Community Backlash: How Cities are Being Impacted by Visitors

Dr. Johannes Novy
Convention Centers and the (Tourist) City

Johannes Novy

AIPC Annual Conference
Boston, July 5-8, 2015
Cities = centers for conventions of all kinds

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Almost every convention center has owed something to the Crystal Palace“ – Paul Goldberger

(Too) Many failing convention centers?

(Too) many centers that fail the cities they promised to improve?

Photo: "(Toward) a Requiem" by Mohamed Sharif, Felix Monasakanian, Efren Soriano, and Teo Biocina

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Convention Centers as “paradigmatic metastasizing megaprojects“?

“For the [convention center] to arrive in downtown in the first place, it must inevitably destroy some of that downtown. And to expand and thereby survive, the [convention center] must destroy even more“ - Brent D. Ryan (2013)
The bigger picture: has the remodeling of cities for the “visitor class“ gone too far? – Presentation Overview

1. The Rise of the Tourist City - How tourism - and the infrastructure it requires - transforms cities
2. Recent backlashes against tourism: are there lessons to be learned from Barcelona, Berlin etc.? 
3. Building “better“ convention centers for “better“ cities 
4. Conclusion: Towards convention centers that engage

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Urban Tourism Redux

- Urban tourism said to be main contributor to tourism‘s growth
- Today, cities are estimated to account for 30 - 40% of all inbound tourism arrivals globally
- In addition the share of urban tourism is said to have increased substantially
- Key factors
  - Heightened mobility in terms of number of trips per person
  - More short term breaks
  - Increase in business and VFR travel
  - Low cost air travel
  - Urban regeneration & marketing
  - etc.
- Recent economic crises slowed down year-on growth but medium and long-term growth prospects remain strong.
The Rise of the “Tourist City“

- Urban environments worldwide have throughout history been among the most significant of all tourist destinations.

- Tourism’s impacts were for a long time in most cities (except “classical” destinations like Venice) relatively insignificant, however, or at least not strong enough to be of much concern.

- Escalating tourism growth as well as cities‘ turn towards tourism as a means for (economic) development led in the 1980s to a growing interest in tourism and its effects on the development of cities.

→ Talk about a “transformation of urban centers into tourist cities“ (Fainstein and Judd 1999) as part of wider processes of urban restructuring/change.

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Exemplifying the “Rise of the Tourist City“: the “Festival Market Place“ phenomenon

Faneuil Hall Marketplace, Boston (Photo: Wikipedia)
Exemplifying the “Rise of the Tourist City“: “Eventization“ & “Festivalization“
Exemplifying the “Rise of the Tourist City“: Cities‘ “arms race“ for the convention trade

"By any measure, the growth in the number of facilities and square feet of exhibition space since the 1970s is nothing short of spectacular. (...) Once the construction of a tourism and meetings infrastructure was recognized as a viable alternative to the indiscriminate “smokestack chasing” of the 1970s and early 1980s, cities engaged in a virtual arms race to build convention centers.“ (Laslo and Judd 2005)

Urban Tourism Impacts

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The net impacts of tourism activity are usually – and rightly so – regarded as being overwhelmingly positive but this has not kept scholars from pointing out that:

- there are also negative externalities (that frequently become more serious as tourism increases) and that there is no simple linear relationship between the growth of tourism and the benefits it is said to bring;
- that investments into tourism involve opportunity costs and displacement effects;
- that different groups are affected differently by tourism development.
The Context (I)

Non-Poor Only, public artwork (The Xcollektiv, Cape Town, SA)

Concerns about equity (or the lack thereof)
Concerns about the transformation of cities into “themeparks” (Michael Sorkin) and a resulting loss of identity and 'urbanity'.

Brooklyn, NY (Photo: Jaime Rojo)
Barcelona, Spain

Mass tourism can kill a city - just ask Barcelona’s residents
Ada Colau

We’ve all been a tourist at some point, but citizens of this great city are fighting for a way of life as they are sidelined by the authorities.
*Help, the Tourists are coming!

Einladung zur Diskussion

Hilfe, die Touris kommen!

Welche Auswirkungen hat der Tourismus auf den Wohnraum?


* * *

The Passport blog

Berlin versus tourists

15 August 2011 | By Stephen Evans

Tourists take a photo with the Buddy Bear sculptures on Berlin's Kurfuerstendamm Boulevard. The bears are on display through 3 October to mark the 120th anniversary of the city's most famous shopping street. (Reuters)
Venice

Cusco, Peru

Los Angeles

Oaxaca

VENEZIA NON È UN ALBERGO

TOURISM IS
COLONIZATION

WARNING
TOURIST FREE ZONE
ALL TOURISTS
LEAVE THE AREA

TURISTA
GO HOME
OAXACA
ANTICAPITALISTA
STORIES
Angry Shanghai Residents Dump Water on Noisy Foreigners
by Li on Thursday, March 21, 2013

Kerala

New York

Lissabon

Shanghai
The rise of “anti-tourism” mobilizations around the globe…

...involves instances of “othering“, scapegoating, and demonization...
...but must not be reduced to the same!

