



Outlining triple bottom line contexts in urban tourism regeneration



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ABSTRACT

This viewpoint offers perspective on pressing issues concerning urban tourism planning, policy and development. This paper outlines how different approaches and contexts of urban tourism regeneration, planning and development are considered in relation to the triple bottom line. Triple bottom line approaches are widely recognized by scholars, teachers, planners and businesses in the area of tourism when planning for sustainable tourism futures. While notions of people, profit and planet are important to conceptually outline, it is important to reflect on the recent literature and examples that emphasise contexts of sustainability. It must be noted that sustainability is often regarded as a term that looks at the environment and financial growth. Increasingly, researchers are focusing on social impacts seeking to address opportunities such as new enterprises, volunteering, education and training, in addition to restored place and community pride. This viewpoint attempts to present perspectives and encourage directions to further consider in urban tourism research, with an emphasis on sustainability and regeneration.

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1. Introduction

The last several decades have seen significant changes in urban tourism planning and development. Industrial cities across Europe and North America during the 1970s and 1980s went through a period of economic restructuring (Owen, 1990), resulting in a need for regeneration. Economic restructuring involves change based on industrial/manufacturing decline and a shift to service oriented economies. Since the 1990s, and into the new millennium, revival was based on innovation and creativity to transform cities. For example, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (United States) and Glasgow, Scotland (United Kingdom) experienced drastic declines in their industrial/manufacturing bases. Significant investments in leisure, tourism and events in both cities resulted in increased service oriented activities to attract visitors. As observed in many cases, cities suffering from decline had to transition their economic base(s) to keep up with the demands and pressures of the global economy. Cities that resisted change, or could not keep up with the pace of global change, risked further stagnation (see Richards & Palmer, 2010).

Today, when considering nascent planning and development strategies in urban areas, especially interurban areas, scholars are continually assessing the role of the leisure and tourism industries (Richards & Palmer, 2010; Smith, 2012; Spirou, 2010; Wise & Whittam, 2015). Regenerating local economies intends to create better lifestyles for urban residents and communities (McLennan, Pham, Ruhanen, Ritchie, & Moyle, 2012). By changing attitudes and perceptions of

post-industrial cities, the aim is to transform not only economies, but also promote new social and environmental agendas, pertinent to the three key contexts of sustainability outlined in the triple bottom line. While social impacts have been a point of concern for some time (Ruhanen, Weiler, Moyle, & McLennan, 2015), increased interest among academics puts new emphasis on social impacts resulting from change and regeneration (e.g. Clark & Kearns, 2015; Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012; Dwyer, 2005; Lawless, 2010; Smith, 2012; Stell, 2014; Wise & Whittam, 2015). There is often a focus on tangible impacts given profit motivations and private sector investment (Smith, 2012). Intangible impacts are important to consider. Tourism management and business scholars working alongside social scientists can further incorporate approaches to assess enterprise opportunities, volunteering, training programmes, and educational opportunities, in addition to psychological aspects considering sense of place and community pride (Smith, 2012; Thwaites, Mathers, & Simkins, 2013).

1.1. Triple bottom line

The 'bottom line' is a framework used in finance and accounting (Elkington, 2004) to assess sustainability. Sustainable management and development is a key focus among social scientists to evaluate wider trends in urban environments alongside tourism planning practices (Buckley, 2012; Dwyer, 2005; Fairley, Tyler, Kellett, & D'Elia, 2011; Hinch, 1996; Istoc, 2012; Lawless, 2010; Lew, 2007; McLennan et al., 2012; Moyle, McLennan, Ruhanen, & Weiler, 2014; Norman & MacDonald, 2004; Richards & Palmer, 2010). Hinch (1996) addressed urban tourism and sustainability based on market trends, control, leadership and regulations. What has been widely accepted are

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three dimensions framed around social, environmental and financial (economic) responsibilities—referred to as the three Ps (people, planet and profit). John Elkington, a leader in corporate responsibility and sustainable development, coined the term triple bottom line in 1994. Triple bottom line dimensions are the core pillars of sustainability (Dwyer, 2005; Fairley et al., 2011). Dimensions of sustainability are becoming more evident when evaluating ethical business practices concerning responsible management and corporate social responsibility. However, in tourism, these three approaches go beyond private and public business practices to focus on contemporary sustainable development practices and regeneration (Spirou, 2010). Therefore, given wider urban transformations and increased investments in tourism and leisure, it is important to look at people, profit and planet from an urban tourism context. Together, this viewpoint will address impacts beyond profit margins, finances and economic issues, to outline social impacts, benefits and burdens, and concerns of tourism and hospitality in urban communities and environments (Assaf, Josiassen, & Cvelbar, 2012; Cummings, 1997).

