Changing Values and Approaches in Appreciating the Built Environment by Tourists and Host Communities

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Abstract

This paper will examine the importance of seeing, reading, evaluating and better appreciating the built environment.

Creative observation of the built environment is fundamental to our day to day lives as well as to cultural tourism development. As we want to break the routine and lack of stimuli from our work environment, we travel to foreign places. Our cities are tourist destinations for others.

Values and approaches in appreciation of the built environment, heritage or contemporary, will certainly be affectd by two recent trends in North America:

(1) the increase of global tourism and interregional mobility

(2) the decrease of commuting population as a result of working at home.

These changes could affect deaply the patterns of modern lifestyles.

Being aware of one's environment and being able to read it should be a skill mastered by all. As many become a tourist at some point in their life, cultural tourism is judged essential to society's enrichment and to the personal enhancement of the tourist, including children, youth. Through methods of awareness, this process allows everyone to appreciate the built environment. None of the tourism charters, educational initiatives or training cover these areas of concern. In response, this paper will explore the matters of perception, place and landscape reading, as well as visual or contextual appreciation as the basis for promotion of heritage conservation, cultural identity and sensitization to place specificities and uniqueness of and landscapes.

How to see and better appreciate these elements is what will progressively promote conservation ethics in search of promising relationships between visitors and the built environment.

Introduction

Globally, tourism will certainly continue to grow in the future. With growing concerns about the environment conservation issues, it is not surprising that energy is invested in the development of sustainable tourism. Spared this vision, we are likely to lose countless valuable natural and cultural environments. In an anticipated tourism boom and culture rush, we may be well on our way to damaging our world and its unrenewable resources to the extent of permanent lose.

Tourism types such as "alternative tourism", "soft tourism", "ecotourism" and "cultural tourism" have often been promoted as solution form tourism in their capacity to establish sensitive guidelines and proper attitudes for environment and inhabitant relationships. However, none of these types of tourism has yet brought forth the real answer to this issue. Not only must we study the specific characteristics of tourism, tourism attractions and appealing cultural or natural resources, we ought to become better acquainted with the life around us.

In attempts to perceive the world around us in a new light, the following paper will emphasize the importance of cultural tourism practise and development as an essential daily intake to personal growth. It will also explore the basics on how to perceive, read, evaluate and appreciate the built environment, whether it be of heritage or contemporary value. Hopefully, it will encourage individuals and communities to become actively involved in the planning and development process of cultural tourism in their home-town. Acquiring such knowledge and skills will therefore promote the practice of conservation ethics by the traveller who decides to explore a land away from home, thus reinforcing the notion soft identity and sense of place.

Maintenance of sustainability

Environment is not "tabula rasa" but a multilayered and dynamic complex (Buttimer, 1980). The diversity and multiplicity of our environment reflects upon people's experience and are both deeply interrelated. During the recent decades, our environment has suffered from many elements which affect the quality of life and the maintenance of sustainability on Earth. We suffer from pollution, urban growth, landscape destruction, as well as non-orderly construction of glass and concrete buildings. All this affects the spirit of places and has contributed to the loss of the many qualities which give people a sense of belonging and participation. As a result, we feel alienated and express the need to escape to genuine places which bring us back to a more mythical time, henceforth, creating a real sense of belonging and intimacy with our space and its interpretive meaning.

Meaning is a qualitative value. Although architecture has been concerned with meaning in the past, it seems to have forgotten this dimension with the years. Monotony, similarities, lack of beauty are now the characteristics of our places. At the same pace, we witness the stripping of our surroundings into nearly chaotic predictability. As a result, we are experiencing what is known to be "a loss of place" (Norberg-Schulz, 1988). "Nevertheless, what is truly human are the figures, the archetypes and their interpretations, in their ability to maintain and provide coherent explanations of our existence. Together, the figures constitute a language which, if used with understanding, may make our environment meaningful, since meaning is a primary human need (Norberg-Schulz, 1988).

