Tourist development as an opportunity for viable and equitable territories: a return to the future

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Abstract

The paper aims to link three main thoughts: First urban planning has traditionally been unable to tackled tourist spaces in relation to their physical specificity. Tourist spaces are not "normal" urban spaces. On the contrary they belong to categories related to human imaginary environments and tourist architecture has reply to this fantasies by imposing preconceived "traditional" forms and geographies assuming that is what the eventual customers expect following their constructions of signs. Secondly, in the present globalised economy, places and territories compete with each other like companies in the commodity market, but their strength its linked to their unique characteristics, thus authenticity is not only a cultural requirement, but a guarantee of market positioning; and finally after acknowledging the unsustainable current urban growth models we propose that a viable solution consist of returning to relations of proximity no conceived as a return to traditional forms, but as a reinterpretation of then.

Keywords: Tourist spaces, urban planning, tourist architecture, identity of places, proximity

A difficult coexistence

Tourism and Urban Planning have been walking on different sidewalks for a long time now. It is a story about misunderstandings, mismatches between a container - the urban planning- and the content-tourism activities, which overflows like an ill-fitting suit.

It is commonly accepted that tourism has almost always been the excuse or alibi for real estate business, something very tempting for developing regions and countries. Nevertheless, the conflict between tourism and urban development (with its architectural consequences) has its origin in the lack of understanding by urban of the unique and specific characteristics of tourist spaces.

Tourist spaces are not "normal" urban spaces. They belong to territories of the imagination, this is to categories related to human wishes to satisfy their entertainment and leisure needs very different to everyday life, the excitement of the unusual. Generally, tourism has been associated to "the dreams industry" or as Urry (1980) named, following Foucault, "the tourist gaze". And even with the widespread phenomenon of so-called "residential tourism" in which the tourist goes from being a transitive entity to be a "citizen" by moving to geographies other

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than its origin as a place of second homes, this option also contains some component of fantasy that is physical, but also embodies the spirit of an imagery that is both personal and collective. Thus, to be fair on planners, it is very difficult to grasp spaces which belong to people's fantasies from narrow-minded and bureaucratic urban planning practices.

When holidays arrive, we embedded in the guise of tourists and we travel anywhere, always confident that the places of choosing to behave as expected. Is this is a fiction, a sham, a sale of hyper-real geographies? Maybe, but so were Venice, Tuscany or Greece for travelers on the Grand Tour in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Borges said: "how nice to be inhabitants of a city that has deserved a great verse!" Sometimes just a line in a verse is sufficient to convert either a modest monument full of history, remnants of an industrial past, scenarios or glorious or even horror events into tourist venues and eventual tourist products. Nowadays, nothing escapes this possibility. This is due to the fact that the secret relays on the eye, the gaze of the traveler, and that look is educated, is formed, is manufactured, and is stimulated. As Urry put it, places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation of intensive pleasures and such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, literature, magazines, the web, etc. which reinforce that gaze.

So how can these places, towns and cities be with the same approach with the same administrative rules that applied to routine relationships between work, residence and leisure all in segregated places? How can bureaucratize spaces that belong to the realm of fantasy? How can they are subjects to the same regulations and planning standards, an industrious inland city and a Mediterranean coastal conurbation?

Planning tourist spaces in globalized territories

Without losing sight of the present economic crisis, and without pretending to pose ready-made solutions, let us focus on some ideas of how urban planning can deal with the crisis in our tourist territories, with special attention on the most significant cities in the Spanish Mediterranean coast[1]

Despite this economic decline and irrespectively of urban and architectural aberrations that have been committed along the coast line, Mediterranean destinations continue to occupy a privileged place in the framework of the New Economy[2].

