**Civic Tourism: The Poetry and Politics of Place**

APRA Conference on Open Space

Dan Shilling
danshilling@cox.net
www.civictourism.org

“The embrace of tourism triggers a contest for the soul of a place.” Hal Rothman

---

**Extension of... Supplement to... Tool for...**

**Alternative Tourism**

What characterizes them all: A "place-based" tourism product.

- Adventure Tourism
- Literary Tourism
- Urban Tourism
- Agritourism
- Green Tourism
- Volunteer Tourism
- Cultural Tourism
- Heritage Tourism
- Sustainable Tourism
- Ecotourism
- Dark Tourism
- Life-Seeing Tourism
- Ethnic Tourism
- Geotourism

Yuma Territorial Prison: Prisons, cemeteries, concentration camps, battlefields, and other sites identified with human suffering and death are sometimes classified as "Dark Tourism."

---

**Why Should We Care?**

**Cultural Heritage: One of the Fastest Growing Segments**

- WTO estimates 37% of travelers fall into "Heritage" category; growing by 15% each year.
- Packaging your town, using your history, selling your environment, commodifying your culture – in the process sometimes changing the “story.”

"Destination communities must not be sanguine about the effects of tourism.” Fred Bosselman

---

**POETRY OF PLACE**

Nature, Culture, Buildings

**POLITICS OF PLACE**


“A society to match our scenery.” Wallace Stegner

---

Dan Shilling
danshilling@cox.net
Open Space Conference
May 9, 2007 - ASU West
Why Should We Care?

Cultural Heritage: One of the Fastest Growing Segments

Tourism is the 1st, 2nd or 3rd largest industry in every state, with tremendous potential to change the look and feel of a community – especially when the tourism product is nature, culture, and historic streetscapes.

Destination communities must not be sanguine about the effects of tourism.” Fred Bosselman

1. Nature of the Creative Economy, the Heritage Economy, and the Role of Tourism.
2. Obstacles and Opportunities
4. Three Strategies with Best Practices
   - Integrate the Story
   - Invest in the Product
   - Connect to the Public

From The Rise of the Creative Class
- “Place and community are more critical factors than ever before.”
- “The Creative Class is drawn to more organic and indigenous street-level culture.”
- “The Creative Class lifestyle comes down to a passionate quest for experience.”
- “Members of the Creative Class prefer more active, authentic and participatory experiences.”
- “We are shifting from the ‘consumption of goods’ to the ‘consumption of experiences.’”

1. BUT DON’T DO TOURISM. EH?
Hijacked Terms
- "Eco" that destroys resources (Greenwashing)
- "Heritage" that reinforces stereotypes (Human Zoos, Bluewashing)
- "Preservation" that creates cartoon streets (Boutique Towns: "Façadomy")

Misplaced Priorities
- "more" at the expense of "better"
- "use" at the expense of "preservation"
- "superficial" at the expense of "authentic"

Show Me the Money
- "marketing" at the expense of "product"
- "surface" at the expense of "substance"

Who labels, monitors, and accredits the use of "eco" and other terms? Who is the industry responsible for?

Tourism: Aligned with GDP-driven growth industry, not place.
(What department knows your tourism office?)

Growth Can Overwhelm
- visitor experience
- tourism product
- community
- economy ("uneconomic development")

BRIDGING DIFFERENCE
"Many NGOs recognize that they cannot ignore the market if they want to find and deliver solutions to complex environmental and social problems. These organizations may believe that the private sector and the market cause many of those very same problems, but a number of them realize that for that very reason these institutions are part of the solution."

Walking the Talk: The Business Case for Sustainable Development

Each With Its Own Purposes, Values & Methods

Tourism Industry
- Business: Private
- Commercial Goal: Educational Goal, "Sacred"
- Funded by Exchange: Largely Donations, Grants
- Mass Market: Individualistic
- Standardization: Differentiation
- Corporate, Distant Management: Local Oversight
- Success: More, More, More
- Facilitates Experience: Provides Experience
- Marketing: Product Development
- Vocabulary: "Destination"

Place Community
- Usually Nonprofit / Public
- Sacred Goal: "Sacred"
- Largely Donations, Grants
- Individualistic
- Differentiation
- Local Oversight
- Quality Before Quantity
- Experience: Provides Experience
- Product Development
- Vocabulary: "Place"

Rather than trying to reach "compromise," can we respect each sector's values and operate along parallel – not competing – tracks toward the same end?
Partnership Tactics

- Serve on Boards
- Museums: Join the Chamber
- Tourism: Become a “Friend”
- Attend Conferences
- Provide Information, Artifacts
- Joint Projects: Try a Mixer
- Heritage Trainings for Tourism
- Staff & Vice Versa
- Assist with Lobbying

A TELL-TALE SIGN: When you arrive in a community, ask the cabbie, hotel clerk, or waiter where the museums are.

