

TOWARDS A CULTURAL TOURISM STRATEGY FOR THE ORESUND REGION

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In response to talk with Henrik Sparre-Ulrich:

a) Development of a model of enhanced cooperation between the art, culture and tourism sectors based on a broad values scheme.

“Why do we want tourism development in our communities? When you ask that question of a tourism promoter, the answer is: to generate revenue for the municipality, to create jobs, to provide economic opportunity, to support a host of activities that we couldn't support just with our own local population. That's all true but that's not the root of the answer. The root of the answer is: We encourage tourism development to improve the quality of life for our local community. And it's against that measuring stick that everything we do to promote tourism in our communities must be measured. If you're not generating a means for improving the quality of life in your community that is equal to or greater than any adverse impact you may be having on your community, you're not stepping forward.”¹

Here is the central argument that, as Robert McNulty puts it, 'successful cultural tourism... should satisfy the requirements of economic development without sacrificing environmental and cultural quality'.²

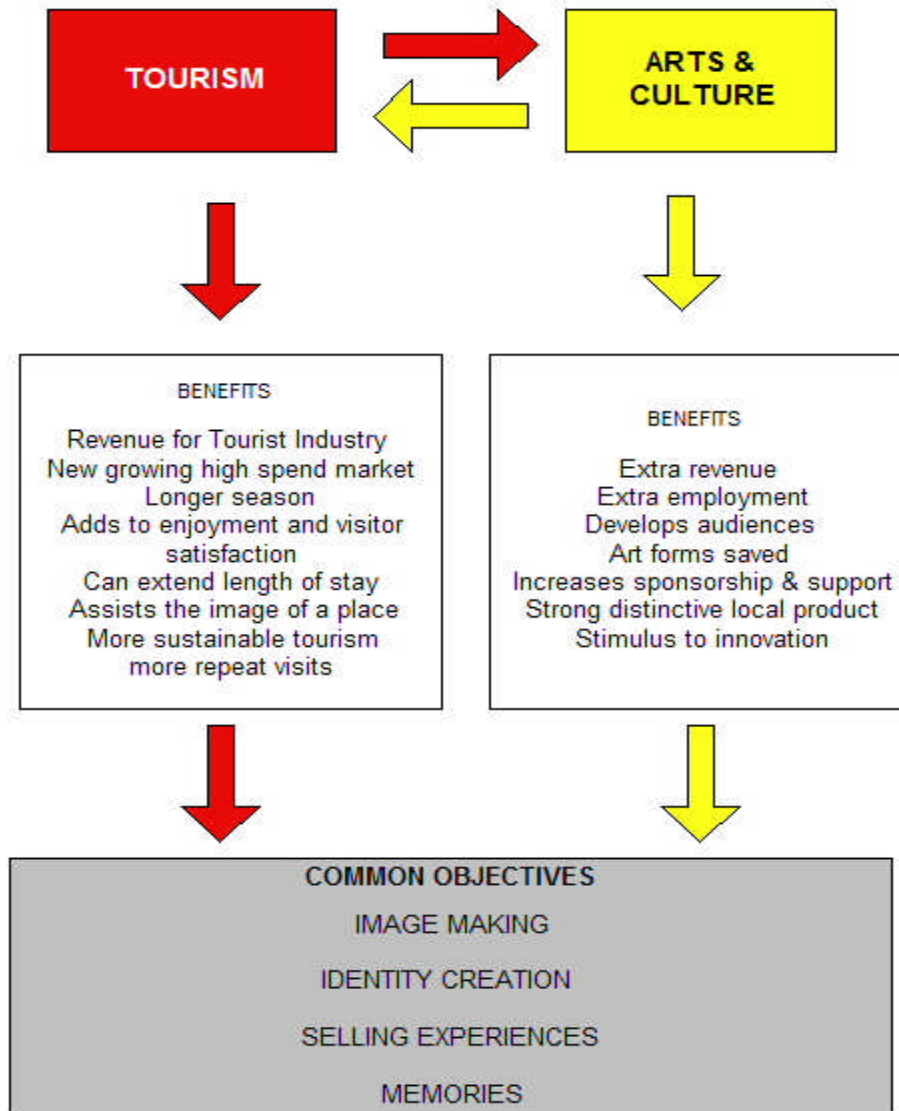
One of the best models I have seen for this, which concentrates on incentives and mutual benefits for the respective sectors is in the Western Australia cultural tourism strategy – *Journey Further* – which I think you already have but which is also attached. See page 8 – ‘The Potential Dynamic’. The Diagram is reproduced/adapted from our Oresund work on the next page.

