

EVERYDAY LIFE AS A CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN CITIES

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ABSTRACT

The dominant way in which cities compete for visitors is still by building ever more 'iconic' attractions and events. Yet such serial reproduction is not only a zero sum game – it assumes that visitors want passively to consume carefully designed tourism experiences. This paper argues that for some visitors, the draw of the city is different – it is the opportunity to create their own experience and feel a part of everyday life. These visitors do not seek recognised tourist attractions or tourist precincts but what they perceive as the 'real life' of the city – a city in which overlapping activities of tourism and leisure, 'visitors' and 'residents', shape city life. For them, the everyday and mundane activities of 'local people' take on significance as markers of the real, and areas not planned for tourism are valued as offering distinctiveness.

The paper draws on new research on the capacity of big cities to generate new tourism areas as visitors discover and help create new urban experiences off the beaten track. It focuses on potential synergies between some visitors and some residents, many of whom may be seen as be seen as part of the 'creative class' or 'cosmopolitan consuming class'.

It concludes that these areas offer city visitors opportunities to create their own narratives and experiences of the city, and to build cultural capital in a convivial relationship with other city users. At the same

time, visitors contribute to the 'discovery' and in some sense creation of new places to visit.

KEYWORDS

*Tourism; Everyday Life; Cities; Off The Beaten Track;
Creative.*

INTRODUCTION

City tourism can no longer be simply seen as a separate activity, focused on well defined tourism precincts, where comparatively passive visitors consume carefully designed tourism experiences. This paper argues that for some visitors, an important element in the appeal of the city is the opportunity to experience and feel a part of everyday life. This means getting ‘off the beaten track’ into places where it is possible to experience ‘the real city’. These visitors do not seek recognised tourist attractions or tourist precincts but what they perceive as the ‘real life’ of the city – a city in which overlapping activities of tourism and leisure now form part of the city fabric and city life. For them, the everyday and mundane activities of city residents take on significance as markers of the real, and areas not planned for tourism are valued as offering distinctiveness.

This paper draws on new research on the capacity of big cities to generate new tourism areas as visitors discover and help create new urban experiences off the beaten track (Maitland 2007; Maitland 2008; Maitland and Newman 2009). It focuses on potential synergies between some visitors and some residents, many of whom may be seen as part of the creative class (Florida 2002) or cosmopolitan consuming class (Fainstein, Hoffman et al. 2003). For some tourists, as for Florida’s creative class, ‘what’s there, who’s there, and what’s going on’ combine to form ‘high quality of place’, amenity and a search for the ‘real’.

These areas offer experienced city visitors opportunities to create their own narratives of the city. At the same time, they contribute to the ‘discovery’ and in some sense creation of new places to visit. Some neighbourhoods, often close to the historic centre and to traditional attractions, offer the mix of cultural difference and consumption opportunities that can create new experiences for distinctive groups of city users, and apparently offer the opportunity to experience ‘everyday life’

PARADOXES IN CITY TOURISM

More and more, tourism is shaping cities. Tourist numbers have boomed as wider processes of globalization and economic change have forced cities to reposition and reimagine themselves to compete in the twenty first century economy. Cityscapes have changed. Waterfronts and industrial zones have been redeveloped and re-aestheticised. History and heritage has been reviewed and re-presented, and urban cultures and entertainments have been promoted. As (Judd and Fainstein 1999):262 point out, together with the growth of large corporate office functions “tourism has been a primary force in determining contemporary urban form, as facilities for tourists have increasingly become interwoven with other structures”. This is especially true in ‘world tourism cities’ (Maitland and Newman 2009), firmly established on global networks – cities that are both leading destinations and sources of iconic images of city life and of tourism. As competition has intensified, cities have become increasingly concerned with constructing attractions and symbols that signal their aspirations and status as they seek to draw in not just tourists but mobile investment or mobile professionals in search of amenity (Florida 2002). Historic areas have been refurbished; former industrial areas re-aestheticised and revalorised for cultural activities, shopping and loft living; ‘iconic attractions’ have been housed in spectacular and monumental new buildings (Smith 2007) and major events have been sought: the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, and the 1992 Barcelona Olympics have been seen as influential exemplars. (Fainstein 2007) points out that one result is to create new shared experiences, which are popular. They allow visitors to add to their cultural capital by consuming an iconic attraction – like the Eiffel Tower, or now Bilbao’s Guggenheim. As they do so, they can increasingly easily produce and share images that witness their experience and ‘this provides common symbols and shared memories within otherwise fragmented cultures (ibid.: 2).