"Cultural tourism can survive only if its asset base is managed in a sustainable manner, and sustainability can be achieved only if tourism and cultural heritage management work in partnership."

McKercher & du Cross

FRAGMENTATION

Tourism Industry
- Travel Agents, Websites
- Tour Operators, Guides
- Airlines, Hotels, B&BS
- Marketing, PR Firms
- Travel Magazines, Media
- RVs, Cruises, Car Rental
- Gift Shops, Restaurants
- CVB, Chamber, DMO, State
- National / International Assns.
- Oh, yes; Attractions

Place Community
- Museums (local / state / federal)
- Land & Parks (local / state / federal)
- Archaeological Sites, “Ruins”
- Events (festivals, fairs, folk arts)
- Churches, Missions, Temples
- Monuments, Shrines, Historic Markers
- Historic Homes, Famous Buildings
- Historic Districts (city / private)
- Eco Attractions (passive / active)
- Farms, Ranches
- Themed Places: Williamsburg, etc.

LARGE & SMALL, PRIVATE & PUBLIC, NO SINGLE VOICE
Good partnerships but … episodic, partial, project-oriented.
Funding and support programs: scattered, inflexible, threatened.

Civic Tourism: Misión & Strategies

Tourism as a Means to Community Development, Not an End in Itself

Mission: Reframe the Purpose
- Integrate the Story
- Invest in the Product
- Connect to the Public

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow mindedness.” Mark Twain

www.civictourism.org

Example: Heritage Trails

Reframe the Purpose

Heritage trails, such as HandMade in America in North Carolina, introduce visitors to the culture, history, and natural environment – using tourism as a means to help enhance the “sense of place.”

“I remember the country I come from and how it informs my life.” Terry Tempest Williams

www.handmadeinamerica.org
"Why are we doing this?"
Reframe the Purpose
Connect the 9 dots with 4 lines, not lifting the pencil.

"REFRAME"
Out of the Box New Perspectives
"Things don’t change. You change your way of looking, that’s all.”
Carlos Castaneda.

Standard Tourism Frames
✓ Tourism is economic development. ✓ Tourism serves visitors. ✓ Tourism ruins towns.
✓ Tourism is gift shops & restaurants. ✓ Tourism is managed by the chamber.

Reframe the Purpose
Does “Place” Serve Tourism OR Does Tourism Serve “Place”?
Flip the Frame
Use tourism as a “tool” to enhance your economy and preserve your history, protect your natural environment, save your built heritage, and serve & engage your residents.

More Frame Flips
✓ Planning for tourists or residents?
✓ Commercialize culture or culturalize commerce?

More Than Any Other Industry . . .
Tourism Contributes To & Benefits From a Healthy Triple Bottom Line

THREE BOTTOM LINE CRITERIA
ECONOMIC
SOCIAL
ENVIRONMENTAL

WHY?

More and more the tourism product is the environment (natural & built).
An unsustainable approach can threaten the tourism resource.
More customers want to buy “green.”

More and more the tourism product calls for: 
- Natural Capital
- Ecological Economics
- Factor Four/Factor Ten
- Sustainable Development
- Corporate Social Responsibility

More and more the tourism product benefits: 
- Tourism-based businesses must earn a profit.
- Tourism provides jobs for regions & sectors.
- Tourism taxes fund community programs.
- Tourism can affect residents more than anyone.
- Customers follow social & ethical beliefs.

ECONOMIC

Social

Environmental

Civic Tourism: The Poetry and Politics of Place
Open Space Conference
May 9, 2007 - ASU West

Civic Tourism: The Poetry and Politics of Place

Dan Shilling
danshilling@cox.net

Hands of Harvest, Montana

Reframe the Purpose: Best Practice

Ask: In what way does a proposed tourism activity add to / detract from the following?