The geography of the strong places in the New Economy is that of which may occur simultaneously in the three basic functions of life that unfolds in most human behavior and activities: the residence, leisure and work. These functions are still contemplated by traditional urbanism and planning rules segregated spaces. Nowadays the aim is to provide give the binding factor of the three ingredients, namely the ability to meet as many citizens' demands

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[1] Spanish Coastal Mediterranean tourism has been steadily losing revenues and competitiveness during the last decade. See Exeltur (2005) and Perelli (2011)

[2] According to WTO (2010), before the Arab Spring, Spain still accounted with more regulated tourist accommodation (over three million) that the combination of all Mediterranean destinations, 2,8 million (excluding Italy and France). Moreover, the World Tourist Organization foresees that in 2020 the Mediterranean basin will absorb 22 per cent of the tourist world market share, being France, Spain and Italy the overall leaders. See also Aguilló and Satre (2011, p.77)

as possible within the so-called "quality of life", namely infrastructure, access to networks, transport facilities, easy connection to the main tourist, existence of cultural infrastructure and events, quality universities and schools, service quality, comprehensive medical care (Borja & Castells 1977).

Broadly speaking, tourist coastal spaces, from Cape Creus to Trafalgar, represent the richness, complexity and diversity of the city and the urban and it is expressed at their best. This diversity when compared to other single-purpose tourist destinations, is the essential condition for the strength of their tourist industry.

With the emergence of residential tourism in coastal conurbations a variety of users overlap. These phenomena has announced a new type of society and social relationships within its counterpart in the, completely new, complex urban model; a model that is difficult to understand if we apply the old lenses of traditional urbanism and spatial planning. The future of our tourist areas, even in crisis, is an invaluable bank of provided that we relay more on our own "know how" that on the mimetic reproduction of past experiences applied to different areas

What is a tourist space after all?

Thus a new definition of what the tourist areas are is required. A tourist destination is no longer just a transit point with some popular or promoted attractions to be riddled with various digital cameras. On the contrary, it is a space that commits the shape of the region that felt its influence.

This new urban reality raises new planning demands and expertise on general communications, not only internally, but to the rest of the country and with the main foreign urban centers tourist are coming from. Hence, the enormous importance of appropriated air, maritime and rail infrastructures. One of the key success of the Costa Brava, Costa Blanca and Costa del Sol is precisely the fact that a tourist residential dwelling located within the radius of one hour from the airport, with low cost flights between their home and their Spanish holiday home, allows the traveler frequent trips to the extent to achieve the status of a double resident both in the country of origin and in the guest city. This fact has important implications for the demand of service and urban facilities in the not-any-more "tourist" environments.

Therefore, the word "tourism" would lose its original meaning, a tourist destination today is characterized precisely by the fruitful coexistence between "normality" of everyday life with the spectacular residential and natural attraction that a tourist destination has to have. Once again this fact constitutes a challenge for architects and urban planners.

The search for quality

Quality in the context of mass tourism is a concept that has come volatile and somehow mean-less. It is clear that tourism is one of the factors that accelerate the history of the places where it is become and considered their main resource, given the huge upheaval and fluctuating trends that came along with.

No criticism should be avoided on the excesses of tourism in the Spanish coastal lines. However, one should distinguish what has been real estate exploitation, regardless of a specific

tourist function. This territory has been responding in strict accordance with fickle and changeable demands which were mostly dependent on external factors alien to the local needs and preferences and related to fluctuations in the global economy: "American" apartments (when they represent the modernity of the time); and isolated housing developments aiming to Central European seniors citizens seeking sun and peace in their retirement; or semi-gated communities due to required security; all-new Mediterranean villages affordable for European and Spanish middle classes, and so on.

It is not fair to simplify what happened on our shores as a simple real estate phenomenon since when tourism-related activities has always been to respond to what was asked and be a strategic factor in the Spanish economy.

This is an important point for argument since it seems that when referring to "quality loss" what is really invoking is a nostalgic quality belonging to a world that does not longer exist , a scenario that has disappeared. Nostalgia is the main enemy of the future, because if taken into consideration, it is not possible to understand neither present not the future and, therefore, makes us incapable of assigning new meaning to key concepts such as quality.