However, for critics the result of this serial reproduction (Richards and Wilson 2006) is to reinforce global processes making cities more standardised. The ubiquity of global retail and entertainment brands is now echoed by major museums and galleries (Evans 2003). Ironically, cities’ attempts to outdo and distinguish themselves from their rivals may reduce their competitive advantage as they become

more alike. Waterfront developments around the world resemble one another (Jones 1998); the same 'Mayor's Trophy Cabinet' of attractions and facilities (convention centre, branded hotel, museum, festival marketplace and so on) can be found in many cities on different continents (Friedman and Sagalyn 1990); modern 'icon buildings' are created that have little association to the city in which they are built (Sudjic 2005) and brand their architects more effectively than they do the city. In short, cities spot a rival that seems to have found a successful formula with buildings or events - and copy it (Richards and Wilson 2006).

There are paradoxes here. Cities seek to achieve competitive advantage through differentiation, but achieve standardization. They do so because they follow familiar strategies, successful in some places at some times in the past and attempt to out-build and out-bid their rivals. Yet as they do so, the audience they seek – visitors, of many types – is changing rapidly and defying conventional categorization. Both tourism and touristic practices are changing and evolving. Tourism itself cannot any longer be bounded off as a separate activity, distinguishable from other mobilities, and tourist demands cannot be clearly separated from those of residents and other users of cities. (Hannam 2009) argues that tourism needs to be understood as part of a wider set of mobilities, whilst (Sheller and Urry 2004) argue that mobilities represent a new paradigm within social science, including the movement of people, information and capital. One consequence is to see 'tourism', as conventionally defined (World Tourism Organisation and United Nations 1994) as just part of a continuum of mobilities that range from the short term to the permanent. For example, business people and professionals come to cities on temporary assignment or short term contract; academics take up short term posts or work on research projects; creatives make films, give artistic performances or devise campaigns. In many ways their activities and behaviours will overlap those of comparatively well off business and leisure tourists. At lower levels of the employment hierarchy, temporary migrants take temporary jobs for long hours and low pay. They will share similarities with students, in town to study, from a few weeks to a few years, and with backpacker or drifter tourists, travelling on a low budget and taking

temporary jobs (Fainstein, Hoffman et al. 2003) (Maitland and Newman 2009).

If 'tourists' are changing, so are those who inhabit the city more permanently: tourism and touristic behaviour is coming to be seen as an integral part of daily life. For (Franklin and Crang 2001) touristic behaviours and experiences are less and less separated from daily life by time and space, and indeed tourism has become 'a significant modality through which transnational modern life is organised'. In part, that means residents consume the city in ways that are similar to tourists: 'citizens ... increasingly make quality of life demands treating their own urban locations as if tourists, emphasizing aesthetic concerns' [emphasis added] (Clark 2003). They enjoy the same activities as visitors, and consume 'the new urban culture' (Judd 2003). In some cases, in large cities, this may be a straightforward case of internal tourism: residents visit parts of the city that are new to them or which have particular attractions, especially the central areas. But more broadly, there is a de-differentiation between touristic practices and other spheres of cultural experience (Lash, 1990; Urry, 1990), and between tourism and everyday life (Urry, 2002; Bauman, 1996).