While the triple bottom line approach is already embedded in the corporate business environment, it has been adapted and applied to wider tourism policies. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) frames motives and initiatives around sustainability by addressing issues of social, environmental and economic responsibility (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2011). The UNWTO is concerned with founding and promoting wider frameworks to maximise tourism impacts globally. Initiatives put forth by the UNWTO are meant to be adapted by national, regional, urban and local tourism organizations. Governments and stakeholders set out to achieve and monitor results locally. Although increased numbers of international travellers can have a significant impact on a city's economy, increased tourism can also put a lot of stress on the environment and local communities (Dwyer, 2005). This is a challenging concept because different people and different cultures (who may have different concepts or beliefs) approach and view the environment differently or have different regulations. To achieve goals of sustainable development around the world and across the tourism sector, the UNWTO works to strengthen partnerships with national governments, the associated public sector groups, private sector business and entrepreneurs, and civil society. Furthermore, it is important to consider the rise in global sporting events and bidding to host events. Most cities see short-term increases in tourism figures, and while much infrastructure is needed, this can cause negative longer term consequences if facilities and infrastructures are deemed not useful after the event(s) (Edgell & Swanson, 2013)—a key example is Athens, host city of the 2004 Olympic Games.

1.2. Urban tourism: regeneration and sustainability

Urban tourism regeneration involves strategic planning to influence change through new developments (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Edwards, Griffin, & Hayllar, 2008; Evans, 2000; Lew, 2007; Tallon, 2010). When addressing change, regeneration has become an important concept concerning spatial transitions (Smith, 2012; Wise & Whittam, 2015). While physical regeneration projects may be deemed necessary to support economic development, competitiveness and growth of tourism (Edgell & Swanson, 2013; Smith, 2012; Spirou, 2010), it is also important to focus on intangible results, impacts, legacies and social benefits (Soh & Yuen, 2011).

As noted above, the creative and cultural industries are closely linked to tourism- and event-led regeneration (see Hong, 2014; Richards & Palmer, 2010; Waitt & Gibson, 2009). New stadia/venues not only represent (physical) infrastructural change, but contribute to new city images (Smith, 2005; Vanolo, 2015). Much work has addressed how image contributes to new city brands or new ways of welcoming tourists. Over the past 20 years, cities have transformed their urban images to overcome negative images associated with late-1970s and 1980s decline, deindustrialization and economic restructuring. Again,

this was especially evident in many North American and European post-industrial cities such as Pittsburgh and Glasgow, respectively. Today, cities such as Pittsburgh and Glasgow reminisce past industrial heritage alongside revived urban settings to show past (manufacturing and production) legacies and new consumption patterns. Moreover, the shift from manufacturing/production to service based economies resulted in cities becoming 'festival' cities, aimed at attracting tourists and event-goers.

Referring back to the triple bottom line, concerning regeneration, the focus is often on income generation aimed at reviving and sustaining the economy (Spirou, 2010). Economic indicators drive change and development. Economic development in its broadest sense not only considers urban income generation, but also how such developments create new cultural, social and employment opportunities for residents (Soh & Yuen, 2011). As noted above, more recent work is concerned with the dimensions of people and planet—social and the environmental, respectively (Taylor & Hochuli, 2015). Research is increasingly concerned with local, social and environmental sustainability that is critical of past approaches to determine how to improve local conditions in the future (Buckley, 2012; Goodwin, 2011; McLennan et al., 2012; Moyle et al., 2014; Phillips & Moutinho, 2014; Ruhanen et al., 2015; Wiedmann, Salama, & Mirincheva, 2014).

Both public and private sector regenerative strategies, in accordance with the triple bottom line framework, put emphasis on long-term goals. However, outcomes assessed and future consequences are dependent on present-day decisions—therefore changing trends are often based on speculation. Therefore, investing in sustainable tourism futures has been a highly debated area (Edgell & Swanson, 2013). Accordingly, foundation frameworks for regeneration, planning and development need to link to people, profit and planet. Urban tourism planners and developers attempt to make use of existing environmental resources—but also should focus on ecological preservation processes and unique natural heritage (Carreras, Druguet, & Siddoway, 2012; Hundloe, McDougall, & Page, 2015; Wu, Xiang, & Zhao, 2014). In terms of people and communities, trying to maintain a way of life for local residents can lead to better understandings and tolerance of diverse cultural norms and values. By focusing on social and environmental impacts, those involved with tourism development and regeneration must seek to make sure viable economic and wellbeing incentives are put in place to benefit people and also improve urban ecosystem environments over longer periods of time (Taylor & Hochuli, 2015). Then, local economies will be supported, and people will be informed of the value of unique natural environments to maximise the full economic potential of a destination or attraction.

1.2.1. Planet (environmental) context

Urban policy makers and planners seek to conserve spaces of historical and environmental significance. It is essential that urban tourism planners and managers ensure that environmentally sustainable policies restore and preserve urban ecosystems. Challenges in urban areas which include: everyday congestion, mass consumption and waste have long threatened air and water quality (Cummings, 1997). Mass tourism promotes mass consumption, putting a strain on resources. While mass consumption may be assessed as an environmental issue (Gössling et al., 2012; Hof & Blázquez-Salom, 2015), it is just as inherently social—given who has access to resources. In many cases, tourist hotels may have more immediate access so to keep visiting consumers satisfied (see Cole, 2012). Beyond such notions used to describe the physical/natural environment, scholars who look at heritage sites in cities make us aware of how pollutants are degrading fragile historical sites; historical sites are an important part of urban fabric—being the underlying cultural environment (Carreras et al., 2012; El-Asmar, Ahmed, Taha, & Assal, 2012). Therefore, environmental protection is not just limited to the physical environment, but also includes the conservation of historic sites, or cultural landscapes. Protecting urban historical sites will enhance the greater urban environment to ensure the

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