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IS ALL TOURISM BENEFICIAL? *THE IMPACTS OF PORT-CITY REGENERATION INITIATIVES*

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Partly as a result of long-standing processes of de-industrialisation, many port cities have encouraged tourism-related activities in recent decades as an alternative to port or shipping activities. This can bring many benefits and can assist in broadly-based regeneration of the city as a whole. In many historic port cities, this can be shown by the example of cruise tourism, which has seen a significant expansion globally in recent decades, with increased capacity in terms of ships, length of operating season, area of coverage, and development of related infrastructure such as cruise passenger terminals in many cities. There are clear economic, social and environmental benefits linked to cruise tourism, arising for instance from the spending power that visitors bring, as well as the possibility for cruise passenger terminals to act as venues for a range of associated activities. However, problems may also arise from cruise tourism, for instance in terms of increased congestion and pollution, and damage to historic heritage. Moreover, anticipated economic benefits may be relatively limited and vulnerable to external factors. In such a context, appropriate spatial planning can provide a means of maximising benefits and minimising associated problems.

INTRODUCTION

The technological development of port functions (arising from factors such as containerisation and developments in transport technology) has led to a shifting of port uses away from historic dockland areas, with the development of specialised dockyards, container ports and distribution centres in more peripheral areas of cities, served by new communications links. The result has been the creation of voids in many historic dockland areas, which have often come to represent broader processes of economic and social decay. This has often been exacerbated by the disconnection between such areas and the central business districts of port cities, including retail and cultural uses.

The creation of such voids has led to the need for regeneration, and indeed such areas have often been seen as opportunities to 're-image' the city, provide new leisure and cultural uses, and restore linkages between the waterfront and the city centre. Hence new and innovative retail, residential, leisure and cultural uses have frequently been created in such areas.

These approaches have often applied 'master-planning' principles for instance in relation to integration of uses, and large-scale 'flagship' developments have frequently been used as a focus of such development, partly to ensure the maximum effects of 're-imaging'.

In many cases, tourism and related uses have formed an important part of such regeneration schemes for port cities, since these uses can provide an alternative to employment and income based on port or shipping activities, and can allow port cities (for instance in the Mediterranean region) to make use of advantages arising from location, climate and historic heritage. It is helpful in this respect that tourism as an activity is increasing in importance globally, relative to many other economic sectors.

CRUISE TOURISM

One example of tourism with specific implications for port cities is cruise tourism. There has been significant growth in this activity since the 1960s, with expansion since the 1960s leading to increased capacity, particularly in terms of ships (Capocaccia 2001). Indeed, around £1 billion was invested in new, larger cruise ships by the world largest cruise firms in 2008. This included the new 160,000 tonne 'Independence of the Seas', for the Royal Caribbean International cruise company, which has a capacity of 3,600 passengers and contains facilities such as a climbing wall, an ice rink and a shopping mall. Furthermore, the 'Oasis of the Seas', planned for delivery in 2009, is the first of two Oasis class cruise ships which will supplement the Royal Caribbean International fleet. This ship, of 220,000 tonnes and able to carry 5,400 passengers, will have sixteen decks, and will include a full-size carousel, an aquatheatre amphitheatre, and an internal open-air park with a multi-purpose central piazza. It will operate from Florida, and will be the largest cruise ship in the world.

The recent growth in cruise tourism has been brought about in part because cruise operators have exploited the changing image and appeal of cruise tourism, by targeting a younger 'mass' consumer base, linked to more flexible travelling routes and seasons, and providing an increasingly broad range of facilities and activities (both on- and off-ship). Hence it has been forecast that worldwide numbers of cruise passengers may grow from 15.1 million in 2006 to 25 million by 2015 (Peisley, 2006).

In terms of built infrastructure, a further implication of the growth in cruise tourism is the need for enhanced capacity in terms of cruise passenger terminals, which many cities have sought to develop in order to compete more effectively in the global market for cruise tourism (Millspaugh 2001), particularly where cities aspire to become 'home ports' (from where passengers start or end their journeys) since these enjoy greater benefits for instance in terms of tourism-related income.

