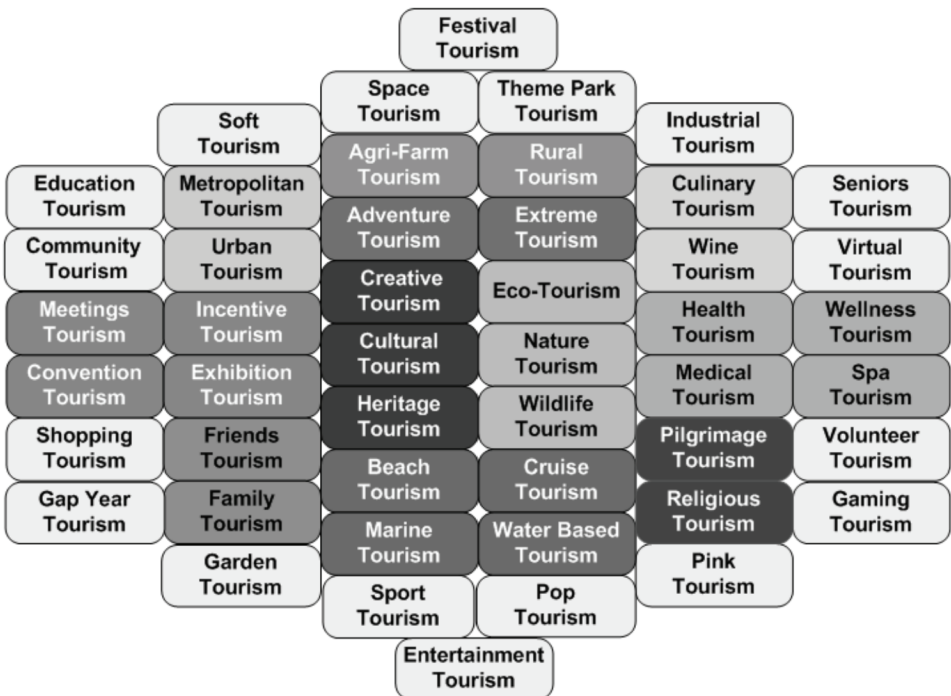


Fig. 7: *Different Forms of Tourism Products and Experiences (Source: Walter Jamieson).*

Site/Attraction Design

A natural place for urban designers and tourism planners to work together is in the design of specific sites or tourism attractions. The destination management process advocates the need for well-designed tourism attractions that do not negatively impact the community. Urban designers play a crucial role in the siting of various attractions and ensuring that they fit within the surrounding environment. As visitor numbers increase it is becoming increasingly important that collaborative design processes are put into place both to protect communities and their resources as well as to provide a meaningful and memorable visitor experience. Physical strategies to make a site or attraction more resistant to negative impacts include zoning, the construction of elevated walkways and natural areas, barriers to restrict access to fragile environments and ongoing monitoring.

Increasingly there is recognition that tourism products and experiences such as historic sites need visitor management plans and designs. Such a plan was developed for the World Heritage site of Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet, Thailand. Space does not permit a full discussion of this plan but the publication is available from UNESCO. A number of urban design techniques were used to create trails and visitor experiences that not only were meant to protect the resources but also to increase visitor satisfaction levels and the amount of money spent in the community. Hopefully urban designers, tourism planners and heritage managers can come together to create visitor experiences that are respectful of the heritage environment and provide for an authentic visitor experience.

Protecting and Enhancing the Sense of Place, Identity and Authenticity of Urban Areas

Many urban designers have long advocated the need for protecting and enhancing the sense of place of a district or city and doing so in an authentic way. On the other hand tourism planners, often influenced by politicians and the private sector, try to replicate experiences from other places or to homogenize urban areas to meet their perceptions of what the visitors are looking for. Tourism planners and urban designers working together can ensure that the goal of protecting a sense of place is achieved while providing for visitor experiences that will meet the needs of the industry.

Richard Florida and Charles Landry amongst others have clearly recognized from their research and observation that urban areas without an identity will likely not be successful as tourism destinations, will find it hard to attract investment, will not likely attract the creative classes and will not function effectively for the residents. What is distressing in Asia is that one city is becoming indistinguishable from another. The poor quality of architecture, “copycat” practices and lack of imagination often results in cities and districts looking very much the same. It has to be understood that leaders of certain cities – depending on their stage of development -want to attain the artifacts of successful Western cities in order to be seen as “world-class”. It is important to recognize that very often this urban development is not guided by urban designers but rather is the result of market forces and the perceptions of decision-makers on what makes a city successful from a physical perspective. Urban designers working with the tourism planners can help develop visions that will be able to convince decision-makers that a unique and distinctive urban environment will not only assist in its tourism development, help attract investment and at the same time provide for a sustainable environment for its residents.

Heritage Resource Conservation

Tourism planners have long recognized that an urban area's historic, cultural and natural heritage environments are often its main visitor attractions and that these resources must be protected and managed to ensure destination competitiveness. Heritage resources can include a single artifact, a single building, entire streets, capes, historic areas and districts. While there may be this recognition on the part of tourism stakeholders very often they lack the power and influence to ensure heritage preservation. Urban designers with their special skill set can assist tourism planners working with interest groups to protect an urban area's tangible and intangible heritage.