Hello! Buenos días!

Dear new Berliners and short term visitors (tourists),

we invite you to join us in our struggle against the exploding rents here in Berlin.

As you might have noticed Berlin is quite a place to be these days. We, who have been living here for decades, are facing the sideeffects of this international attention. Our rent is rising rapidly and a lot of people are being displaced. Our neighborhoods are being transformed into superficial entertainment parks with an infrastructure which only to a minimum fulfills the needs of old Berliners.

We believe that visitors and new Berliners could themselves do something against these processes that they are part of. They could raise their voice against the city government, its failed city-development and the tourism industry. City marketing which treats the city and its inhabitants as a brand is not in our interest. „be Berlin”, the city’s marketing slogan, has a bitter side effect for a lot of people. We invite you to join us in our upcoming demonstrations.

Show your solidarity! Let’s struggle together for a good life for everyone - without displacement, low wages and racial discrimination! Spread the word and come with your friends!

Saturday / August 18th 2012
Saturday / September 1st 2012
Saturday / September 15th 2012
4-6pm Kottbusser Tor/Admiralstraße

I love Berlin

Santiago de Chile

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Urban Tourism as a course of conflict: a taxonomy of negative effects

| **ECONOMIC**       | • Increased costs of living  
|                    | • Changes to destinations’ commercial landscapes (homogenization of retail, displacement of businesses serving local needs) |
| **PHYSICAL**       | • Overcrowding, traffic congestion, noise, litter,  
|                    | • Environmental damage  
|                    | • Architectural pollution  
|                    | • Development pressure, and land-use conflicts  
|                    | • Displacement of lower socioeconomic groups |
| **SOCIO-CULTURAL** | • Commodification and commercialisation  
|                    | • Potential for intercultural misunderstanding/conflicts  
|                    | • Social problems such as crime, prostitution and “uncivil“ behavior |
| **PSYCHO-LOGICAL** | • Feelings of alienation, and the loss of a sense of belonging or attachment to the community |
Urban Tourism as a course of conflict: a taxonomy of negative effects

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Oranienburgerstrasse, Berlin Mitte - an extreme example of “commercial gentrification”: proportion of tourist and entertainment-related uses from 10 to 80 % of the ground floor space (Richter 2010: 106–107)
Changes to destinations’ commercial landscapes

• (Tourism-induced) commercial gentrification can lead to displacement:
  – Displacement of traders
  – Displacement of produce
  – Displacement of consumers
  – Displacement of a kind of social relation and a community (Gonzales 2014)
  – And, in some cases: Displacement of destinations‘ original appeal
Urban Tourism as a course of conflict: a taxonomy of negative effects

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“Hotelification” - Hotel development is transforming the character of many communities & competing against other land use priorities, from affordable housing to manufacturing and cheap office space required by start-ups etc. (Pratt Institute 2015)
Hotel Development in NYC: Room for Improvement (Pratt 2015)


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A key bone of contention: Huge growth of vacation rentals:
Available vacation rentals in Mitte, Kreuzberg, P’Berg and Friedrichshain: **2397**
Available regular apartment rentals: **1595** (all figures for March 2015, Source: Plusforta)
Inside Airbnb
Adding data to the debate

INDEPENDENT, NON-COMMERCIAL, OPEN SOURCE DATA TOOL

How is Airbnb really being used in and affecting your neighborhood?

Airbnb IN NYC

OUT OF MORE THAN 27,000 LISTINGS:

16k are for the entire home (58%)

87% highly available (more than 60 days/year)

29% multi-listings (where the host has other listings)

FILTER by Neighborhood

Chelsea

50+ data points per listing

HOST “JOHN D”
17 listings

SEE Airbnb ACTIVITY OVER TIME IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

2012

2013

2014

VIEW TOP HOSTS’ MULTIPLE LISTINGS

NEXT...

VISIT insideairbnb.com

SHARE it widely

#insideairbnb #illegalhotels #affordablehousing #nyc

DOWNLOAD the data
(open source; 50+ data points per listing)

The data Airbnb doesn’t want you to see!

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Touristification – We know it when we see it, but what is it, exactly?

Urban Tourism Politicized

- Tourism has evolved into an increasingly powerful force of urban change (so much that there is talk about a “touristification” of urban space or, alternatively, a “recreational turn” in processes of urbanization (Gotham 2005; Stock 2007))

- The heightened impact of tourism – as well as what is perceived as a skewed civic agenda in favour of the "visitor class“ – has led to a politicization of what had hitherto been a largely non-controversial issue

- Debates revolve around
  - tensions between development for use value for inhabitants vs. development for exchange value (and cities as a place to call home and as a place to visit and for accumulation respectively)
  - equity impacts (who bears the costs and benefits from the visitor economy?) but also…
  - detrimental impacts for the “visitor economy” itself (e.g. acceptance problems as well as an erosion of tourism‘s resource basis)!

