

**Introduction**

Our surroundings can shift our perspective on life and change the course of our values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes. An underlying transformation that affects mind, body and spirit may arise spurred by the environment around us. This metamorphosis ultimately builds an enlightened community as these changes cascade from individual to individual and offers a transformative experience that may be engaged through tourism. New ideas about healthy living and “alternative” lifestyles are gaining in popularity as they bring creativity, diversity and sustainability, as well as art, food and culture into the scope of tourism planning

By transforming spaces into places, the created environment can encourage a lifestyle that is beneficial to community and its members. Planners may be able to engage new revenue streams, as these communities become tourism destinations. There are common elements shared by successful destinations that deliver experiences that teach values such as peace, trust, honesty, tolerance, morality and service to others.

Travelers often subconsciously seek betterment of self and surroundings. Tourism that seeks experience and culture may include transformation as the person seeks enlightenment. As tourism professionals, we aspire to create an environment conducive for transformation, ultimately forming an environment that produces betterment of self.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1962) suggests specific levels of development for self actualization, or enlightenment. Communities operate in much the same way. This research will seek to uncover the fundamental variables that lead to successful transformative environments in communities. These elements will then be used as a model for building community enlightenment and transformational tourism.

**Transformative Environments in Tourism***Experience*

Experiences are events that engage individuals in a personal way (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and serve as a key construct in travel and tourism research as well as destination positioning. Searching for self-identity is part of the phenomenology of tourist experiences. From a benefits chain standpoint, tourist experience may act as a driver to transform a destination's activities into ones that add positive benefits to the tourists visiting the destination (Cohen, 1979).

Tourism has principally been concerned with the tourist experience of visiting, seeing, learning, enjoying and living in a different mode of life (Stamboulis & Skayanis 2003). In this sense, everything tourists encounter at a destination can be experience. To the stakeholders of this experience, such as tourists, destination marketers, local residents, and policy makers, the nature and scope of the experience offered by a destination and processed by tourists determine the value of the destination (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007).

Experiences also affect us in an unconscious way resulting in a kind of silent learning and the accumulation of knowledge resulting in some new and expanded life-experience (Gelter, 2006). From these experiences, destination environments, physical and other, shape us as humans and affect our perspective of life and living. Gelter (2006) stated that unconscious learning aspects of the experience process may be as important as the conscious aspects of the experience in the outcome and value of the offered experience.

In his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida (2002) described the creative class lifestyle as a passionate quest for experiences with the ideal being to 'live the life'. The creative class is the segment of the population made up of the highly educated; these are the scholars, the engineers, the businessmen, the doctors, and the lawyers. This cohort searches for environments

that create intense, high-quality, multidimensional experiences and the kinds of activities that reflect and reinforce the identities and values of the creative class. They favor active, participatory recreation over passive spectator sports. They prefer indigenous, street-level culture where it is hard to draw the line between participant and observer or between creativity and creators.

### *Peak Experience*

Stamboulis and Skayanis (2003), described tourism experiences as four categories—feel, learn, do and be. Dewey (1938) saw experience as a process based on interactions of an individual with the environment and where learning from experiences is the process whereby human development occurs. These thoughts are mirrored by each other in the sense that while creating a destination, an environmental relationship must be present and transformational offerings are delivered as smaller steps that build to create the ultimate experience, i.e. the ‘Peak Experience’. Maslow (Wuthnow, 1978) wrote:

“The most wonderful experience or experiences of your life, happiest moments, ecstatic moments, and moments of rapture are peak experiences”.

Maslow’s (1962) research showed there are possible effects of peak experiences on values, such that peakers are less likely than nonpeakers to say they value material possessions, high pay, job security, being famous, and having a lot of friends. They are more likely, however to say they value working for social changes, helping to solve social problems and helping people in need (Wuthnow, 1978). Maslow (1962) suggested that peakers tend to exhibit a distinctive style of life, namely that of the self-actualizing person. For example, he wrote:

“The person is more apt to feel that life in general is worthwhile, even if it is usually drab, pedestrian, painful or un-gratifying, since beauty, excitement, honesty, play and

goodness, truth and meaningfulness have been demonstrated to his to exist (Maslow, 1962)".

Self actualized people are in general more at peace with themselves than the average person and should be able to rise above many of the petty concerns which are culturally ingrained and pursue values which are more beneficial to mankind (Maslow, 1962). They become more concerned about the needs of others and are cognizant of how people orient themselves to the culture and the society in which they live.