Cultural Use tourism to commemorate history, promote understanding and instill pride.

Natural Use tourism to protect and improve the environment.

Built Use tourism to preserve and reuse pieces of the past.

Economic Use tourism to keep money circulating locally.

Society Use tourism to bring citizens together.

CIVIC TOURISM

A “CIVIC” PRODUCT
Tourism as an enabler of healthy place-making.

A “CIVIC” PROCESS
Tourism as an activity that might foster civil society.

More Than Any Other Industry...

Tourism From

MYTH: Strict environmental policies hurt the economy.

REALITY: Environmental protection is not only good for residents but helps build a strong economy.

Tourism provides jobs for residents & Hawaii.

TOP STATES Gold Rank Green Rank

Vermont 3 1

New Hampshire 5 2

Hawaii 1 4


BOTTOM STATES

Massachusetts 40 43

West Virginia 48 45

Louisiana 50 50

TOP STATES: Massachusetts 40 43. West Virginia 48 45. Louisiana 50 50.

"Whenever you see people trying to pit the economy against the environment, it's always in terms of short-term benefits."

Robert Kennedy, Jr.

"The substance of man cannot be measured by Gross National Product."

E.F. Schumacher

Reframe: A Different “Social Construction” for Tourism

Part of the Solution, Not the Problem

“Reframing is changing the way the public sees the world.”

George Lakoff

Example: Prescott’s Sharlot Hall Museum

1. Integrate the Story

1. Lends artifacts/photographs

• restaurants, hotels, stores

• other cultural institutions

2. Partners on historic signage throughout Prescott

3. Helps position the entire town as a heritage destination

• generates support for museum

4. Includes exhibits about the natural environment

• part of Prescott’s “story”

• central to “place-making”

5. Functions as community center

Museums, Land Agencies, Preservation Groups, Heritage Sites, Arts Organizations.

BE AT THE TABLE.
1. Integrate the Story: Multi-dimensional Approach

**Place: The Story of Cultural, Natural & Built Environments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage Tourism</th>
<th>Ecotourism</th>
<th>Preservation Tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story of People, Museums, Sites</td>
<td>Story of Land, Parks, Outdoors</td>
<td>Story of Town, Buildings, Urbanism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**People**

**Land**

**Town**

The Creative Economy: “Place is becoming the central organizing unit of our economy and society.” Richard Florida

---

**Integrated Stories = “Place”**

- What does the streetscape reveal about a community’s history or values?
- How does the natural setting affect the built environment?
- What role did nature play in local history?
- What does the streetscape reveal about a community’s history or values?

“The evolution of our built environment, and the ways in which we modify and interact with the natural environment, are themselves a manifestation of our society values.” Tim Beatley & Kristy Manning

---

**Place = Experience**

**Beyond a Commodity Transaction**

“Heritage attractions of the future will be mediators of experience, encouraging postmodern tourists to construct their own sense of history and place, and to create their individual journeys of self-discovery.” Szilvia Gylkédly & Nick Johns

Montezuma Castle National Monument. What really happened here? We don’t know the full story. That’s part of the allure, part of the “experience of place”:

- What would I have done if . . . ?
- How did they . . . ?
- Will the same thing happen to us?
- Beyond information, it’s imagination. The challenge: Create that sensation (the great “aha!”) in your community.

“The best interpretation engages the visitor both intellectually and emotionally, and is personal, relevant, and meaningful.” Sam Ham & Betty Wital

---

**“Experience” not “Projects”**

Projects often appeal to the same tourist. Employ the same rhetoric. But NOT at the same table.

Civic Tourism: The Poetry and Politics of Place

**Best Practice In Detail**

When La Ruta de Sonora, an ecotourism organization representing destinations in southwestern Arizona and northwestern Sonora, Mexico, decided to create a product to attract visitors, the organization had significant challenges.

- **Projects**
  - Ecotourism
  - Preservation
  - Built Resources
  - PLACE

**“Experience” not “Projects”**

- *Think like a mountain.*
  - “We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain.” – A Sand County Almanac

- *Think like Aldo Leopold thinking about your community.*
  - “Aldo
  - Nector
  - Leopold
  - “Experience”

The landmark 1987 “Brundtland Report” (Our Common Future) on sustainable development urged: “overcome sectoral fragmentation.”

