THE TOURISM CHALLENGE

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Today, the most extensive wave of land use worldwide is tourism development. As travel demand increases, nations, provinces and communities now look to tourism for economic progress, even salvation. It is reported to be the largest item of world trade, employing over 200 million people, one in every nine workers. It now represents over 10 percent of all global wages and is expected to grow at a real rate of 5.5 percent per year. (World 1995).

As it continues to spiral upward, it consumes thousands, perhaps millions of acres of land yearly. New resorts, new airports, new roads, and new shops, casinos and hotels demand the very best of our remaining land resources. From research and observation, one must conclude that land planning for tourism is today’s greatest challenge to landscape architects the world over— one that we are failing to meet. It is not only within our ability to resolve but it is our responsibility to do so.

THE URGENCY

Environmental Degradation

Natural and cultural resources, the very foundations for tourism, are being eroded as never before. Especially damaging is water pollution because clean water is the basis for extensive travel objectives. More than 2.5 billion gallons of untreated waste is flushed into Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, every year (Brancatelli 1994). In 1994, volunteers for the Center for Marine Conservation collected seven million items of trash and a ton of debris for every mile of the Texas Gulf Coast. It was reported that $2.5 million a day of tourist revenues were being lost because arsenic, grease, and other toxic wastes were flowing into Galveston Bay. And, this is a worldwide as well as an American problem. Resort hotel
sewage is frequently discharged directly into the water used for swimming, fishing, diving, and boating. Equally significant is the depletion of vegetation, wildlife habitat, and soils due to unplanned tourism development. These are just a few of the clues to the environmental crisis that is so very significant to tourism everywhere.

Disunited Development

As the thousands of decisionmakers continue to create attractions, services and facilities, the result is a chaotic mass of unconnected development. This lack of integration creates a confusing and often ugly juxtaposition of land uses. This situation results in less than optimal business success, poor visitor satisfaction, conflict with existing community values, and environmental damage. Neither the public or private sector seems to be concerned about the overall result. Only when the issue becomes critical, such as gridlock traffic congestion or killing of an endangered species is action taken.

Homogenization

Mass tourism development today is producing a homogenized landscape--the same no matter where we go. Business developers tend to copy others that have appeared to be successful. Franchise and chain firms tend to repeat the same land use and building design in all locations and geographic regions. In the great desire to standardize offerings to market segments, the visual landscape is beginning to look all alike. The traveler today is less and less aware that he has left home. Although some tourism designs capitalize on vernacular themes, we have been guilty of much repetition.

Destruction of Place Qualities

Closely related to homogenized development is the destruction of place qualities. Hills are bulldozed flat, native vegetation is destroyed and replaced by standardized plantings, significant vistas are blocked, historic places are destroyed by gambling casinos, vernacular architecture is replaced by international glass-box style, prehistoric sites are buried under golf courses and resorts, and the subtle qualities of community traditions are often obliterated. Place qualities, the very essence of the pulling power of tourism, are unwittingly being
decimated, and how much are we doing to prevent it?

**Lack of Land Use Policies**

Most of the ills I have just described are due to the lack of land use and design policies, especially for tourism. The mind set of tourism agencies has been and continues to be on promotion, not on what is to be promoted. And so with such a vacuum of land guidance, individual investors continue to create poor tourism development that is not only bad conservation but also bad economics. Why haven’t landscape architects been on the cutting edge of fostering better land use policies?

**THE LANDSCAPE CHALLENGE**

Looking back over 50 years of observing development, these are just a few of the key issues that represent a major challenge to all of us involved in land planning and design for tourism. Every one of these issues is within the scope of our profession. Although some excellent tourism design work has been done here and there, generally as a profession we have failed to respond to the need for our intervention into the field of tourism. It is within our tradition and philosophy but has escaped our attention.

Our great leaders, such as Frederick Law Olmsted, Henry Vincent Hubbard and Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe believed in a total landscape philosophy. They were not merely grass and plant planners. They were social activists, political realists, cultural geographers, and above all, disciples of Nature. No other professionals are as well equipped to provide the leadership, guidance, and specific design recommendations for tourism growth that honors and perpetuates landscape values. And so, the challenge to all landscape architectural professionals today is to become more proactive rather than passive about the many issues associated with tourism.

Following are eight of the most important ways in which landscape architects can exercise greater power to resolve today’s land development issues of tourism.

**Understand the Real Clients**
Traditional landscape architectural practice involves a designer-client (usually property owner) relationship. For tourism, an intervening factor too often is missed or incompletely considered—the "real" client, the visitor. The true clients are the users of the landscapes we design. Understanding these land users has not been part of our training and we cannot rely on our limited experience or intuition as we design.