There might be reasons why we have let this lack of meaning invade our own existence and why we find ourselves surrounded by ugly or non-appealing cityscapes and urban environment. Jackle (1987) writes that in Canada and in the United-States, there is a strong work ethic. It seems that how things look matters very little. How things work or will work in the future matters substancially more. This is a society strongly involved in functionalism, therefore the aesthetic aspect ranks second. This form of thinking has strong repercussions on urban planning, tourism development and on the relationship between people and the environment. As tourism is an escape, a recreational activity, the way we travel and appreciate the environment is not very important and is synonymous to superficiality. "The place impressions of tourists are assumed by scholars to be superficial in contrast to those of natives, the assumed doers and movers of society." (Jackle, 1987).

The other negative point about landscape appreciation is that "touristic orientations to landscape have been viewed as essentially aesthetic, a mere seeing of place as opposed to profoundly meaningful experience. Landscape aesthetics have been more highly valued in Europe as a scholarly pursuit. European elites have been adroit at creating visually aesthetic landscapes expressive of social control.

The look of places and the functioning of places are more equally valued, the one seen to reflect upon the other." (Jackle, 1987) Jackle is very critical of

his fellow Americans. He expresses the very same ideas that other geographers do. Tourism is considered much more as an industry than as an educational tool. This industry "is in large measure sustained by aesthetically deprived Americans travelling abroad in search of visual pleasure." (Jackle, 1987)

The other aspect is the strong belief and great confidence in science and scientific truth which greatly conflict with values. We accept specialization as the only approach. We look at fragments of society or culture as if it were a whole. This system of functionalism needs to be changed into an open system with a systemic approach, where links are noticed and symbolic values are reintroduced in order to create meaningful forms and milieu.

Along the same lines, architecture has become, a very practical activity. It is very specialized and requires a synthetic approach. Architects and non-architects "need a better understanding of the world" (Norberg-Schulz, 1988). Our master of thought should be Heidegger who wrote "that phenomenology is the study of the "thingness of things" which means how things are interconnected and "reflect" each other". He talks about the "mirror-play" of the world. He teaches us that seeing is poetic awareness (Norberg-Schulz, 1988).

The other aspect of this reality is that our current philosophies or attitudes continue to value the journey over the dwelling. We tend to live in "Placelessness" (Relph, 1981) environments, where artificiality, ugliness and uniformity meet. Only in the interior of a home for example, can we have significant impact on the means of making it a special place. However, this unique privilege also incurres some design problems. Interior designers have developed skills, patterns and ideas that are extraordinary but often foreign or unrelated to the outside world. Our suburbs are the most repelling environments and remain proof of this problem. Our interiors are comfortable, pretty, subtly decorated and serve as our

escape from an insipid environment. These themes of dwelling and journey demonstrate our need to seek something else. Overall, who ever we may be, we continue to be in search for "a new way to see, think, understand and build" (Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985). In attempts to answer to these needs, architecture translates our ideas, relations and feelings into built form. Typology and morphology make up the language of architecture". Topology "is concerned with spatial order. It means a particular spatial organization .... In general, topology is founded on the spatiality of "understanding" which we have called "orientation". Psychologically, orientation implies an "environmental image" which makes spatial understanding possible" (Norberg-Schulz, 1988). Morphology is concerned with the "how" of architectural form and is concretized as "formal articulation". In general the character of an architectural form is determined by how it "is" between earth and sky" ....Morphology asks the questions: how do buildings stand, rise, extend, open and close?" (Norberg-Schulz, 1988) "Morphology understands embodiment as built structure. Through building, a character gets real presence. The scope of the language of architecture is to translate the spatiality of the life world into built form. This translation happens through a process of "gathering". Therefore, a builder "gathers world" ...(Norberg-Schulz, 1988)