(This also, of course, touches on the issue of sustainability which is addressed more centrally below).

¹ City Counsellor Pamela Plumb, of Portland, Maine, USA as cited in Robert McNulty, 'Revitalizing Industrial Cities Through Cultural Tourism' in *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, vol 25, 1985, p.228

² Ibid.

DYNAMICS & SYNERGIES OF CULTURAL TOURISM



Adapted from Journey Further: an arts and Cultural Tourism Strategy for Western Australia 2004

b) Development of a best practice model regarding what should be understood by "sustainable tourism"

In sustainable cultural tourism strategies culture and the arts have a strategic role to play. Many national and international indicators suggest that tourists are increasingly less interested in 'showpiece' resorts and destinations and more interested in environmental, cultural, heritage, ethnic and historical features. Cultural tourism is a strategy which is designed to satisfy the requirements of economic development in an industry which now represents 6% or more of GDP without sacrificing environmental and cultural quality. The special role of a strategic arts and cultural development strategy in this context is summarised by Carole Rifkind, of the US organisation,

Partners for Livable Places, when she argues that 'basing tourism on the arts, ethnicity, architecture and..heritage involves the recovery of cultural resources...we hardly knew we had.' Given the importance of tourism to regional economic development and the notorious vacillations of the industry, cultural tourism may provide some elements of stability and encourage the realisation of local cultural resources.

Sustainability in the context of tourism (apart from physical environmental factors such as aircraft carbon emissions, etc) has to refer centrally to the relationship established between 'hosts' and 'guests'. Operationally this is best addressed by getting stakeholder buy-in to a process of cultural mapping – discovering the resources we hardly knew – or forgotten – that we had.

A necessary pre-requisite is to know or to assemble an inventory of what an area's cultural assets, strengths and weaknesses are. This can best be achieved through the process of *cultural mapping*.

“Cultural mapping involves the identification and recording of an area's indigenous cultural resources for the purposes of social, economic and cultural development. Through cultural mapping, communities and their constituent interest groups can record their cultural practices and resources, as well as other intangibles such as their sense of place and social value. Subjective experiences, varied social values and multiple readings and interpretations can be accommodated in cultural maps, as can more utilitarian 'cultural inventories'. The identified values of place and culture can provide the foundation for cultural tourism planning and eco-tourism strategies, thematic architectural planning and cultural industries development. “

Though formulated by an Australian Aboriginal researcher with specific reference to her own culture, this quote provides some useful pointers to the ways in which other forms of indigenous culture can be effectively and sustainably mapped – and mobilised – for both cultural tourism and cultural/creative industry development. These are both quantitative and qualitative and include:

- Baseline statistical mapping of cultural sector and creative industry activity (employment, number of companies/organisations at local authority/sub-regional level.
- Quantitative and qualitative mapping of participation and satisfaction levels at cultural events and venues.
- A capital/infrastructure audit of actual or potential cultural venues and sites. This should not be restricted to dedicated sites and venues and should also include potential landscape/environmental sites, heritage sites and infrastructure suitable for adaptive use and mixed use development.
- The initiation and/or recording of special projects in all art forms relating to the stories, images, places, rituals, customs, festivals and cultural diversity of the region.

- The development of sense of place and social value projects which mean something to local residents and also produce interpretation and enhancement for the visitor experience.
- The training of interpretative guides.

c) Development of a strategy for better access (logistics) to high quality culture tourism products including better access to remote/periphery parts of the region

To ensure both ownership and input by all stakeholders – and equitable benefits to them - and sustainability of the initiative, the following actions and options may be necessary:

- appointment of a senior-level ‘Cultural Tourism Co-ordinator’ for the Oresund region responsible for strategy implementation, programme management and liaison with strategic authorities at regional and local levels, and with actual and potential funding partners;
- initiation of a range of projects – eg. *Oresund Stories*, *Oresund Images*, *Oresund Performs*, *Oresund Celebrates* – to stimulate new creative content development for both resident and tourist audiences. These initiatives should actively address the range and cultural diversity of Oresund and be socially inclusive in their orientation.
- the adoption of a brand name for the programme
- The programme should aim for a combination of some high-profile activities backed up by delivery of linked (and perhaps themed) smaller initiatives across Oresund
- development of a cultural mapping initiative and a ‘cultural map’ for Oresund as both a marketing and intelligence tool and to stimulate both new cultural content and increased tourist demand for and satisfaction with that content;
- development of a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based communications and marketing infrastructure for cultural tourism and related cultural and creative industry development in the region; and,
- development of a regional *Cultural Tourism Strategy* including, as a core component, a marketing strategy for the Region’s cultural offer.
- Development of capacity building elements of the programme such as business support and skills development for organisations participating within the programme
- Development of a business plan that is clear about the product offer, the market, and the management.