BENEFITS

Cruise (and other tourism) activity can offer significant benefits which can contribute to the achievement of regeneration outcomes for port cities (Bruttomesso 2001; Kotval and Mullin 2001; McCarthy 2003a). Specifically, economic benefits can include: increased visitor spending (including direct and indirect effects); job creation; city image enhancement due to the cachet associated with cruise tourism (arising from associations with modernity, leisure and luxury); the attraction of new service industries (Figueira de Sousa 2001); extension of the tourist or visitor 'season' with the increasing operation of year-round cruise tourism; and additional revenues from passenger terminals where these include uses such as retail and leisure in additional to the terminals' primary function.

There are also clear environmental benefits which can lead to sustainable development outcomes (Matvejevic 2001). Specifically, the following benefits may be evident: re-use of dockland areas as 'brownfield' sites with particular advantages in terms of location; preservation of historic heritage where this can house new uses; more effective use mixing compared to the city as a whole, resulting from a 'master-planned' approach which prioritises integration of uses; improved linkages between the waterfront and the city; more sustainable urban densities than many other parts of the city, including relatively high residential densities; and an improved overall environment, particularly where resources and planning make the best use of the visibility of the waterfront area (in terms of representing the city as a whole and acting as a gateway) for instance by applying high-quality iconic architecture as a feature and focus of regeneration.

Social benefits of cruise tourism may include the use of 'planning gain' or community benefits, which are benefits funded by developers and designed to offset the potential negative impacts of the development. Such benefits may include for instance community facilities, environmental improvements and enhanced infrastructure, which can be of benefit to local communities as well as visitors. In addition, developments associated

with cruise tourism, such as cruise passenger terminals, may allow greater access to the waterfront (for instance via public walkways) than was previously available, and this too can be enjoyed by local communities as well as visitors. For instance, in the case of the cruise terminal development in Palma de Mallorca, planning gains included the provision of a new road system, a new public walkway, and the handing-over to the municipality of the ownership and management of the seafront promenade (Triay 2001). There may also be other facilities within cruise-related developments, which can be enjoyed by local communities, such as retail and leisure facilities. In addition, cruise-related tourism development may help to enable local communities to 'reconnect' with historic port areas, particularly where interpretation techniques are used effectively, without compromising authenticity.

PROBLEMS

However, cruise tourism development (and other tourism development) in port city waterfront areas may also lead to costs or problems. For instance, much of the employment created may be seasonal, low-wage and low-skilled. In addition, the income (direct and indirect) derived from visitors may be small, particularly where visitors spend minimal time in the city (Figueira de Sousa 2001). Such income is also vulnerable to global shifts in fashion as well as the effects of events in terms of perceived risk (Bianchini 1993). Furthermore, competition amongst host ports often leads to relatively small fees being paid by operators, reducing the overall benefit to port cities. At a broader level, it may be argued that the increasingly globalised pressures for cruise tourism may lead in the longer term to homogenisation of the waterfront areas of port cities, in the context of increasing pressures for place branding which emphasise the need for local distinctiveness.

There may also be environmental costs deriving for instance from the inadequacy of infrastructure such as transport to cope with large numbers of cruise passengers (Capocaccia 2001). This may be particularly important for 'home' ports where passengers embark or disembark (in some cases with a throughput of over 10,000 passengers per day), resulting in congestion, and negative effects may be felt particularly in sensitive historic urban areas where heritage conservation is a key issue (Shaw 2001). Congestion may be exacerbated by the (albeit decreasing) seasonality of cruise (and other) tourism, although efficient scheduling of cruise traffic can minimise this. In addition there may be significant pollution effects. Air pollution may derive from sulphur-rich exhaust fumes, and water pollution may derive from the waste from cruise ships, comprising for instance waste water, sewage and oil-contaminated water. Moreover, the United Nations has indicated that passengers on a typical cruise ship account for 3.5 kg of garbage daily, and it argues that since most regulations concerning pollution were developed prior to the expansion of cruise tourism, there are many loopholes and exemptions within the regulations which result in pollution effects, though these are largely related to the passage of ships through open seas. There may also be loss of natural habitats (Matvegevic 2001).

In addition, social costs may derive from increased crime and anti-social behaviour in some contexts, as well as a broader decrease in the quality of life of local communities, linked to effects such as congestion. There may also be a degree of marginalisation or even displacement of local communities as a result of the gentrification effects of tourism-related prestige waterfront development.