Architecture, urban and social planning

These days, architecture needs to be included in urban and social planning as well as in urban and social design in order to produce coordinated effort for gathering world. This process requires the use of a systemic approach. Not only does a holistic perception allow our cities, our neighborhoods and our built environments to express the ambiance of place, it ensures a real sense of place. Eventually, this approach will help attain certain goals, as we regularly neglect our daily environments in opting for economically sound decisions. To our surprise, such resolutions do not always

promise the proposed advantages studied in the developmental stages. Consequently, we realize that a once vibrant street such as Rideau Street in Ottawa for example, has become a dangerous and unpleasant one because it has been covered with glass windows and stripped of the animation its little stores, boutiques and restaurants brought to it ....once upon a time........ a short time ago........ Cheated out of the elements and ingredients that made it a historically dynamic street, Rideau Street has sadly become a non-street. It lost its charm historic flavor, and unique character when merchants and economic experts thought that its proximity to a newly built shopping centre would make it a successful area where more goods could be sold and more profits gained. This street was the only route from Parliament Hill to Montreal. Connecting two cities, you could enjoy the lovely streetscape, now ruined by the building of unaesthetic glass roofs. Restricted to buses and deprived of its openess, it has become a gloomy corridor; a passage for functional and rapid commuting. This proves that Ottawans in general, never really paid close attention to the characteristcs of this special space. They did not care enough for it. Only a small group of conservationists tried desperately to save this street. They were considered to be non-progressive Canadians, opposed to modern trends and most importantly, to economic development of the downtown core and region as a whole.

Urban planning and urban development must make better use of the sense of place to create pleasurable built environments. There is an apparent need to bring greater sensitivity to the meaning of the built environment. The participation of city dwellers along with that of city users should be a prerequisite to the building of new areas or to the restoration of older landscapes. Together, their efforts will certainly promote the uniqueness of these places and provide inhabitants with an impression of belonging and identity. After all, these are places where our daily lives take shape. The practice of

urban planning, zoning regulatios, architecture and environmental design greatly influence the creation of a place. Heritage planning and conservation regulations have a strong impact on the urban landscape and spirit of place. "Heritage is a living tool that must give us a picture of ourselves. It enables us to continue developing our territory and leading our lives in accordance to our forebearer's genius." (Martin, 1978) This means that the collective memory needs to be at work. That the imagination should be very active. To allow both to achieve what is required, a stronger interest in the built environment should be exercized. It demands that visual awareness be raised and adequate reading of landscape be effectively executed. It is a significant means by which to discover of perceive the environment. Perception is of synthetic nature and differs strongly from the scientific analysis. Based on qualities, perception allows to grasp the whole, comprised of logical and illogical components, harmoniously integrated to its entirety.

Place and landscape

Each place and landscape is a human living space. Human events and experiences have been transposed into places which usually reinforce our identity. The concept of places is not only physical, but also psychological and interactional (Steele, 1981). Places are reservoirs of life experiences and are at the center of a person's identity and sense of psychological well-being (Norberg-Schulz, 1980).

The term place is used when one talks about a sense of place and a spirit of place. The sense of place refers to the particular experience developed by an individual in a place. It reflects the perceived quality of a place (Bailly, 1984). It is the experience created by physical and social contacts between a space or setting and an individual who applies his/her perceptions, past experiences, acquired knowledge, ideas and creative powers to that setting. Sense of place is the encounter of chemical interaction between the

environment and the experience. It presents imagery and symbolic elements in an impalpable fashion. Man-made things hold profound symbolism and represent microcosms of Man's view of the world and often of paradise.

The sense of place is an interactional concept. It is the pattern of reactions that a setting stimulates for a person. The individual comes into contact with a setting which produces reactions. "These reactions are a product of both features of the setting and aspects the person brings to it." (Steele, 1981) The "Spirit of place" is the combination of characteristics that gives some locations a special "feel" or personality or spirit (Steele, 1981)

Cultural landscape

Landscape made by humans called cultural landscape include our environment, "nearly anything that we can see when we go outdoors" (Lewis, 1979). All human landscapes have meaning no matter how ordinary or extraordinary they may be. For many authors landscape is a social and cultural product. It is the consequence of a collective human transformation of nature (Cosgrove, 1984). It is expression of the talents and understanding of the world around us. It is also the wise use of resources in attempts to bring greater quality to life. Cosgrove (1984) emphasise the fact that landscape is not merely the world we see. It is a construction, a composition of that world. We can consider cultural landscapes as a cumulative record of the work, beliefs and lifestyles of human beings. The landscape has stored data. Our task is to collect, understand and interpret this data. As landscape is expression of cultural values, social links, actions and decisions, it makes a statement about former generations and the past in general.