Today’s travel markets are not only diverse, they are highly specialized, requiring individual land design solutions. To the traditional market seeking beach resorts must be added the great growth today in ecotours, adventure travel, scuba diving, rock climbing, hiking (tramping), scenic trail use, nature photography, wildlife watching, and cultural activities such as visiting archeological and historic sites. The planning and design of areas and structures for these activities present new challenges to today’s landscape architects.

It becomes necessary, then, to incorporate travel market specialists into the design team. Their market research is as critical for development as for promotion. This research can provide insight into important characteristics, such as demographics, life styles, psychographics, and other visitor factors that must influence the design and development of tourist places. The ultimate success of our work depends not only on the desires of the owner, but more critically upon how well it meets the needs and interests of the travelers.

**Practice New Public Involvement**

Avant-garde landscape architects are now recognizing the need to practice a new design paradigm that involves the people being impacted by tourism. In the past our training in landscape architecture has tended to inflate our egos, that our artistic talent and intuition would give us elite design status. Today we are being humbled by the opinions and tastes of many others. Many constituencies today are much more vocal, especially on land use issues related to tourism. Residents frequently block tourism project proposals, such as hotels in their back yards, new highways through parks and a Disneyland at Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania. Local residents, not environmentalists nor planners, are now objecting to new housing projects near the 470-mile Blue Ridge Parkway in eastern United States, a scenic area that attracts over 20 million visits annually and is managed by the National Park Service (Fordney 1994). At the center of the controversy is local citizen
demand for protection of scenic viewsheds, old structures, mills, farmsteads and historic fence details. Communities are ahead of us in creating their own destinies of better design.

Progressive designers today are recognizing the need for initiating public involvement at the very beginning of the design process. Local residents have the right to influence tourism planning and design that will impact them. Landscape design educator and practitioner, Lane Marshall (1983), has put forward a design process with a first step of input (Figure 1 placed here) by citizens and governmental agencies. This step includes workshops, brainstorming, attitude surveys, public information and review of policies that will influence design of a project. In some areas such a step must be preceded by educational sessions that describe alternatives. Educator and consultant Motloch (1991) advocates a "design/management hierarchy" that (Figure 2 placed here) progresses from the macro to the micro influences on design. Canadian planner of tourism, Callaway (1990) has introduced what he calls a "co-design approach" that utilizes a seven-step process of public participation in projects in British Columbia. Designers and planners should make use of all available techniques for public involvement (Manual 1988).

Another aspect of this new design paradigm, especially by landscape architectural consultants from outside the project location, is cross-cultural ignorance. At a previous IFLA conference, authors Dimanlig and Hilario (1990) observed, "Attempts at change are often resisted, particularly where planning approaches and values differ widely from those of intended beneficiaries and are imposed without the benefit of an acculturation process". At the same conference, landscape architectural scholar Hamed (1990) described many design cultural problems when consultants work in the Middle East. Regarding a park plan in Saudi Arabia, he comments, "In the case of Asir National Park, the cultural gap between the American designer and the typical Saudi user was manifested in many instances and has caused problems to users and managers. These include such issues as insensitivity toward the separation of the sexes, the inappropriateness of Western style bathrooms and the inadequacy of typical American picnic tables for the Bedouin style of eating." Conflict can arise because visitors would be a mix of residents and foreign tourists. Landscape architects have much greater opportunities for success of tourism projects when they fully understand cultural
characteristics of the country in which they are working.

**Understand External Site Implications**

Landscape architecture is often called site design, implying containment at the site boundaries. A property-owner client relationship with the landscape professional has reinforced this narrow scope of responsibility. For tourism, however, this narrow perspective is insufficient.

For example, on an island in the South Pacific a study revealed that the resort hotel investors and designers had missed a great opportunity to look beyond the hotel sites. Resort hotels were losing money and visitors were bored and felt cheated. No nature interpretation or trails were available in the magnificent mountain in the center of the island. Ancient Polynesian sites, abundant on the island, were not available nor interpreted for visitors. The many potential visitor uses of the beautiful waters of the lagoon within the coral reef were untapped. The rich traditions and cultural assets of the island demanded by the visitors were not being carried forth in dance, pageantry, costumes, legends, or crafts.

Surely the landscape architect for each hotel site cannot resolve all these issues but should raise them in early discussions with the client and during land analysis studies. Fortunately, more landscape architects are beginning to perform this valuable role. For example, Donald Hilderbrandt of LDR International included the importance of surrounding resources when planning for Orange Valley Resort, Antigua (1991). When landscape architects relate external opportunities to site projects, all parties will gain. Visitor appeal and activities can be enhanced, businesses can be more successful, and resources can be protected.