The quality, today, in a territory that is the mature expression of mass tourism, requires conceptually simple solutions, but with high economic and infrastructure impacts: hospitals such as roads, good services and clean beaches. But quality, in a tourist destination, embodies another series of issues: facilities, services, places, events, heritage both located at the coast and inland, landscapes, attractions that, in themselves or as complementary part of a destination, can justify the move to it from remote locations. In other words, the recovery of the concept of quality is closely linked to the recovery of the concept of authenticity. And this aspect deserves further discussion.

Identity and authenticity

The global economy is built on a network that provides the framework for economic activity, whose main nodes are the great conurbations that centralize power. For the rest of the locations may belong to the system (to be in the network, so they are on the map), it must comply with the final status of being competitive

Since cities and regions compete nowadays in the global market like companies in the commodity and services markets, hence their spatial planning mechanisms and tools has been increasingly displaced or complemented by the strategic planning practices traditionally used and developed by enterprises and , business in general. Cities and territories operate as multinationals companies and medium-sized cities such as SMEs. Both urban areas aim to fulfill a similar role, this is to say maximizing their profit margins. The secret of the strength of their position in the network lays on their capacity to articulate within the global economy, enhancing   at the same time their economies and local societies. Nevertheless this aim needs to met certain conditions.

First of all, they must deploy their capacity for communication with the outside world and at the same time, to achieve "isotropy" in its internal communication skills, as the modern city is one in which each sector and neighborhood should represent the fullness of the urban attributes: the vitality of a poly-centric city should be expressed and seem in every area as well as allowing the maximum capacity of communication amongst them.

Second, it is necessary that cities and regions take their own and rightly defined "niche market" within the global system, through the empowerment of all segments where they can be competitive. The identity of a place is exclusive to it, thus its strength in the market lies on their identity characteristics. Thus, the enhancement and preservation of the vernacular character of traditional architecture is a key objective in the stability of the fixed capital of the tourist industry. Authenticity is not only a cultural requirement, but a guarantee of market position. This is precisely what is aimed at City Strategic Planning.

Finally, they ought to portrait their excellence as a product and marketing at its maximum capacity. To a larger extend, cities and places are now "on sale" as products in the global market. And it is from the commercial logic of the city that it can be explained current urban policies based on the finding theme-topics to be identified with a city, as a procedure to better portrait the product offered, and the systematic use of events as equivalent to the launch of advertising campaigns any city- product.. And undoubtedly, the global emergence of mass tourism that is mainly in the origin of this general approach, which addresses today, everywhere, urban planning of an urbanized society[3]

It is not necessary to dwell on the importance of Tourism in the global economy[4]. As noted above, cities and regions can have a diverse product base, and various functions can be dominant and commercial, industrial in all its manifestations, administrative, political, religious, etc.-but for a long time virtually all struggling for offering attractive to the outside through the maximum exploitation of the rich heritage much or little they might have[5].

However important, this it is that no one wants to remain dominant role falling behind the source of wealth and employment that tourism provides. A close and well-known example could be Bilbao, with an economically buoyant past, remodeled its industrial base with tourist eyes by using the disappearance of the "Altos Hornos de Vizcaya" (Biscay Blats Furnaces) in order to treat its river margins now marked by milestones such as the La Salve Bridge, the Auditorium and especially the Guggenheim Museum to join modernity to their pride of an industrial past, in a mixture that ends up being all an exemplary symbol of the entrepreneurial capacity of the city.

As a consequence, everything can be transformed into a tourist attraction: the birthplace of a painter like Picasso in Malaga, a naval battle, like Trafalgar, the scenes of horror, like Auschwitz or Mauthausen , war, as the beaches of Normandy, or intangibles like the nostalgia of a bygone era, which is based tourism by advertising the relaunch of Tangier.