It is then our task to decipher these landscapes properly so that we can protect them and add to them without anihilating or destroying them. "We can read the landscape as we might read a book. Our human landscape is our

unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form. We rarely think of landscape in this way, and so, the cultural record we have "written" in the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about how we describe ourselves" (Thielgaard-Watts 1975), Grady Clay (1973) has said. "There is no secrets in the landscape." Lewis (1979) writes: "To be sure, reading landscapes is not as easy as reading books, and for two reasons. First, ordinary landscape seems messy and disorganized, like a book with pages missing, torn, and smudged; a book whose copy has been edited and re-edited by people with eligible handwriting. Like books, landscapes can be read, but unlike books, they were not meant to be read.

In the second place, most Americans are unaccustomed to reading landscape. It has never occured to them that it can be done, that there is reason to do so, much less that there is pleasure to be gained from it." Very few disciplines teach their students how to read landscapes even in disciplines which would require a very fine and accute eye. And "to read landscape", to make cultural sense of the ordinary things that constitute the workaday world of things we see, most of us need help" (Lewis, 1979). This author has written some of the rules of looking, learing and teaching about landscapes. He calls them axioms, "which are essential ideas that underlie the reading of America's cultural landscape" (Lewis, 1979).

In order to protect our built environment, it is a must to address its value and importance in a most cautious and sensitive manner. Everyone should consider mandatory practices such as seeing of landscapes, recognition of sense of place, and feeling of spirit of places to ensure that our built environment is acknowledged as an important heritage. The world offers a great variety of places and each place reveals some enviable points of interest. Places and sense of place are both part of our lives because every one of us is from a

particular place. We all have roots somewhere. These places affect ourselves. "Our individual lives are necessarily affected in a myriad of ways by the particular localities in which we live, that it is simply inconceivable that anyone could be the same person in a different place." (Meinig, 1979). As this ability to comprehend, to sense and to read develop, it will be easier to plan and conserve our neighborhoods and cities. It will become mandatory to exercise awareness of one's own built environment. Thanks to advanced technology and effective communication transmission, it will be especially noticed in the growing trend of decreased commuting and increased working a home.

Leisure and touristic leisure

Another fundamental change is the development of leisure and touristic leisure. Tourism will be the biggest industry in the years 2000. The influx of tourism is important on the international scene, increasing rapidly in the regions and their boundaries. As everyone becomes a tourist at one point or another, it is important to develop, for our own benefit, the abiltiy to read places and landscapes; in other words to care for the built environment. Landscape reading will enhance the tourist experience and will allow the visitor to better understand, interprete and appreciate the world around him. The perception and level of responses to places are multi-faceted, and very complex. The experience of place to one individual is not accessible, nor applicable to that of another individual. Words are not enough. It must be lived, "if we lack the awareness of possibility of experiencing landscapes transcendentally, we are not likely to inspire architects, developers, planners and property owners to make landscape aesthetically pleasing. If we want landscapes to appear better, we first have to see them better." (Relph, 1979)

When we study landscape seeing, reading, perception we need to realize that "the affective bond between human beings and the external world is different between the external individual observer

and the inside participant. In the latter, places are invested with personal and social meanings. To apply the term landscape to their surroundings seems inappropriate to those who occupy and work in a place as insiders" (Cosgrove, 1984). The insiders integrate the composition of the landscape with life events, time and place. "For the insider, there is no clear separation of self from scene, subject from object" (Cosgrove, 1984)

Landscape for the insider is a dimension of existence. It is a collective production. It is lived by a collectivity, a community. Communities use symbols and rituals in order to control their environment. There are no aesthetic considerations. The outsider, the external observer, the tourist, will appreciate a landscape as a visual form. He/She will give aesthetic values to the place because landscape is, for the tourist, a scene, a frame picture from which he/she can walk away. The tourist speaks of beauty. This is the position of the outsider.