**Assert Proactive Environmentalism**

Today, many landscape architectural efforts are thwarted because we are painted as "greeny extremists" and antagonistic to development. This negative image hinders our ability to demonstrate how compatible environmentalism is with tourism.

Probably no other form of economic development is so dependent upon the protection of cultural and natural resources as tourism. Support of resource protection is not mere
altruism, it is sound tourism economics. The great mass of tourism activities depends on clean water, scenic vegetation, wonders of nature, wildlife and their habitat, dramatic topographic change that is free from erosion, prehistoric and historic settings, and rich cultural landscapes. These land qualities are essential ingredients of the tourism "product".

Landscape architects need now to embrace ecological principles as foundation to all tourism projects. Landscape architect Kathy Poole, at the American Society of Landscape Architects conference last year proposed the introduction of "ecology as content," a deeper understanding of each site’s natural dynamic forces. Strong resource protection is essential to all tourism design projects.

**Plan at Three Scales**

Because of the great complexity of land development for tourism, greater opportunities are ahead for landscape architects when we divide tourism development into three scales, from macro to micro. The *site* scale is traditional and many landscape architects in recent years have found new opportunities of being of service in the land design of resorts, marinas, hotels, parks, and many other tourist sites. The comprehensive design guide, *Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design*, (1993), issued by the U.S. National Park Service, provides environmentally-sensitive details and recommendations for sites and structures.

Less popularly practiced is tourism landscape planning at the *destination* scale. It is helpful to define this as a community surrounded by attraction complexes. City governments, tourist councils and private sector organizations today are reaching out for guidance on how best to plan tourism. Their first inclination is to consider only the commercial side of tourism. But today, other groups, such as historic preservationists, natural resource conservationists, and citizen organizations want to be involved in the planning and decisionmaking. Because all development takes place on the land it is logical to believe that landscape architects are able to guide tourism destination growth in ways that meet the needs of all constituencies at the same time land values are retained.

Key elements within a destination requiring land design input include: the community itself, the several attraction complexes within and surrounding the community, and highway linkage between attractions and the community. For several years, for example, landscape
architect Hans Frederich Werkmeister (1990), has been concerned over poor road linkages for
tourist features in Egypt. He cites the city-like roads with bright street lights on the way to
the Valley of the Kings as a major design error. Because of the complexity of tourism
planning at the destination scale, it requires a design team approach including local public
involvement.

At the regional scale (here considered a state, province, or nation), landscape
architects have much to contribute, especially for land use policies. Public agencies and
private tourism organizations need guidance on major issues, such as transportation, resource
protection and incentives for destinations with greatest potential.

A tourism reality at this level, still not well understood, is that not all lands have
equal potential for tourism. Geographer and planner Michael Fagence of Australia (1991)
states that locations, regions, resources, amenities, and infrastructure have an unequal potential
and capacity for particular forms, types and scales of development. It is not enough to have
local enthusiasm and even offers from outside investors; to this must be added proof of
sufficient geographic foundation.

As now described in Tourism Planning (Gunn 1994), GIS computer mapping
technology has been applied to several state plans within the United States—Oklahoma,
Washington, Delaware, and Illinois. This process is based on the premise that areas with the
best quality and quantity of foundation factors have the greatest potential for tourism planning
and development. These foundation factors are: water and waterlife, wildlife, topographic
change, vegetative cover, existing natural resource developments (resorts, parks), prehistoric
areas, historic areas, economic development, existing cultural development, transportation,
and communities. All of these contribute greatly to tourism activities. When maps of these
factors are overlaid, the resulting composite shows destinations that have potential. Local
people can then analyze and plan more carefully for tourism development in these areas.

(Figure 3 placed here)

Landscape architects, with their sensitivity and knowledge of the several factors important to
design of places, could become more active at the regional scale for better tourism
development and success.
Be a Catalyst

Because landscape architects have no vested interest in tourism projects they are generally respected as being neutral and objective. Frequently, opposing forces can be brought together in order to work out solutions when landscape architects serve the role of catalyst.

A case in point was the solution to a long-standing stalemate between environmentalists and highway engineers at Franconia Notch, New Hampshire, USA. (Rigterink 1992) For over twenty years, an eleven-mile section of an Interstate highway had been held up due to objection from environmental groups. Their resistance centered on potential destruction of a traditional mountain landscape feature if Interstate standards were applied. This issue was finally resolved when planners and landscape architects intervened with a design solution that retained important landscape character. In order to implement the solution, however, Congressional action was required to change standards for the 11 mile strip—narrower shoulder, narrower median, and reduced speed limit. The needs of tourists, environmentalists and engineers are now met by an unusual scenic design that still allows traffic flows.