So, the territory and the patrimonial heritage of the site is something that happens in this place and only there. The city heritage is precisely the identification of a place, which determines its

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[3] For a recent analysis of the evolution and characteristics of urban tourism in Spain , see Anton (2011)

[4] For present and future impact on the world economy as well as Country and Regional destinations, see WTO (2010); Goldin (2010) and Amadeus (2011)

[5] Saskia Sassen (Sassen 2001) claims for a comprehensive understanding of all urban characteristics of cities when facing global markets as portrait in the Global City Index 2010 which uses over 25 metrics in five dimensions (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/node/373401)

exclusivity and eventual excellence, that is, by his own condition, the heritage of a place or a city, once is duly revalued, is the market niche makes that place or the city potentially competitive.

Nevertheless, this vital need and competing could cause compulsive exaggeration by creating – and sometimes invented- identity factors. This is what has given rise to life has become a representation of life, and that reality is loaded with content in order to become a hyper-artificial, this is to say hyper-reality in full gear: reality replaced by a representation of reality. This also affects the transformation of architectural models.

In a local version of American "new urbanism" , a fiction of "Mediterranean settlements and villages" have been established to fulfill what a Saxon mythology of the expected "South" should look like. That is, tourism has been producing "real frauds" calling on "traditional architecture" reinterpreting "the authentic" for consumer use.

But while the fraud on the authentic is nothing but a condition for mass production familiar to any process of mass consumption, it is certain there will always be the vernacular, wise and meaningful traditional architecture as the undying support for the tourist supply.

A return to the future?

This paper claims that traditional rural settlements can play an important role in the design of new tourist destinations as well as reinterpreting metropolitan planning as a whole.

In brief, the narrow view and assumption that the present crisis is financial in character prevents professionals and academics from seen the unsustainable current urban growth models and land consumption practices. It is proposed here, in coherence with the debates on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion[6], that a viable solution for uncontrollable metropolis goes through a return to relations of proximity that enable physical coexistence with the virtual space of flows. The reinforcement of local production systems and local social fabric by applying information technologies to urban models close to traditional villages constitutes part of the challenge.Thus a new paradigm of modernity goes along these lines. This new approach is no conceived as a return to traditional forms, but as a reinterpretation of then. From this point of view, traditional architecture should be an inspiration for a typological evolution based upon the sustainable character of ancestral constructive wisdom.

Modern urbanism, prisoner of bewilderment, has only come to grasp that the sustainable city is a city in which each place, each neighborhood, district or community is able to provide the right basis for diversity, local identities , compatibility of uses; public spaces that encourage relations of proximity and last, but not least self-sufficiency standards that used to be a characteristic of old urban centers. We have learned that every place in the city, regardless its size, should be considered a central area so that no citizen will feel especially segregated by his or hers peripheral status due to the lack of facilities and services nearby the place one lives.

It is curious to notice that when modern urbanism claims this pattern as the only way to address the problems of cities choked by traffic, distances and unapproachable demographics it seems to

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[6] It main objective is to turn territorial diversity into strength by concentrating services and facilities enhancing poly-centric urban networks all levels .CEC (2008)

forget the model, that is supposing referring to. This is not other that the one that has been neglected from a long time now: the way of life of agricultural settlements. In fact, after the contribution of the Utopian Socialists and the movement of Garden City, urban planning engaged in the definitive separation between the city and the countryside, as two conflicting and refractory concepts: the urban world as the scene of the opportunities and the rural as a passive space, sentenced to compensate and support the ecological footprint of the city.

Planning legislation itself has enshrined this dilemma: urban land as *logos*, reason, and non urban land as the *pathos* of a traditional farming with unintelligible land policies, a world without voice confined, at best cases, the condescending bondage of the "typical" for domestic or foreign "urbanites" to be used as an ideal arcadia. The countryside, farming communities and traditional towns have long suffered a slow process of depopulation due to their lack of economic and social recognition. The "urban logic" has kept the rural areas as identity reserves in a similar way than endangered species are contemplated.