The affective dimension of landscape demonstrates a link and harmony between human beings and the environment. This bondage exists in the presence of symbols and cultural elements which have been created in these forms over the years. As a result, they are acting components of cultural responses to specific problems or realities. These forms are usually typical of a region and should demonstrate the power to effectively communicate their meaning to the observer. The landscape idea, when considered as a way of seeing from an external observer "denies collective experience and mystifies it in an appeal to transcendental qualities of a particular area or region" (Cosgrove, 1984) Sensitization to our built environment is necessary in order to educate overselves about the meanings and values of our landscapes. As tourists we need to understand that landscape-reading is essential if tourism is presented as the opportunity to live in a different context, to have new eyes which perceive new and different things, such as enrichment through experience.

Personal factors influence our sense of place. Our expectations, the concepts acquired through publicity and promotion also influence the spirit of place. Our mood determines our readiness to accept and appreciate. The tourist's frame of mind can exert a profound influence on the perception of a place.

Cultural tourism as a tool for seeing better

Cultural tourism is "far more than the discovery of monuments and sites" (Icomos Charter, 1976). It is everything that this discovery creates in terms of the process, the spatial and time experience and the psycho-cognitive aspects through which the tourist might reach a more open, universal way of thinking. To draw personal as well as universal conclusions from the encounter with human cultural heritage (tangible or intangible) is largely the secret to the success of cultural tourism" (Moulin, 1990) Cultural tourism is a way to protect heritage. It is now well-understood that cultural tourism is based on cultural resources which are very sensitive. Cultural tourism is an economic activity which uses cultural resources, enhancement and management in a sustainable way. Cultural tourism as sustainable development offers three key factors: the quality of the experience, the quality of the resource and the qulity of life. Cultural rourism is the opportunity for an individual to use leisure activity to enhance his/her awareness of the world around him/her. It gives the ability to appreciate more and can reduce this "loss of place" (Norberg-Schulz, 1988) and create a positive feeling about one'self.

Nowadays, the educational role of tourism seems to be the most important measure for introducing respect. "There has been a subtle shift from definitions based upon the criterion of what is visited (monuments and artistic events) to one which deals with how we visit them (educational tourism) (Moulin, 1990). One example used in Wood's article (1991) deals with the well-known

Malcolm Miller, interpreter of Chartres Cathedral. Malcolm uses many subjects and allows the tourist to read the building. Malcolm is "telling stories. These stories have themes. The themes give the building a context, a framework within which to understand it, and through it, other buildings and medieval thought. In doing so he is not only promoting understanding but also empowering tourists, giving them the tools to travel intelligently." (Wood, 1991).

This approach signals strong changes in the way to travel in the interest of the travellers. "Fundamental to this new way of travelling is the understanding that travel basically involves a dialogue between the imagination of a traveller and the place he or she visits. The tools which unlock the imagination are the mental frameworks we must construct in order to see things intelligently." (Wood, 1991)

Relph (1976) writes about scenery as place, and offers a "characterization of place intention". This has two aspects. The first one is, what he calls "behavioral insideness" and the second one is "emphatic insideness". The first aspect is when a tourist is in a place and sees objects having observable qualities. The appearance of places is important and creates immediate experience. "The most important element of this experience is sight." "The empathetic insideness is an effort at palce identity, a desire to understand the significance of a place through its symbols (Jackle, 1987). To be inside a place empathetically is to understand that place is rich in meaning, and hence to identify with it, for these meanings are not only linked to the experiences and symbols of those whose place it is, but also stem from one's own experience." (Relph, 1976)

To decode a built environment a sense of sequence is required. "Patterns and sequences of place experiences can be unplanned or planned, accidental or consciously chosen" (Steele, 1981). We need to take a more active interest in this aspect by asking overselves questions on

how the use of the setting could enrich our experience. The designers and managers need to ask the same type of questions: How are tourists getting to the setting! How will be their moving patterns in the setting! Where will they go afterwards!