**Example: Connecticut Heritage Development Fund**

2. **Invest in the Product**

- Grants for heritage tourism product development
  - technical assistance
  - planning
  - implementation
  - monitoring and reports (economic impact studies)
  - staff and operations (not just “project” funding)
  - professional development; capacity building

- Mandates several levels of partnerships
  - between and among heritage sector
  - heritage sector & chamber, CVB, city departments
  - engage business community and general public

Questions: Who distributes money? Who awards grants?

*“In the next society, the biggest challenge for the large company... may be the social legitimacy of values, the mission, the vision.”* – Fred Drucker

*“Place creates meaning and connects to visitors in a personal, emotional, even spiritual, way. (“Volunteer Tourism” Habitat for Humanity)"* 

---

*Dan Shilling danshilling@cox.net Open Space Conference May 9, 2007 - ASU West*
Civic Tourism: The Poetry and Politics of Place
Civic Tourism: The Poetry and Politics of Place

2. Invest in the Product

- Monitoring
  - Phillip Island Nature Park
  - Product development committee: Establishes design and benchmarks
  - Partnership between Park, telco, industry, researchers, public
  - Questions: How to agree on benchmarks? Who monitors?

- Educational
  - Green Globe
  - Awards, recognition, accreditation
  - Tourism-community educational events
  - Questions: "Greenwashing" or authentic? Who sets criteria?

- Networking
  - CHT Alliance
  - Resources
  - Economic reports
  - Conferences

"Where once there were places, we now find nonplaces." Ray Oldenburg

3. Connect to the Public

HOW: A "Civic" Process

- Tourism
- Place
- Public

"Local involvement and control contributes to successful tourism development." Erve Chambers

So, what’s different about Civic Tourism?

"Engage the Community"

Geotourism
Community Tourism
WTTC: Blueprint for New Tourism
National Park Service Gateway Communities
Protected Landscapes
WTO: Agenda 21

So, what’s different about Civic Tourism?

- Communities should be allowed to decide for themselves how far tourism is a potentially positive development option." Melanie Smith
- "Tourism development issues should be handled with the participation of concerned citizens." Rio Earth Summit
- "Consultation between the tourism industry and local communities ... is essential if they are to work together." Tourism Concern
- "No tourism product should be developed or marketed without the involvement and support of the local residents." David Edgell
- "Participation by the local community is key to the long-term viability of tourism." Commission for Environmental Cooperation, Canada
- "Involve the community in the cultural tourism development process." Partners in Tourism
- "Ideally, alternative tourism regulations are established and monitored by the local community." David Weaver
Imagine Outside the Debate Paradigm
Focus on Process

PRO

“economic impact”
“more jobs”
“taxes that underwrite social services”
“better restaurants”

CON

“ruined my town - not the way it used to be”
“traffic, congestion, crime”
“T-shirt shops and tacky attractions”
“more for visitors than us”

Maximize vs Optimize
Distinguish Between More & Better

In the Box
Just adding “more”
Sometimes inappropriate
Quantitative
Incomplete, Disconnected
Solitary, Secretive

Out of the Box
Enhancing what’s there
Organic, Specific to place
Qualitative
Comprehensive, Holistic
Inclusive, Transparent

Distinguish Between “either/or” and “both/and”

Tourism ruined my town!
Can it? Yes. Does it have to? No.
That’s the point. Communities have a choice.
Tourism isn’t going away. It’s not “if” but “how.”

FREE EDITORIAL
There’s a Catch-22 to the “No Growth” opposition to tourism: If advocates succeed at creating livable places, people (tourists) are going to want to visit! Rather than the age-old antagonistic frame, these groups can get out in front and help to create a vision for tourism that benefits residents as much as tourists.

Imagine Outside the Debate Paradigm
Focus on Process

DELIBERATE
New Voices - New Perspectives
Creative Choices - Informed Decisions
Tourism can learn from fifty years of research on civic engagement.

Example: Forest Stewardship Council
Partnerships between residents, environmentalists & Big Timber.
=Sustainable forests.
Stable economy.
Civic participation.