Acting as a design catalyst, bringing several decisionmaking forces together, can become a major function of landscape architects, especially for tourism applications.

New Innovation, Creativity

There is a tendency among investors and developers of tourist businesses to proliferate sameness. If it is seen that a type of operation is successful, there is a temptation to replicate everything willy-nilly, whether or not it is appropriate to the setting and to tourists. Today the design of beachfront hotels, theme parks and casinos tend to follow hackneyed stereotypes of the past. Fortunately, several design teams today are creating entirely new solutions that are more appropriate to special travel market segments and localized site conditions.

Especially significant is today’s ecotourism, a term that has been coined to capture the new trend of nature tourism. Here is a new and extremely great opportunity for landscape architectural practice, the world over. An excellent example that not only captures resource
protection but also makes money is Maho Bay Camps, U.S. Virgin Islands. The site plan has several innovative features, such as no roads, no grading of the native landscape, aesthetically placed structures, and all wastes are recycled.

Similar examples are appearing more frequently, proving that innovative solutions are not only resource sustainable but also profitable. Pamela Wight (1994), tourism development coordinator for Alberta, Canada, emphasizes the need for concern over place design that retains resource values in order to meet ecotourism market needs. Designers must play a major role in identifying capacity limits of resources for tourism development. Better design and management are essential to control overuse. All of these practices require close cooperation between developer-clients and ourselves as designers.

For tourism, historic reuse opens up new design challenges. Too often, history buffs drop their efforts when a building is kept from demolition or is restored. For tourism, consideration must be given as well to the setting, to access and parking (especially for tour buses) and to relationships with other tourism attractions and services. An innovation today is the modification of trademark design of franchise businesses such as McDonalds and Holiday Inns have done in special historic and environmentally sensitive areas.

For inspiration of greater design creativity there is no better stimulation than to again review the landscape principles set down by Hubbard and Kimball in 1917. These precepts are as fundamental today as they were then. Certainly we should use all modern tools, such as computer graphics, but for tourism the creative thought processes are as valid today as those cited at the birth of our profession. Consideration of order in landscape composition, unity, visitor perception, emphasis, balance, harmony, sequence, and scale are still important when utilizing land areas for tourism developments. But, no matter the principles, the key to successful and enduring design is the creativity of the landscape architect.

**Teach Tourism Design and Planning**

Today, tourism land use issues and design principles are not being taught to future architects, landscape architects, engineers, and planners. Tourism should be a part of every college and university program for these design professionals.

Because the land and landscape are the very foundations upon which all tourism is
built, principles of land design and planning must be incorporated into design and planning curricula. Such curricula should include the following topics:

--The roles and opportunities in tourism for design professionals
--The heterogeneity of geographic factors affecting tourism
--Public involvement in tourism design and planning
--Protection of place qualities in all tourism development
--Tourism land use as part of the urban planning fabric
--Integration of tourism into park planning
--Significance of travel markets in design and planning
--Design solutions to tourism resource protection
--The politics and economics of tourism and land use
--Eco-ethics of tourism planning and design
--Site design in context with regional planning

Of course, in order to teach these topics there must be support from university administrators, research information on these topics, and teachers trained to provide such education.

CONCLUSIONS

No other field for landscape architectural research, education, and practice is as wide open for attention as that of tourism. Those individuals and firms who are responding to this challenge are discovering how interesting and rewarding it can be. The teaching, talent and experience of landscape architects can be very effective in turning the present ills of tourism land design around into new, beautiful, and appropriate as well as profitable tourism development. The opportunities are there. Are we enthusiastic enough, aggressive enough, and knowledgeable enough to take advantage of them?
REFERENCES

Brancatelli, Joe (1995). "What is Polluting Our Beaches?" Smithsoniain, (26) 1, April, pp. 74-75.


Figure 1. Designer/Public Input Model. A land design process that involves citizen and government input throughout.
   (Adapted from Marshall 1983, 96)

Figure 2. Design/Management Heirarchy. A process of land design that progresses from the macro to the micro scale.
   (Source: Motloch 1991, 264)

Figure 3. Potential Tourism Development Zones. An example of the primary and secondary tourism development zones of potential for the state of Illinois. These zones resulted from computer graphic analysis of significant resource factors.
   (Source: Gunn 1993, Fig. 18)
METASYSTEMS DESIGNER
Integrates physical, fiscal, social and political systems; develops conceptual frameworks and models for the integration of physical and nonphysical systems

SYSTEMS DESIGNER
Manages physical systems and their synergism in "making place"; develops conceptual frameworks and models for management and integration of specific physical systems

PROJECT DESIGNER
Physical planning and design at the project scale:
- urban planning
- architecture
- landscape architecture

(for Figure 2)