

Editorial

Rethinking of Cities, Culture and Tourism within a Creative Perspective

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The last decade has been a period of intensive interest for “creativity”. In fact, it is not the “creativity” that is new to humankind, as people have been creative throughout history. What is new is the rather frequent use of the word “creativity” to describe a diverse set of areas in our lives. Creative economy (Howkins, 2001), creative industries, creative jobs, creative class (Florida, 2002), creative cities and creative tourism (Richards & Wilson, 2006) have been some of the areas where the concept has been utilized to relate the consequent fields to innovation and imagination.

The ever-growing interest with (re)creation is not without reason. The major issue almost in all arenas of life today is to be “different”. It is the combination of the two powerful concepts of our age; “competitiveness” and “standardization” that calls for a need to be creative in order to differentiate our selves, our products, our jobs, our economies and of course our cities from the rest.

The concept of creativity has been introduced to the field of tourism relatively recently. Acknowledging this new concept of inquiry, the international conference of Cities as Creative Spaces for Cultural Tourism in Istanbul (CCSCT) was organized to bring together an international

group of scholars to discuss their work and ideas about creativity in tourism in order to deepen the existing knowledge on the topic.

The conference also aimed to integrate the concept of culture with creativity, as it was mainly organized as a contribution to Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture event. The aim to include culture in the discussions of creativity in tourism was twofold. Firstly, the conference intended to re-present the concept of cultural tourism to discussion in order to understand whether the terms culture and cultural tourism need to be expanded beyond the commonly agreed borders and to envision the possible influences of this expansion on various actors. Secondly, the conference aspired to address how host cities that harbour the entire range of cultural heritage, events and actors, can be redesigned and regenerated as creative cultural spaces using all their tangible and intangible cultural assets.

The selection of papers in this special issue is skilfully chosen to give you a sense of the spirit of the conference. On one hand, there are works of those scholars advocating the regeneration of urban spaces through creative cultural practices. These practices do not only regenerate cities physically, socially, culturally and economi-

cally, but they also (re)create an image for it, which is a *sine qua non* for tourism. Thus, discussions of various /contemporary concepts of marketing is also a natural and an important part of these papers. On the other hand, there are papers criticizing and warning us about the commodification of culture, creation of fake/induced images for cities, staged authenticities, top-down policies, exclusion of host communities, gentrification of culturally diverse neighbourhoods, and the elitist character of creative cultural practices.

The latter group of papers are written by Dogan, Walker and Kuzgun, Göksel, Özalp, Somer and Alvarez. They question the process and outcomes of creative cultural events /practices. The core idea behind these papers is the necessity to honour the local culture and people as the major actors in constructing a creative city. They all suggest that the efforts towards building a creative city should be linked to the existing culture.

Among these papers, the one with the strongest critical tone is by Dogan. Set in the context of Istanbul, the paper of Dogan critically discusses “the commodification of urban cultures and spaces” as a result of cultural projects that reinvent the images of the cities. The author specifically focuses on the nature of the projects within the frame of European Capital of Culture (ECOC). The main purpose is to point out the fact that these projects should be carefully planned in order to provide long term, sustainable benefits to its residents.

The paper discusses that although the ECOC event can be a valuable opportunity for the cities, there is also the possibility that ECOC projects will create “invented” images by brushing up the visible parts of the cities for the “tourist gaze”. The paper is not against the conservation of buildings, however finds it problematic that no integration is built between physical conservation and the host community. It is argued that the result is a city left out of its peculiarities, its identity and its meaning.

The ideas offered by the paper are discussed through the case of Istanbul, which is the ECOC for 2010. The author provides an example of Tarlabasi and Sulukule areas where the government plans to clean up and “revitalize” through mass displace-

ment of current population for “gentrification” purposes and renewal of the historical buildings. The article provides these examples in order to discuss that without local people the heritage loses its meaning. Instead of constructing a creative city the newly renovated buildings end up being sole theatrical stages of the history. As a solution to this, the article reminds us of the importance of community participation and also of Florida’s creative triad - Tolerance, Talent and Technology- (Hospers & van Dalm, 2005) underlining the importance of tolerance to diversity of people in urban spaces.

The paper by Walker focuses on the importance of congruency between tourism image and the tourist product. The author offers the consideration of history during the branding, imaging and marketing processes of creative tourism projects in order to protect cultural integrity and authenticity of the cities both for the host community and the tourist. The benefits of using history as a mechanism to prevent cultural distortion during image formation process is explained to be twofold: On the one hand, if the promotional messages provided during the image building are linked with historical truths, they can be helpful in clarifying the transforming reality of the destination, as well as its self-presentation over time. On the other hand, it will relieve the community members from living up to an invented destination image to which they do not subscribe. The paper asks a very vital question: “Whose city, after all, is it?”

The final paper of this group is by Kuzgun et al. It complements the two former conceptual papers with empirical data collected from the host community of Istanbul. The core interest of the paper is to question whether the Istanbul ECOC program is successful to link itself with all layers of the society or whether it only targets people with cultural and monetary capital. The purpose of the research is to determine the perceptions of Istanbul’s local community regarding the city as a ECOC. The research also proposes a scale to measure the construct of ECOC.