#### *Development of Consciousness/Enlightenment*

The experience of transcendent consciousness is said to be within the realm of possibility for nearly everyone (Kokoszka, 1992) and important to the future of humankind as a possible steppingstone to achieving a global change in human consciousness (Ornstein, 1991). Beck & Cowan (1996) described integral consciousness where the fully developed person embodies all the earlier stages of development simultaneously and where the world takes on a concrete and immediate quality, which is characteristic of the experience of living fully in the present. The structures of consciousness, in its positive or efficient mode, give us a sense of oneness with nature and with each other. Consciousness carries us through the world in a comfortable simpatico with events that surround and connect us to the larger web of life in which we live.

#### *Transformation of consciousness into a values shift*

Magical consciousness exists today in music, poetry and romantic love, each of which has power to transport us beyond the ordinary boundaries of our day-to-day experience (Combs, 2002). From magical consciousness comes the power and compassion to work for the betterment of others as well as the planet as a whole (Combs, 2002). Florida (2002) described this incorporation of consciousness into communities as a multitude of 'scenes', such as a music

scene, an art scene, a film scene, outdoor recreation scene, night life scene, and so on – all reinforcing one another in order to build in an element of shifted consciousness.

Prentice's (2004) romantic paradigm pointed to tourists' intrinsic motivation to consume the extraordinary as a means to self-education and personal enlightenment. Tourists passively appreciate, or are influenced by, the way the destination appeals to their senses (Oh, 2007). Tourists are looking for ways in which to escape their regular environments and think about their lives from a different perspective (Turner, 1973).

Whether conscious or unconscious, tourists are believed to hold personal values that permeate their lives and influence their choice of a specific destination and/or target tourist experience (Madrigal & Kahle, 1994). Creating places that encourage betterment of self and surrounding, these intrinsic values are elevated to higher levels of transformation. Gelter (2010) offers that transformation is not staging personal experience but guiding a personal change. Creating places that encourage a lifestyle enhancement allows the visitor to be steered toward channeling energy toward enlightenment.

In order to make a change and reach the next stage of human growth, we need to follow a transformation path. We need to transform ourselves: our values, life priorities, lifestyle and the way we use resources and spend time and money. Reisinger (2011) argued that we must move towards a world in which we learn about the purpose and meaning of our life, a world which gives way to new values of ecological awareness, empathy for others, non-violence, human rights, and equality.

Pine & Gilmore (2007) posit that such transformations require a change in attitude, performance, characteristics, or some other fundamental personal dimension. Using these two

thoughts I would argue that there are specific fundamental aspects that communities can implement into their planning in order to create such shifts in value and consciousness.

### *Value shifts*

Based on a study of 100,000 Americans, Ray & Anderson (2000) found a transformation of life values among 25% of the US adults which they call “Cultural Creatives”. Similar value shifts towards creativity, authenticity, globalism, self actualization and culture has also been confirmed by others (Pine & Gilmore 2007; Pink, 2006). These value shifts may be a result of transmodernity, an essence of being for something. (Luyckx, 2006). Taking active action towards ethnic, racial and sexual equality, sustainability and interconnectedness has an interesting bearing on community development as it relates to transformative tourism and heightened consciousness and enlightened communities.

For example, a political disagreement may in fact be a conflict of values that in turn arise from different structures of consciousness. Such conflicts are very difficult to resolve because adequate resolutions need to take into account the perspectives of all levels of consciousness (Combs, 2002). Bahro (1994) believed that the struggle for the future would not take place between social or economic classes, but between structures of consciousness.

Good intentions alone cannot produce the changes that are needed. What is required is a wide-scale transformation of humankind itself, a transformation in the direction of shared positive values that honor the natural earth and carry a tolerance, even a celebration of individual religious and cultural differences. Such a transformation cannot come from the intellect alone, but must arise in the whole person: heart, mind, body and spirit. Otherwise apparent gains are likely to slip away when problems become complex and difficult (Combs, 2002).

### *Transformational Tourism*

Shifts in consciousness come from environments that have been intentionally planned to create a better quality of life for the residents within them, thereby altering their internal dynamic. From the point of view of 'self' related to 'community', tourists seeking self and community gravitate towards destinations that provide experiences that offer to fill what is missing, subconsciously being met with values and higher levels of consciousness. Once engaged in these experiences these tourists have then been a part of transformational tourism.

### **Community and economic health**

#### *Health*

The concept of health has evolved from a narrow focus on the absence of disease, toward a more holistic and dynamic vision that considers the individual, social and environmental determinants of health (Arai & Pedlar, 1997). As the definition of health expanded and evolved, there was a modification in thinking toward a more participatory approach to health planning, which is now known as the healthy communities approach. Whether at the level of personal decision, corporate practice or collaborative partnership, building a healthier community has become an expressed priority across the country (Norris & Pittman, 2000). Everyone has a role to play in building a healthier, more vibrant community. To a great extent, it is about how we spend our time, treasure and talent. It is also about how we create settings within communities conducive to positive change in self and environment thereby becoming more attractive to visitors thus enhancing economic development.