But all that is over. No, the countryside and the natural environment cannot remain today as the negative part of the urban: on the contrary, in these times of crisis rural societies can be a wellspring of opportunities if approached positively, imaginatively seeking its own role in the context of a territory which is an indissoluble globalized part: a "pro-active" vision is needed rather than a passive approach that by prohibiting only manages to lead to marginality.

Many places in the interior of the Spanish coasts have beautiful landscapes and villages. It is possible to see the lifestyle that takes place: they tend to be generally well equipped, well-connected with the metropolis and to the coast, at distances that improvements in the communications' network have declined considerably. These places can be experienced on a human scale, where everybody knows each other and where there is no need to take a vehicle to go from one extreme to another in order to satisfy some basic needs.

Today, the rediscovery of urban values is to look back on the streets, the courtyards, the surprising twists of those streets that are all existential adventure, as Maria Zambrano described sixty years ago[7] the quality of nearby urban spaces, places in which, after leaving the computer that has contacted us minutes before to the world, we join our neighbors to share their joys and concerns. Working as in the city, but with the difference that after open the windows we can feel the breath of mountain air, the sight of an olive tree, an orange or almond grove. This is quality of life, but would not be sufficient unless alternative production models success to retain the indigenous population and they complement with a new population in these places searching for an advantageous alternative to the discomforts of the metropolis, while staying on business, commercial or professional circuits.

As David Hammerstein writes in its magnificent prologue to the book "Building sustainable cities" by Hervé Girardet, "there are thousands of communities and groups around the world are inventing their own alternatives for revitalizing local economies, and are thereby providing greater self-sufficiency and equality, more social cohesion, more democracy and environmental protection that we can offer the kingdom of multinationals firms. These trends toward establishing in towns and generating money and resources flows from the local tissue to the local tissue, promote attachment to human relationships and solidarity nearby, help local job

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[7] "La ciudad, creación histórica". Semana. Puerto Rico, 1961

creation and new ways of working less dependent and more stable, while, in greater harmony with the limits and opportunities of ecological systems"[8]

Curious enough the aftermath of all this depredation, depopulation and the marginalization of these areas neglected by coastal tourism development it seems to be the development of an alternative model of growth, productivity, product renewal and quality tourism , which governs by the principle of concordance between local and global[9] These rural communities are now far from the traditional primary sector base. They are of the global networks that provide them access to the latest techniques and knowledge to apply innovation to old productive processes. Nevertheless they are also rooted in local identities that are absolutely necessary to develop a sense of community and psychic stability needed by human beings.

In conclusion, this is the opportunity for the agrarian and traditional areas to experience new paradigms of sustainable growth. Tourism and its permanent search for authenticity could contribute to the establishment of these new paradigms. It is not the demand that requires fraud products, but the organizers of the flows which, by inertia, still offering a redundant and extinguished product . Quite possibly the future of tourism is closely linked to different conceptions view of productivity, and this, in turn, must seek alternative models, basically, has a lot of return to origins, but it is basically a newly-born return to the future where the implementation new technologies allows forms of "microeconomics" tied to the land and places, stronger and profitable than global macroeconomics, so huge and fragile, uncontrolled and unsustainable.

It consists somehow in revisiting the once popular Schumacher' *ditto* that "small is beautiful " and substituting it by " the tangible, the authentic, the real thing is beautiful " It looks no difficult to extract from there a rich philosophy that consist in the application of the infinite possibilities that contemporary technologies contribute to urban planning and tourist products, in short, our social relations are every day more related to reality. This is the space of flows contribute to give authenticity to the real common shared public space.

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[8] This goes in line with the comprehensive new trends of tourist sustainability far apart the narrow environmentalist approach. As an example see Lim& Cooper (2009); Pulido & Sanchez (2009) and the Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities (1997)

[9] Vera, J.F & Baños, G (2010)

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