One important commonality that this paper has with Dogan’s, is its understanding and appreciation of the local community as a highly diversified group. Thus, the

authors aim to learn the perceptions of local residents with different education and income levels, and from different districts of the city, regarding Istanbul as a ECOC. This paper has also a mutual point with Walker's paper that it perceives the local community as the real owners of the city who should be a part of creative cultural activities in order to render sustainability. The research is based on surveys collected from a diverse sample. The results of the study show that the perceptions of residents of Istanbul regarding their city as a ECOC tend to be positive. However, the major finding of the study is very important as it determines that Istanbul is marked by socio-spatial polarization (Yardimci, 2007) when it comes to the ECOC event. Thus, better communication of activities, cultural exchange and recognition emerges as crucial actions to be taken to build the link between social segments

The second group of papers presents examples of creative cultural regeneration projects. The first one is from Italy, a country which is deeply embedded within the flows of cultural networks. Rizzi and Dioli present us the case of four major Italian cities -Turin, Genoa, Venice and Piacenza- as examples of how carefully engineered planning processes can successfully help cities regenerate themselves. The second case is from Turkey. Gökçen Dünder, provides us with the case of Izmir, a major city on the Aegean coast of Turkey. It is an example of a city which carries the potential and intention to regenerate itself and take part within the flows of cultural networks but had hard times right from the planning stage of the process.

The paper by Rizzi and Dioli approaches marketing as a major policy tool for urban issues. Thus, they integrate three contemporary marketing concepts in their paper: Strategic Planning, Place Marketing and City Branding. The paper discusses that through the holistic use of these three concepts cities can renew their image, embed themselves in knowledge and business/social networks and increase their competitiveness. The authors also suggest that the successful use of these tools will also protect the identity of the cities and fight the danger of copy cat reproduction.

Within this framework the paper examines the implications raised in Turin, Genoa, Venice and Piacenza. The paper discusses how these cities exploited some event-based (i.e. 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Turin, G8 and ECOC 2004 in Genoa, Sensation Carnival in Venice) opportunities to rebuild and strengthen their identity and image, to preserve and transmit their heritage and to provide various forms of artistic expression. It is clearly pictured how successful planning can widen participation of the community, eventually stimulating creativity. In order to analyse the effects of Strategic Planning, Place Marketing and City Branding the paper also provides data on population growth and attraction of new residents, tourists and visitors, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of these four cities.

While the paper by Rizzi and Dioli exhibits accomplished examples of city renewal projects, the paper of Gökçen Dünder points out that those cities like İzmir, which seek to establish themselves as competitive cities of culture in the global arena should consider such examples of other nations carefully. However, the author also underlines a reality that developing nations can go through very different problems during regeneration processes starting from the planning stage. The paper provides us both with the story of İzmir's urban development over time and gives us examples of specific projects as evidences of İzmir's intention to achieve a culture-led regeneration. However, as the paper asserts, the failures of the planning system constitutes a major obstacle against any intention toward a culture-led rise of the cities.

The third group of papers focuses on the importance of understanding the visitors both before and after their experiences in a destination. Having knowledge of visitor images, expectations, perceptions, opinions and habits prior to the actual experience is obviously very helpful during the planning stage of events or marketing strategies. Collecting post-data is also a must in understanding whether the previously set goals are achieved. However, beyond these, it is also very important to note that since both cities and visitors are in a constant process of transformation, continuous data

collection is very significant to follow this ever-changing process of becoming.

The first article by Iordanova-Krasteva, Wickens and Bakir compares the projected image of Linz as a tourist destination promoted by its policy makers with the perceived image held by Linz's potential tourists in the context of the Linz 2009 ECOC. The main difference between this study and the monitoring survey conducted by the policy makers are (1) Instead of closed ended questions with predetermined constructs this study uses open ended questions allowing respondents to share their feelings and perceptions of Linz (2) unlike the study by Linz09 organizers which was conducted on a mainly Australian sample, the data of this study was collected from an international sample. The results of the study suggest a difference between the projected image of Linz as promoted by the officials and its perceived image as seen by the respondents.

The second paper by Kurgun seeks to understand the influence of country image on the destination brand equity. In trying to understand this relationship the author conducted a structured survey on 293 foreign visitors in Izmir. The questions aim to identify visitors' impressions that have been effective on their choice of Turkey as a vacation destination and to determine whether there is dependency between these impressions and their perceptions about Izmir. The results of the study reveal that there is a significant and positive relation between country's image and any destination's brand equity in the country

Finally, the article by Guerreiro, Oom do Valle and Mendes aspires to clarify the link between segmentation and cultural event management by using the case of Faro which was designated as the 2005 National Capital of Culture by the Portuguese government. The paper analyses segments of the population that participated in the Faro 2005 event and discusses the relation between the event's success and the degree of satisfaction from participants. The contribution of the paper lies in understanding the importance of an adequate marketing approach of large-scale events, such as cultural events, in order to achieve greater audience appeal/impact, in order to ensure sustainability. Each par-

ticipant holds a unique set of experiences and perceptions; more than one product needs to be made available.

This special issue closes with an article by Kirant Yozcu and İcöz which brings a distinct discussion for integrating creativity with different forms of tourism. The paper draws attention to the fact that creative tourism activities need not to exist in an isolated fashion from different types of tourism such as congress tourism. The study adapts the 8Ps of tourism marketing -*packaging, partnership, people, product, price, promotion, place* to congress tourism. A model also illustrates how to integrate creative tourism activities to the marketing mix of congress tourism. The proposed model aims to ensure that the attendants of congress tourism take part in creative tourism activities in the destination. The authors suggest that this participation will provide multiple benefits both for the tourist and the destination. The paper posits that the creative activities will foster learning the social and cultural structure of the destination for the tourist, as well as increasing the number of days of their stay and contributing to local economy.

Creativity and its relation to culture and urban spaces are very new topics in the field of tourism. Therefore, further empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative is necessary to construct well-established concepts. Thus, it is hoped that the selection of papers in this special issue will not only contribute to existing conceptual discussions of creative tourism and creative cultural practices in urban spaces but also promote further research on the topic.

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