The Role of Urban Design in Positioning a City

It is encouraging that within the larger urban development process cities are now increasingly looking to urban design as an important component of their overall tourism and economic development efforts. Seoul is an excellent example of a city that has recognized the importance of design in positioning itself as a world city. In addition to the Second Seoul Design Olympiad the city is working to reinvent itself as an international design center. Seoul Mayor, Oh Seehoon, elected in 2006, launched a number of projects including the urban gallery project and highlights leading-edge civic design art, the Seoul Design Headquarters to oversee the city's transformation, the Hangang Renaissance project to turn the city's riverside banks into an urban oasis, the Gwanghwamun Square and the Hangang Arts Island. The city was named the World Design Capital 2010 by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design. This award is designed to "...recognize innovative cities that most actively and, more importantly, creatively used design as a tool for progress". One can only hope that other cities recognize the power of design as an important tool for transformation and positioning. Sadly Seoul is still the exception as opposed to the rule. In order to achieve this objective planners must work along with urban designers and others to ensure that other cities see the advantage to supporting design initiatives as a way of providing for a unique identity at their destinations.

Increasing the Quality of the Public Realm

Creating public spaces whether they be formal squares, parks, sidewalks, etc., that meet the needs of both residents and visitors is always a challenge. The residents' culture, way of life and values may often be in conflict at least at one level with those of the visitor. While the residents use these public spaces on a daily basis the visitor is primarily concerned with the ability of these spaces to meet their expectations. While it is difficult to achieve success in the public realm we do have many examples where public spaces work effectively for both residents as well as visitors. One only has to think of Central Park in New York, Park Guell in Barcelona, the Garden in Washington, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve in Singapore, Parco Savelloin Rome or BehaiPark in Beijing as memorable experiences. The challenge for urban designers and tourism planners working together is to be able to understand and respond to local sensitivities and the needs of the tourist as they relate to the creation of public spaces.

Determination of Carrying Capacity

Many urban areas and in particular their attractions are under tremendous pressure by the growing level of visitation. Both the physical fabric as well as the nature of the experience

are often diminished by large numbers of visitors. This has led to an urgent need for a better understanding of how to define and enforce carrying capacity policies. Urban designers tend to have a much better sense of the carrying capacity of different spaces given their three-dimensional thinking skills and ability to visualize physical environments at different stages of development and use. Tourism planners often driven by the need to increase visitor numbers to satisfy the industry as well as the politicians are often forced to ignore the carrying capacity of cities, districts and attractions.

Carrying capacity is a complex concept, particularly when a range of residents as well as visitor products and services must be supported by the same environment. Yet the question remains: how many tourists/visitors can be accommodated in an urban area, district or site without threatening the long-term sustainability of a specific site or entire urban area? Urban designers working with tourism planners can play an important role in helping to measure as well as develop development guidelines that will ensure satisfaction. Working together they can test the tolerance of the host population since outright hostility toward visitors can ruin their experience and discourage new tourists.

Economic Development

Destinations most often choose to develop their tourism potential to meet a range of economic as well as social goals. These expectations were introduced at the beginning of the article. What is becoming increasingly evident through comprehensive tourism development approaches is that tourism can attract tourists who contribute to the overall economic well-being of a city but also help to support small and medium-size enterprises that are not at first glance at least part of the tourism economy.

In November 2003 a World Bank Institute report entitled “Urban Development Needs Creativity: How Creative Industries Can Affect Urban Areas” Shahid Yusuf and Karou Nabeshima discussed how a dynamic city requires a wide range of social and cultural amenities that affect the quality of the urban environment (Yusuf and Karou 2003). Many of these amenities are important for attracting investors, meeting the needs of residents and attracting tourists. From an urban management and design perspective, understanding how to meet the needs of these different sets of stakeholders will always be a challenge. Richard Florida, cites the examples of Tokyo, San Diego, Boston and London as places where individual creativity has been able to grow thereby fueling the overall expansion of the cities and their attractiveness as tourism destinations. Generally cities with these types of dynamic environments are also good places for both residents and visitors. Suffice to say at this point that the future of urban tourism is very much tied to the ability of urban designers and municipal officials to create successful, sustainable and competitive urban areas based on the creative industries.

The World Bank estimates that the combined creative industries represent 7% of employment with annual growth rates of 10%. The commonly accepted creative industries include:

- Performing arts: opera, theater, dance, etc.
- Heritage: museums, zoos, botanical gardens, libraries, art galleries, archives, sites and festivals.
- Design: advertising, architecture, web and software design, graphics, industrial products, fashion, communications, interior design.
- Visual arts: crafts, photography, sculpture.

- Media: film and video, television, radio, cable, and digital media, recorded music and publishing.

Many cities are in fact using the creative industries to brand themselves, e.g. Creative London, Creative New York, Creative Amsterdam, Creative Baltimore, Creative Sheffield, etc. Dozens of cities are investing in leveraging millions of dollars in media city districts and variants in industrial scale facilities (Evans, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The tourism and urban design challenge in Asia is unique and one that has not been experienced in any other part of the world. Given the scale and diversity of the region, urban design and tourism solutions and approaches will have to vary quite considerably to recognize regional differences, resources and capacities.

While it has been often felt that market forces could help to develop a responsible tourism environment it is becoming increasingly evident that the market simply cannot be relied upon to provide responsible direction and structure to urban development. If one accepts this position urban design with its strong policy and planning perspectives becomes an essential part of ensuring tourism development that meets the needs of a wide range of urban stakeholders. The challenge will be to ensure that the public sector response is created along the lines of the creative bureaucracies discussed in this article.

In this article various perspectives of the complementary dimensions of professional practice of urban design and tourism have been identified. It has been argued that placemaking can be a useful umbrella that includes a number of different areas of activity where the two disciplines working together can help to achieve a better quality of urban environment for both the residents as well as tourists.

The interface is obviously a work in progress and one of the interesting areas for future development. For the interface to become truly operational significant Asian-based academic research and actual experimentation will be required. Many of these have been identified throughout the article.

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