Performance indicators and critical success factors for this framework need to address both ‘supply-side’ (creation/production) and ‘demand-side’ (distribution/consumption) factors and include:

- capacity of the programme to stimulate local and region-level cultural and creative content;
- quality of local and region-level cultural and creative content;
- contribution of local and region-level cultural and creative content to quality of life for residents;
- stimulation to local and region-level cultural/creative industry development;
- demonstrable increase in visits and return visits by both domestic and international visitors;
- satisfaction levels;
- partnership funding and investment leveraged, and
- increased positive perception levels of Oresund by residents and visitors as evaluated through surveys and by favourable media mentions

Building the knowledge base for knowledge-based tourism offer: GIS

New information and communications technologies such as, for example, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software which allow the recording of many 'layers' of information about a place will be invaluable tools in the context of cultural mapping for Oresund.

Normally used for physical and land use planning purposes, and therefore used by almost all local authorities, GIS software is also capable of recording quantitative demographic information such as population, ethnicity, etc – , and market information relating to tourist movements and propensities, and qualitative information in the form of narrative, images, stories, etc., about a given place. It can integrate into its ‘layers’ of information details of, for example, a special heritage site, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a gallery, museum or ‘special place’ and have integrated information on that site in the form of text or additional and interpretative images.

GIS is used by all levels of government, by academic geographers and planners, and by commercial agencies and it is not difficult to see how it may be applied in the more qualitative context of cultural mapping and planning with interactive and online potential. Some UK counties, such as Somerset, are already using GIS with high resolution digital photography drawing on heritage and archival sources to profile the County’s cultural heritage online in the *Somerset Timeline* project (see: <http://www.somersettimeline.org.uk>).

In the context of cultural mapping – and recognising the importance for cultural and ‘knowledge-based tourism’ of developing a high quality computerised product database - GIS can:

- incorporate the baseline quantitative data on cultural sector activity and infrastructure and user/tourism/market data identified above;
- enable the ‘patching-in’ of diverse digitised media – text and narrative, still and moving images, maps, sound to enhance interpretative capacity and experience for locals and residents; and,
- be used for presentational purposes in web-based, CD ROM, DVD and hybrid digital formats and be edited and customised for hard copy presentation.

It will be important within the business planning phase to determine how such a system will fit within the region’s own GIS systems and any Destination Management System used.

d) Development of a model for public-private cooperation. This model might for example include 4 year public-private contracts aimed at developing new experience- and knowledge based culture tourism products (Jens Friis's example).

This is crucial but depends on the outcomes of the cultural mapping process which should, in principle, identify the opportunities for co-operation between public and private ‘content-suppliers’ (from museums and galleries to craft shops and musicians/performers) and the following stages in the value production chain – especially promotion and marketing, and distribution/dissemination.

e) Development of a model for cultural tourism mapping as a basis for establishing a coherent culture tourism strategy of the Oresund Region. This would enhance the possibility to also develop and include high quality cultural tourism products in the periphery of the region.

Most of my comments on this theme are covered in b and c above. I do stress, however, that cultural mapping should include tourism as well as indigenous/endogenous objectives. Cultural tourism, that is, should be able to act as a catalyst for other cultural development/cultural industry/experience economy objectives.

f) Development of a cooperation scheme with Riga Oresund (Latvia) and Klaipeda Oresund (Lithuania) regarding the above strategy elements including a concept for supporting the development of knowledge-and experience based cultural tourism products. Such support concept should include the product development needs of Oresund based tourism players including Baltic cruises.

Some of these issues are covered above and I can't comment further as I am not sufficiently familiar with the region yet. In researching for the Essex work however, I did come across a Baltic Cultural Tourism Strategy document which you may be familiar with. It's fairly basic but I am attaching it for your information.

Colin Mercer
December 5, 2005