We know it when we see it, but what is it, exactly?
Berlin, Germany

“\textit{The tourist destroys what he seeks by finding it}”

\textit{(Hans Magnus Enzensberger)}
Tourism and City Sustainability

- SCD – Sustainable City Development Policies
- TD – Tourism Development Approaches
- SCT – Sustainable City Tourism
  1. City Sustainability Policies that Impact Tourism
  2. Tourism Development that Impacts City Sustainability (Lew 2011)

Sustainably managing increasing tourist numbers (...) while ensuring the city is developed to respond to the needs of both visitors and local communities is key.

Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Building “better“ convention centers for “better“ cities

1. Planning processes that are fair, transparent and inclusive
Planning processes that are fair, transparent and inclusive

- Urban (economic) development = a matter of competing visions and interests and, above all, a matter of choices and trade-offs
  - e.g. “Where to invest?”; “Into what to invest?“ “To what end?“ etc.

- Research suggests that the bigger the project and therefore the interests involved, the greater the potential for “democracy deficits”, “optimism biases“ and, according to some authors, “strategic misrepresentation“...

(...) Megaproject development is a field where little can be trusted, not even – some would say especially not – numbers produced by analysts. [In addition], project promoters often avoid and violate established practices of good governance, transparency and participation, (...). Civil society does not have the same say in this arena of public life as it does in others; citizens are typically kept at a substantial distance from mega-project decision making. (Flyvbjerg et al 2003)
1. Planning processes that are fair, transparent and inclusive
2. Developing political alternatives to the “arms race”
Developing political alternatives to the “arms race”

• The idea that cities compete represents a key “logic of action” of today’s cities and regions (Le Gales 1998: 502)

• While competition can have positive impacts, it can also result in waste and an inefficient allocation of (public) resources
  • e.g. when convention centers are cannibalizing business from each other, fight price wars and sit empty large parts of the year

• Significantly, competition by no means exhausts the nature of relationships between cities:
  • Through collaboration and the development of complementary roles the success of one city need not be at the expense of another
  • e.g. the marketing cooperation “Seven Centers of Germany”

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Building “better“ convention centers for “better“ cities

1. Planning processes that are fair, transparent and inclusive

2. Developing political alternatives to the “arms race“

3. Lessons from urban renewal (Jane Jacobs redux)
Cities grow in a way that we can only call organic, in the sense that one thing depends on another and another and another and another - they’re webs of mutual support. And if they don’t have that, they die away. You can’t make a downtown like a one-crop plantation and get anything out of it. One trouble with having great massive things, like a convention center, (...) is that it turns an area that had diversity and variety and opportunity of many kinds in it - small kinds, but many kinds - into something resembling a one-crop place.

- Jane Jacobs (ARTVOICE, July 27, 2000)
Lessons from urban renewal (Jane Jacobs redux)

From 'big boxes with docks'

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Lessons from urban renewal
(Jane Jacobs redux)

From 'big boxes with docks'

to integrated parts of the urban fabric

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I think the idea of making a kind of compound for the out-of-towners, the convention people, and plunking it right in the middle of [a city], is terrible. ... People like to go to conventions in New York, because they can go to the theater and all those amazing restaurants, and find anything they want in a toy store, and so on. But that wasn’t made for out-of-towners; out-of-towners share in it. The same could be said of (...) any great destination. The basis is the local use, and then the gravy is visitors’ use.

- Jane Jacobs (ARTVOICE, July 27, 2000)
Building “better” convention centers for “better” cities

1. Planning processes that are fair, transparent and inclusive
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4. “You shall love your neighbor[s] as yourself
“You shall love your neighbor[s] as yourself”

- Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) = way for developers and community organizations to ensure that residents share in benefits from major developments

ATTACHMENT A
COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROGRAM

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Community Benefits Program for the Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment District Project is to provide for a coordinated effort between the Coalition and the Developer to maximize the benefits of the Project to the Figueroa Corridor community. This Community Benefits Program is agreed to by the Parties in connection with, and as a result of, the Cooperation Agreement to which it is attached. This Community Benefits Program will provide publicly accessible park space, open space, and recreational facilities; target employment opportunities to residents in the vicinity of the Figueroa Corridor; provide permanent affordable housing; provide basic services needed by the Figueroa Corridor community; and address issues of traffic, parking, and public safety.

Agreed-upon community benefits: (1) a developer-funded assessment of community park & recreation needs, and a $1 million commitment toward meeting those needs; (2) a goal that 70% of the jobs created in the project pay the City's living wage, and consultation with the coalition on selection of tenants; (3) a first source hiring program targeting job opportunities to low-income individuals and those displaced by the project; (4) increased affordable housing requirements in the housing component of the project, and a commitment of seed money for other affordable housing projects; (5) standards for responsible contracting and leasing decisions by the developer. (see http://communitybenefits.blogspot.de)
“You shall love your neighbor[s] as yourself“
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“You shall love your neighbor[s] as yourself”
Southbank Centre, London

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Towards Convention Centers that ENGAGE...

- With their immediate surroundings;
- With the cities they are a part of;
- With their cities’ residents!
Literature Used:

- Gotham, Kevin Fox (2005) 'Tourism gentrification: The case of new Orleans' vieux carre (French Quarter)', Urban Studies, 42:7