The changing tourist experience of cities needs to be considered carefully, and change should not be exaggerated. Some city tourism goes on much as it has before, especially in well established destinations. First time visitors still arrive in Istanbul in organised groups, consume iconic attractions like the Topkapi Palace or Hagia Sophia, adding to their personal cultural capital in the process; then they move on their next destination. In London, new attractions like the London Eye and the Tate Modern art gallery have drawn millions of visitors. But now, a lot of city tourism is not like this. Many visitors are experienced users of cities and want to move beyond traditional tourism precincts. Some are highly mobile and feel a sense of belonging to the place they visit - the 'cosmopolitan consuming class' (Fainstein, Hoffman et al. 2003) and transnational elites (Rofe 2003).

The dissolving boundaries between 'tourists', residents and other city users, and between touristic and non-touristic behaviours means that it is futile for cities to base their appeal simply on producing ever more 'attractions' which visitors are expected passively to

consume. Attempts to do so mean engaging in an unwinnable arms race that requires ever more investment in the attempt to produce the ultimate icon. Instead, cities need to consider how tourists themselves can create distinct experiences through their interplay with the city.

CREATIVE TOURISM AND EVERYDAY LIFE

In their influential discussion of creativity and tourism (Richards and Wilson 2007) 20 suggest that city tourism is shifting from a reliance on tangible resources like museums and monuments to intangible resources like lifestyle, image and creativity. They associate this with a shift in what visitors want – from ‘having’ a holiday through ‘doing’ the sights or activities towards ‘becoming’ – a focus on the tourism experience and its (potentially) transformative effects. Similarly, (Andersson Cederholm 2009) argues that ‘being’ rather than ‘doing’ is emerging as a tourism value, with tourism experiences deriving from being with oneself (in a contemplative experience), being with other tourists and being with ‘the locals’. Not all tourists’ wants will be changing in this way, and we can associate the shifts with more experienced visitors – whose numbers are growing.

More people are travelling to more cities, and repeat visits are becoming increasingly important – and that affects what visitors want. Tourism is a process that encourages learning. Learning can take place outside formal educational settings – so called experiential learning – and tourism practices encourage the reflection and analysis of experience that promote learning ((Minnaert 2007). Tourists linger over the tourist gaze, (Urry 1990) and capture images. New media and new devices make it easier than ever for images to be captured, shared and discussed. And visitors have long used guidebooks, visitor centres and guides as a means of structuring their experiences of places. These practices mean that they learn new skills and come to look at places with ‘an increasingly informed eye’ (Urry 1999): 74. We would expect this to affect how they look at a city and their aesthetic sensibilities (Maitland and Smith 2009) - and also what they want from the tourist experience. And many visitors are returning to cities that they know well (in London, some 60% of overseas tourists are repeat visitors (LDA 2007)); many of them are frequent visitors.

We would expect repeat visitors' demands to differ from those of people coming to the city for the first time. Familiar and 'iconic' attractions such as Big Ben and the Tower of London may have limited appeal as repeat experiences, and having been visited once add little to personal cultural capital when visited again. It seems reasonable to suppose that increasingly experienced tourists will learn new perspectives and consumption demands and that, particularly as repeat visitors, they may wish to venture beyond recognised tourism precincts. As (Larsen 2008) points out

“Much tourism theory ... defines tourism by contrasting it to home geographies and ‘everydayness’: tourism is what they are not.... As a result, tourism studies produce fixed dualisms between the life of tourism and everyday life: extraordinary and ordinary, pleasure and boredom, liminality and rules” 21

Yet for experienced travellers, the exotic may be found in the everyday, in the ‘real life’ of the city to be found off the beaten track.

THE ATTRACTION OF THE EVERYDAY

The appeal of off the beaten track areas in a series of world tourism cities has been investigated in detail in (Maitland and Newman 2009). Here the focus is on two areas of London - Islington and Bankside. Both attract large numbers of visitors although neither has formed part of traditional tourist itineraries, nor been planned as a tourist precinct. They offer contrasting aspects of tourism development in new areas. Whilst Islington is well connected by public transport to central London's main tourist concentrations, it is spatially and functionally separated from them. Bankside, by contrast, is contiguous with established tourist areas in central London, into which it is increasingly well integrated. Both areas have experienced regeneration and gentrification including up-market housing, office and studio development, new restaurants, bars and shopping.