EXAMPLES

The case of Valletta in Malta presents an interesting case of cruise passenger terminal development since the country has become increasingly dependent on tourism, but it also has an extremely valuable historic heritage, particularly in Valletta's Grand Harbour (a World Heritage Site), where a cruise passenger terminal has been sited (McCarthy 2003b). Hence there have been some tensions between the need for tourism development and for protection of historic heritage. The area for the cruise passenger terminal in Valletta was identified in the city's strategic spatial plan (Maltese Planning Authority 1997), and a development brief was prepared for the scheme (Maltese Planning Authority 1998). Part of the area selected for the scheme was of great value in terms of historic heritage, comprising seventeenth century stores as well as historic bastions, though many of the buildings were in a state of decay, and other parts of the area were vacant and derelict and used for car parking and port-related storage. Partly due to the requirements of the development brief, the scheme includes a new-build cruise passenger terminal, a new retail complex, and a range of leisure and recreation uses with new bars and restaurants on the waterfront.

Elements of good practice include an emphasis on high quality design which is carefully integrated into the site, re-use (or re-creation) of historic buildings, and provision of new landscaped areas and a new walkway along the waterfront. However, while there is a range of uses, this does not include residential uses (though the Grand Harbour Local Plan indicates the need for these) which are often desirable for such areas (Brutomesso 2001). There is also a lack of connection with the city centre, partly because while this is close by, there is a significant change in level, though in 2009 the restoration of the Upper Barakka Lift (a vertical connection linking the cruise terminal with the city centre) was agreed to be completed by 2011. In addition, the new retail and leisure facilities incorporated into the scheme (including restaurants and bars) do not seem to be used significantly by local people. This reflects wider concerns for waterfront regeneration in port cities (Hayuth and Hilling 1992; McCarthy 1995; 1996; 1998).

Other European examples include a new cruise passenger terminal in Amsterdam, which shows innovation in design and a highly-developed transport infrastructure to minimise congestion (but with problems in terms of lack of public access to the adjacent waterfront because of heightened security concerns). In addition, the case of a terminal development in Genoa illustrates a design-led approach based on a detailed master-plan, with a resulting high level of integration of uses.

ANALYSIS

The examples mentioned above show the need for spatial planning to manage the potential conflicts between tourism development and the protection of heritage or amenity interests, and to take account of such conflicts in decision-making for the strategic regeneration of the waterfront areas of port cities. Such decision-making should involve a wide range of interests including local communities, so that appropriate community benefits are included. It should also seek to ensure that development schemes involving tourism-related activities include appropriately-integrated uses, and that schemes are integrated with the wider city, with adequate provision of transport infrastructure. Moreover, it should aim to ensure that the distinctiveness of the area is maintained, so as to protect its long-term attractiveness for tourists and visitors.

Moreover, in terms of the development of cruise passenger terminals – an important physical effect of the expansion of cruise tourism – there would seem to be a need for clearer and more careful regulation of the process of development and expansion of such development, taking account of all potential impacts. In fact an analogy may be suggested here in terms of the process of 'containerisation'. Like the expansion of cruise tourism, this led to significant changes in the way that (commercial) ports operated, and, while there were major associated benefits including wealth creation, there were also significant associated problems including congestion and adverse environmental impacts (Bruttomesso 2001), to which the regulatory infrastructure was often slow to respond. In such circumstances, areas of heritage value (for instance within historic port cities) may be particularly vulnerable (Marshall 2001).

One means of evaluating the potential effects of cruise passenger terminals – as a key component of cruise tourism promotion – could be by the application of generic criteria to ascertain the potential contribution of such development schemes to broader regeneration aims. Such criteria could include for instance: internal functional integration of an appropriate mix of land uses, including re-use of historic buildings where appropriate; integration with the surrounding area, particularly the city centre; regeneration effects on the city as a whole; and inclusive partnership in the development of the scheme. These are based on case studies of waterfront development in practice (McCarthy 1996; 1998), and they reflect a degree of consensus on good practice in waterfront development/regeneration. In addition, the application of 'master-planning' approaches, as in the case of Genoa, can provide a clear vision to shape development so as to maximise net benefits.

CONCLUSIONS

In order for the net benefits of tourism development in port cities to be maximised, there needs to be careful management of the potential conflicts between tourism and related development and heritage or amenity interests, and such conflicts need to be taken account of in decision-making, which should also involve a wide range of interests including local communities. Effective spatial planning can help to ensure that a development scheme involving tourism-related activities includes an appropriately-integrated range of uses, and is integrated with the wider city. It can also assist in ensuring that the distinctiveness of the area is maintained. This can lead to the achievement of sustainable regeneration benefits for the city as a whole.

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