Learning to see and learning to read landscape

Learning to see and read landscape is the key to create better patterns and sequences for the tourists. We need to care for these dimensions. The objective is to reach high-quality place and high-quality place experience. To obtain these two specific characteristics and to recognize the value of appreciating built environment, gathered efforts from the local, regional, and national government bodies are of utmost importance. Only then, can communities become more effectively involved in cultural planning. For cultural tourism planning and development, effort is required from host communities in order to identify their own resources. But alone they cannot work miracles. Cultural tourists also have an important part to play in this process. They must be considerate and conscious travellers. This level of comprehension can be achieved through diverse modes of behavioral learning such as travel education during the first years of school, promotion of the code of ethics and practice of respectful tourist attitudes vis-a-vis cultural and natural environments.

The publications on tourism education and recent tourism codes of ethic have suggested sensitivity to the environment, natural and cultural. Already, Kadt (1976) in policy recommendations writes, "Gradual preparation in terms of" ....reciprocal cultural sensitivity and receptivity between hosts and tourist." He also suggests an information campaign to prepare the tourist for the different social, cultural and religious environments that will be encountered in the travel. An encouragement in arts and crafts and the use of handcrafted objects in building tourist facilities are strongly emphazised, allowing for a greater appreciation of local culture.

In the late seventies the Charter on Cultural Tourism (1976) and a code for tourist (WTO, 1985) encouraged a social and cultural approach toward tourism for a better appreciation of local traditions, way of life, skills and talents. This movement led to integrative planning, the creation of ecomuseums and the development of regional heritage programmes. Conservation codes, charters, and guidelines are worthwile documenmts, though they all assume that place-reading and landcape-reading are not skills that need to be taught and developed.

The Guidelines on Education and Training in the conservation of monuments, ensemble and sites which will be ratified at the ICOMOS General Assembley in Colombo in August 1993, is the first one to write precisely in paragraph 5; "Education and training for conservation should produce from a range of professionals, conservationists who are able to read a monument, ensemble or site and identify its emotional, cultural and use significance. All the other sections deal with the "understanding" of hisotry, ensemble, setting..... These guidelines are specific to professionals and conservationists. But it could be recommended that this ability be extended to all humans, in order to establish a fulfiling "own" place in the world.

If we analyze the new tourism code of ethic of the Canadian industry (TIAC, 1992) it attests that sustainable tourism development will encourage the promotion of tourist products and activities that enhance environmental and cultural awareness. But how do we successfully achieve this awareness, when we are faced with a genuine lack of qualitative information and guidelines to assess such activities? The next paragraph of this tourism code indicates that promotion should highlight Canada's natural, cultural and historic resources. Again, how do we know what to highlight? Following what criterias? For whom? In Chapter 9, research and education mentioned but nothing supports appreciation of the environment.

CONCLUSION

Reading and decoding our environment is of primary importance, whether we are urban dwellers or tourists.

Just as landscape-reading is essential to the tourist as a personal skill, creative seeing of landscapes is fundamental to any cultural tourism development.

Our recommendations are as follows:

(1) Tourists and hosts need to understand that perception of the environment is a basic requirement for any cultural planning or development initiative.

(2) In order to *see*, everyone needs to be self-taught or trained by a specialist. Such training will develop abilities to visually perceive and analyze the wealth of information contained what is obvious and inconspicuous.

(3) Courses, discussions and workshops on tourism, tourism development, heritage conservation and basic architecture need to be developed.

(4) Sightseeing "as a form of environmental experience" (Jackle, 1987) should be the focus of scholars.

(5) Mental drawing and cognitive mapping need to become intellectual and sensational exercises common to all. Cognitive mapping should be used to synthetize visual information.

(6) Landscape-reading, place-reading should become part of curriculum.

Exercises in visualization, cognitive mapping, place and landscape reading and environmental awareness will allow the individual to be well-prepared for his involvement in the planning and development of the natural and cultural environment.

This kind of attitude towards our world, natural or built, will allow our landscapes and cityscapes to attain visual integrity and to maintain top life-style qualities through sense of place. It will encourage tourism of high calibre and provide quality experience. Cultural tourism will then become educational tourism or simply tourism of worthy regards.

This process will inevitably promote heritage conservation in an integrative manner in its ability to offer profound understanding and extensive knowledge of the world in a more likely holistic perspective.

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