Islington is a fashionable residential area that has been gentrified for over thirty years. Much of the historic street patterns and buildings have been retained, although there are mass social housing blocks of the 1960s and 1970s as well as high value private Georgian

and Victorian streets. Gentrification and higher spending residents saw a growth in consumption opportunities, with new restaurants, bars and shops, some of them distinctive or high quality: Camden Passage antiques market or designer shops on Upper Street, for example. New development in former industrial buildings created loft apartments and studio developments whilst retaining the existing street pattern and renovating existing buildings. Tourism policy in Islington has an uneven history. There was no major tourism plan or investment in new iconic attractions, although two theatres received substantial National Lottery funding for refurbishment. A local tourism organisation, Discover Islington, existed from 1991-2001, and defined the area as the 'real London' By 1998 the area was attracting some 4 million visitors (including day visitors) (Carpenter 1999) but there was little evidence that this was a consequence of tourism policy and the area maintained a comparatively low profile (see (Maitland and Newman 2004) for more details).

Bankside by contrast has begun to establish a global image and reputation by the turn of the millennium. The area lies between long established tourism precincts (Westminster / the South Bank Centre, and the London Bridge / Tower Bridge area) and includes two new 'iconic' attractions – Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and Tate Modern art gallery (also a beneficiary of National Lottery funding). However, like Islington, the key driver of development was not tourism, and the area was not designed as a tourism precinct. Public authorities responsible for the area aimed to spread commercial development pressures across the river from the congested north bank. A key element was improving pedestrian links across the river and a new pedestrian bridge creating a route from St Paul's to Tate Modern was opened in 2002. New cultural icons, and a design makeover (Teedon 2001) provided an opportunity to attract new commercial land-uses and upscale residents, whilst retaining much of the traditional morphology. Remaking the riverfront created new amenity and an attractive location for the mobile professionals seen as essential to London maintaining its place in the global economy. The area has continued to develop with more galleries and theatres, and speciality food shops, bars and restaurants particularly focused around Borough Market. Warehouses have been converted to loft apartments and there is a significant population of office workers – some in modern

towers, others in smaller spaces in converted warehouses. Further south, and away from the river, development appears to have been driven by apartment and office conversions, often for the ‘creative industries’.

In both areas, tourism has been one part of a wider process of regeneration. It promotes the areas’ development by bringing in visitors, and helps revalorise and create interest in what was previously considered unattractive. Yet neither area was designed as a tourism precinct, and we need to understand what attracted visitors. The research discussed below was designed to answer this question.

The research was in two parts. Initially surveys of overseas visitors to Islington and Bankside were conducted to explore their characteristics and the appeal of the area to them. Visitors in the surveys differed from overseas visitors to London as a whole, and could be differentiated from standardised markets. They were older, more experienced travellers; had generally visited London before; were more likely to be visiting friends or relations or to be on business; and made use of their connections through friendship and other networks in deciding on the areas they wanted to visit. These characteristics were more pronounced in Islington than in Bankside, with its proximity to established tourism precincts (see (Maitland and Newman 2004) for a fuller discussion). In both areas visitors liked the built form of the area and sense of place, along with atmosphere: sense of history, a cosmopolitan feel, a sense that the area was ‘not touristy’. They also enjoyed opportunities for consumption – the range of shops, bars, cafes, and restaurants. Major tourist attractions were rarely mentioned. This was true even of Bankside with the popular and well known Tate Modern and Shakespeare’s Globe, as well as a range of other tourist attractions. This seems surprising but is borne out by VisitLondon surveys of the wider area of the South Bank which show that despite the wide range of cultural and other attractions, the most popular activity is going for a stroll, followed by visiting a bar, café or restaurant (VisitLondon 2005).