Maximize vs Optimize
Distinguish Between More & Better

In the Box
Just adding “more”
Enhancing what’s there
Organic, Specific to place
Qualitative
Incomplete, Disconnected
Solitary, Secretive

Out of the Box
Comprehensive, Holistic
Inclusive, Transparent

Civic Tourism: The Poetry and Politics of Place

Maximize vs Optimize
Distinguish Between More & Better

In the Box
Just adding “more”
Sometimes inappropriate
Quantitative
Incomplete, Disconnected
Solitary, Secretive

Out of the Box
Enhancing what’s there
Organic, Specific to place
Qualitative
Comprehensive, Holistic
Inclusive, Transparent

Distinguish Between “either/or” and “both/and”

Tourism ruined my town!
Can it? Yes. Does it have to? No.
That’s the point. Communities have a choice.
Tourism isn’t going away. It’s not “if” but “how.”

FREE EDITORIAL
There’s a Catch-22 to the “No Growth” opposition to tourism: If advocates succeed at creating livable places, people (tourists) are going to want to visit! Rather than the age-old antagonistic frame, these groups can get out in front and help to create a vision for tourism that benefits residents as much as tourists.
Civic Tourism: The Poetry & Politics of Place

Vision Must Lead to ACTION

"Be great in act, as you have been in thought." Shakespeare, King John

- Deliberation
  - Not date: seek common ground; agree on ends; study civic research.
  - Consider all points of view, all values.

- Partnerships
  - Invite all stakeholders.
  - Meet often and regularly.
  - Be transparent, be accountable.

- Action
  - Committee: Reframe tourism's purpose.
  - Create funding mechanism(s).
  - Design label & accreditation systems.
  - Provide “Triple Bottom Line” reports.

Sample Community: Applying the Four Principles

Civic Tourism & New Urbanism

Reframe the Purpose

- Tourism as community development
- Tourism as “means” to healthy place
- Privilege “Triple Bottom Line” thinking

1. Integrate the Story
   - What is your story? (identity, brand)
   - Beyond single buildings (diverse, in context)
   - Nature, museums, arts, ethnic, business
   - Festivals, remanita, artifacts, tours

2. Invest in the Product
   - Dedicated funding (determine: advocacy, enabling stream, decision makers)
   - Purchase, planning, preservation, renovation, interpretation, education
   - Build capacity, conceptualize, monitor
   - (accred, label, awards program)

3. Connect to the Public
   - Forums, surveys, heritage trainings
   - Reports, media, officials ("leaders")
   - "Place" Conferences (standards, benchmarks)

Civic Tourism: The Poetry & Politics of Place

Project Overview

- Four Prescott Summits
  - March-June 2005
- Eleven Town Halls
  - October 2005-January 2006
  - Wickenburg, Flagstaff, Bisbee, Cave Creek, Phoenix, Sedona, Camp Verde, Lake Havasu City, Tuscan, Fountain Hills, Phoenix
- National Conference
  - March 16-18, 2006
  - Prescott
  - 35 presenters, 330 delegates from 35 states, Canada, and Mexico
- Book
  - Summer 2007

"We can speak of a real community as a ‘community of memory,’ one that does not forget its past.”
Robert Bellah

"The work of belonging to a place is never finished.”
Scott Russell Sanders

Managed appropriately, tourism can be the, leading force for transforming our cities

TBL Reports

- Economic Performance
- Environmental Protection
- Social Contributions

"It is reasonable to contend that every place on the world’s surface can now be considered a tourist destination.”
David Weaver

Hopeful Developments: A Young "Industry"

Positioned to Meet the Challenge

- Explosion of Mass Tourism
  - 1950: 25 million international arrivals
  - 2004: 750 million arrivals (1 billion by 2010)
- Chamber, CVB, Tourism Depts
- Tools: Internet, TV, Books
- Demographics & Worldviews
  - Boomers Seeking “Experience,” “Otherness”
  - Education, Income, Free Time
  - Globalization, Culturalization of Commerce
- Research, University Courses
  - No longer a boutique industry
  - Sociological, Environmental, Cultural Studies
- New Development Theories
  - The Creative Economy, Natural Capitalism
  - Asset Maps, CSR, Sustainability, Eco-efficiency
  - New Urbanism, Regionalism, Holistic Planning

“Place” Committee (standards, benchmarks)
- Reports, media, officials (“leaders”)
- Forums, surveys, heritage trainings
- Build capacity, conceptualize, monitor
- (accred, label, awards program)