It seemed that for these visitors at least, the appeal of the areas lay in atmosphere and their sense of place, and that apparently mundane elements of vernacular architecture, and shops and cafes could constitute attractions. Qualitative research was undertaken to investigate visitor perceptions in more depth. Semi- structured

interviews lasting from 25 to 45 minutes were carried out with overseas visitors selected on a convenience sampling basis in central locations in Islington and Bankside. Visitors came from a wide range of countries from around the world including western, central and eastern Europe, North and South America, Australasia, India and Africa, but interviews were conducted in English. Their ages ranged from 20s to 60s and most were in professional occupations.

A series of themes can be drawn out of the interviews and three are discussed here (see (Maitland 2008) for a fuller discussion of other aspects). Text in italics is quoted from interviews. First, visitors perceived both Islington and Bankside as not touristy: not places that had been designed to attract visitors. Instead they were seen as out of the way and off the beaten path, quieter and less crowded. There were explicit comparisons with other parts of London that were seen as tourist hotspots: Covent Garden, Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square or the area around Buckingham Palace, for example. Respondents also contrasted the areas with tourism precincts in other cities, such as the Champs Elysees in Paris. The perceived contrast is unsurprising in the case of Islington, but more unexpected in Bankside. It turned out that visitors could be aware of or indeed actually visit a series of tourist attractions and still maintain their perception of the area as not touristy. Most interviewees on Bankside were aware of Tate Modern and Shakespeare's Globe and planned at least to take a look at them. One respondent proved to have visited almost every attraction promoted in the Tourist Information Centre's literature, but still enjoyed the area because of the out of the way places where there aren't so many people catering to the tourists. The big touristy attractions were recognised but did not dominate perceptions of the area which was seen as quieter and places where you can take your time away from tourist hotspots.

Second, the built environment and a sense of place were frequently mentioned and often described in some detail. Whilst for some visitors the appeal of the area was simply that it was nice - we like the buildings, others seemed much more observant and discussed what they saw in considerable detail. Small aspects of vernacular buildings attracted comment – windows, lintels the chimney stack on a building down that alley; the windows of those shops, how they are designed, how they do it. Architecture could be appraised in detail:

This part of the city, well, they're doing construction to make it more modern but it looks like there's older buildings from the late 19th Century, early 20th Century.... They haven't renamed them at all or tried to keep them in a current state. They're just trying to upkeep the brick and the whatnot from a lot of years ago which is nice.

Interviewees saw the physical qualities of place as embedding history and the contemporary nature of the city - there is a mix ... it's multicultural... a mix of people ... so in the culture there should be the old part and the new part of London [16].

Most comments focused on the vernacular, the everyday, the ordinary buildings in the areas rather than on icons like the Globe or Tate Modern.

Third everyday life was at the heart of the areas' appeal. Visitors were often acutely observant of the mix of activities that were taking place; they noted that these were areas where Londoners lived and worked, and this was crucial to how the areas were valorised. The observations were accurate and unromantic. Commenting on Bankside one respondent noted the mix of offices, studios and apartment, and the proximity to the financial district and remarked that it's nice that you can live close to where you work but quickly added that to do so you've got to be rich – more than rich. Islington was liked but seen as a high class community and pricey. Still, respondents felt that in these areas they could meet local people and chat over coffee or a drink, that the area was more relaxed, and you are not actually an outsider. This was a more common perception in Islington, but in Bankside too the presence of Londoners was crucial to the experience of the area. In part this was a flaneur's enjoyment of observation: liking to see people going about their daily tasks or normal Londoners just doing their thing. For more than one respondent there was pleasure to be had in visiting Tesco (the dominant UK supermarket chain): the opportunity to observe ordinary people, and what they bought made it one of our favourite places. Under the gaze of experienced travellers, mundane work routines took on new significance. For a North American couple, one highlight of their visit to Bankside was peering into office windows and observing workers typing at their computers - you can't miss this. The recurring theme was that everyday life was both interesting

in itself, and also a marker of the real London. It meant that for visitors, even Bankside was not experienced as dominated by its big attractions, but as an area in which the city's daily life went on. That made it more interesting: museums are museums and they're all interesting, but museums [could be] anywhere and I like to see what the city is actually about. The words of one respondent speak for many: tourist spots are always very generic, right, look at the places where tourist are in any city you feel like, oh, I'm just one of the them and I'm just doing the typical tourist thing but if you, somehow, end up in the place where the locals go, it feels like a more authentic experience somehow.

DISCUSSION

We can distil three themes about everyday life and creative tourism experiences.

First built environment and sense of place are important. The morphology of the areas, with traditional and intricate street patterns and buildings of varied age, type and style is appealing, seen as distinctive - despite the insertion of new icons in Bankside. A combination of gentrified cityscape and consumption opportunities is attractive for visitors when combined with the presence of local people going about their everyday lives. This provides empirical evidence to support ideas about the way tourism mixes into the fabric of the city (Terhorst, Deben L. et al. 2003) Observing everyday life is interesting in itself, but perhaps more importantly, it acts as a marker or signifier that the area is part of the real city and not simply a show put on for visitors. As one respondent said it doesn't feel artificial... you don't feel like you're in Disneyland. The exotic is in the eye of the beholder, and as Urry has said, everyday life can be full of exotic signs. (Urry 1995). Particularly for experienced travellers, often themselves living in large cities, this sense of being in a distinct, real, unbranded area can be a sought after experience. As (Till 2009), drawing on Lefebvre, says the everyday is not simply ordinary – 'rather it is the site that contains the extraordinary within the ordinary if one is prepared to look'. 139

Second, the areas are not dominated by iconic buildings or strong historical or cultural narratives, or clearly established routes through which they are consumed (despite some considerable efforts at placemaking in the case of Bankside (Teedon 2001)). This frees visitors to construct their own narratives about the areas, and to explore them in their own way, to exercise their imaginations – to be creative. The ordinary and everyday qualities of the areas mean they are heterogeneous (Edensor 2001) and open to different experiences, different interpretations. As (Raban 1974) pointed out, we construct our ‘soft city’ from the streets we visit and those we imagine and it is as real as the ‘hard city’ shown on maps – and individuals create different soft cities. We can do this in any part of the city, but it is easier in areas that do not impose their own identities and allow the imagination freer rein. ‘Being with the locals’ (Andersson Cederholm 2009) can include a chat over coffee, but can also include imagining what their lives are like. One respondent, discussing Islington, felt:

you can find really, really nice walks just watching the houses and sometimes I just imagine how they look inside and sometimes I see the people wearing different clothes and I think the people how is their life how is their work in the house.

Third, the notion of ‘the real London’, the ‘everyday city’, is nonetheless an elusive concept. Whilst it is true that London residents live and work in both areas, and that the everyday life of the city goes on there, they are ‘the real city’ only in its middle class and gentrified guise. Visitors to Islington (like its middle class residents) evidently navigate the area to avoid its often unattractive social housing, which is never mentioned in interviews. If the ‘real London’ is where most of its inhabitants live and work then it is not to be found in Islington and Bankside but in ungentrified inner areas and in the suburbs and suburban centres of outer London. Yet visitation to outer town centres like Croydon and Bromley is limited and despite the fascination for real life poverty evidenced by the growth of slum tourism in the developing world (Gentleman 2006) there is little sign that London’s poor areas like Dagenham or the Aylesbury Estate at Elephant and Castle attract leisure visitors. Visitors to Bankside and Islington know that they are visiting a particular version of the real London, in which the locals they see are well off – yuppies, maybe –

and shops and houses expensive. We can see them creatively constructing a London that is an idealised city – one that can be experienced in places that emerge like islands in the sea of the modern commercial London that is increasingly homogenised and branded for consumption by visitors and inhabitants alike. They relish those ‘real’ places with intricate built form, a combination of old and new buildings, with interesting shops, cafes and bars, where one can watch locals go about their everyday lives and enjoy a stimulating mix metropolitan buzz along with the feel of an old place. In this, they are like the middle classes that inhabit such gentrified areas. They too exercise creativity in their interpretation of the city, to construct an appealing experience. As (Butler 2003) 2374 says of Islington, it is a global space servicing the international service-class diaspora’ and caters for the well-off – yet it has ‘an aura of inclusivity and this is a large part of its appeal’ to its residents. (2476).

CONCLUSIONS

The transformation of cities for tourism consumption creates commodified landscapes. But as (Gilbert and Hancock 2006) have argued, it also creates the opportunity for reaction to such commodification. New pathways and new interpretations of the city can be negotiated by visitors in a creative interchange with the city, its history, urban form and everyday life. We began by identifying paradoxes in city tourism: attempts to achieve distinctiveness can lead to standardisation, and policymakers are following familiar ‘tourism strategies’ whilst tourism and tourism practices are rapidly changing and evolving. In these circumstances, conventional attempts to distinguish tourists from residents in terms of time and distance - tourists are in the city only temporarily and have travelled some distance to get there - seem unhelpful in understanding the interaction between cities and those who use them. It is better to think in terms of a range of city users with a series of demands, behaviours and practices which reflect their widely different incomes, power and urban preferences. The consumption demands and behaviours of some visitors will overlap with those of some residents and will help shape cities.

Exploring the perception and practices of visitors to areas not designed as tourism precincts helps provide partial resolution to these paradoxes. Some visitors deliberately seek out everyday life and the 'real city'. They want to go beyond 'enclavic tourist spaces' created for them, and find 'heterogeneous tourist spaces' – 'multi-purpose spaces in which a wide range of activities and people co-exist' (Edensor 2001). These areas are 'softer' and allow personal narratives to be created around them. They value the everyday and the presence of local people as markers of authenticity, and indicators that they are in the 'real city'. They use off the beaten track areas in a creative way, constructing their own narratives and relishing everyday scenes - which can seem more extraordinary than a spectacular icon obviously planned for tourist consumption or a heritage building already familiar from countless media images. As they enjoy the areas, they contribute to the renewal and rebranding of neighbourhoods and broader processes of urban change, development and gentrification, which in turn feed through to the city's image, and what it has to offer. Such areas are not comprehensively planned for tourists, and whilst public policy can have important influences in attracting visitors, here they are largely unintended. Exploring tourists and gentrifying residents can have convivial links and contribute to the creation and re-creation of upscale areas enjoyed by visitors and locals.

Such areas provide a means for cities to cater for a desirable niche market of practiced travellers by offering an experience that is distinctive because it is everyday. That allows cities to avoid the zero sum game of competition to provide the newest gallery or the latest architectural icon or the most prestigious event as a lure for visitors. In those competitions there can be only one winner, and there is a constant battle to achieve the greatest prize. The distinctiveness of the everyday provides a potential means for cities to compete through differentiation. It also offers a way of avoiding the high costs that such attractions and events incur. Current estimates of the costs to London of staging the 2012 Olympics are £9.3b / €13b. Although the benefits to the political leadership in London government are clear, as opportunities are offered to connect with their followers (Newman 2007), the benefits to London tourism are less certain.

However, identifying the attraction of new tourism areas does raise new dilemmas. These revolve around the stability of the mix of characteristics that make them attractive. Promotion and marketing of cities is relentless, yet once areas are advertised and promoted as ‘undiscovered’ and ‘off the beaten track’ they are likely to lose much of their appeal for many visitors. Can tourism marketers restrain themselves and find new and subtler ways of making potential visitors aware of these places? And are we in any case seeing an evolution of areas, in which visitors most concerned with exploration will seek out less ‘discovered’ parts of the city, in some version of Butler’s famous tourism area lifecycle (Butler 1980) ? There are some indications that exploring visitors in London are seeking out newer gentrifying areas like Shoreditch and Hoxton and may be moving even further afield. More research is needed to improve our understanding of how areas of the city outside of recognised tourism precincts are used by visitors and how this interacts with the dynamics of their development.

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