#### *Planning*

Life choices, behavior, and socioeconomic factors are areas that are directly or indirectly influenced by community planning decisions. Efforts to make tourism a more sustainable option has focused increasingly on a community development approach (Joppe, 1996). Community is

self-defining in that it is based on a sense of shared purpose and common goals. Joppe (1996) stated that the focus of most positive community economic development can be summarized as ‘small, green and social’, which agrees with Florida’s (2002) arguments about the creative class movement. Building a community culture, focusing and embracing a community’s indigenous amenities helps build from ground-up or from the grass roots of the community.

The focus of more traditional economic development is outward, with the objective of attracting new factories and businesses to the community. Florida (2002) furthers this thought with research showing how cutting-edge companies follow creative people, creative people want and move to creative communities, creative communities are found offering layers of ‘small, green, and social’. Full circle initiatives of planning create places that are both livable and attractive as tourist destinations.

There is almost universal acceptance by governments that potential of tourism to create jobs and wealth is positive and this belief underlies the development of policies to expand the industry. The relatively labor-intensive nature of the tourism industry and the limited scope for capital substitution in the production of tourism services, leads many lesser developed countries and regions to look upon tourism as the economic vehicle of choice in their revitalization and development efforts (Lerner, 1996). Government ideals can shift the structures of the human spirit with basic and fundamental levels of community planning or community tourism planning.

### *Mindset*

Healthy communities are powerful because they help unleash human potential. They build trust and relationships. They mobilize the creativity and resources of the community toward a shared vision for the future. Healthy communities engage the voices and talents of the community at a higher level than those that are not healthy (Norris & Pittman, 2000).

In a growing number of small communities people are setting up cooperative local and regional bartering and currency systems, such as the ‘slow cities’ of France, where ‘fast food’ restaurants are replaced by ‘slow’ local food distributors (Combs, 2002). In such local or even regional communities, people can agree on limited goals and work together to achieve them. The challenge today and for the future is to settle on a global economy that is consciously regulated for the health of all concerned. (Combs, 2002)

Since 1974, the US has experienced slower growth, slower increases in median income, slower job creation, slower productivity gains, slower life-expectancy improvements and slower rates of technological change (Cowen, 2011). It could be that the nature of technological change is not causing the slowdown but a shift in values, or mindset. Cowen (2011) described an industrial economy where people develop a materialistic mind-set and belief that improving their income was the same thing as improving their quality of life. In an affluent information-driven world, people embrace the post-materialist mind-set. They realize they can improve their quality of life without producing more wealth. It is this value shift that fosters communities to embrace a ‘slow’ lifestyle, ironically creating greater economic gains as it embraces this type of holistic type of atmosphere.

### *Wealth*

The new economy operates in a ‘space’ rather than a place, and over time more and more economic transactions will migrate to this new space. Cities will flourish, and the value of a distinctive place, such as a wilderness area, will only increase (Kelly, 1998). Place and community are more critical factors than ever before and a large proportion of the reason for this is that rather than inhabiting an abstract ‘space’, the economy itself increasingly takes form around real concentrations of people in real places.

The experience economy has emerged as a consequence of the contemporary cultural shift towards a conceptual age (Pink, 2006). This cultural change affects both the context of tourism business enterprises as well as tourist expectations, values, and consumption behaviors. The concept of ‘experiencescapes’ describes the spaces in which experiences are staged and consumed and can be likened to stylized landscapes that are strategically planned, laid out and designed (O’Dell, 2005). They are, in this sense, landscapes of experience – experiencescapes – that are not only organized by producers, but are also actively sought after by consumers.” (O’Dell 2005, p.16). Trip frequencies and trip lengths are primarily a function of the build environment (Ewing & Cervero, 2007) suggesting that the quality of our destination encourages more stay, additional revenue and potential for word of mouth marketing.

### **Social capital and spiritual capital**

#### *Social capital*

Social capital is defined as the social, political and economic networks and interactions that inspire trust and reciprocity among citizens and may be affected by the design of the physical environment (Andrew, 2003). Toffler (1970) proposed a dualistic aspect of designed experiences as composed of both a material component constituting the physical place, as well as an immaterial part constituted of the mode, emotions, feelings, expectations, and thoughts of the experiencing person.

The understanding of the world as constantly changing, inherently unpredictable and ultimately impermanent further requires that actions should be guided by iterative, collaborative and, above all, reflective processes that take into consideration the impact of actions on all system levels and abide by principles of precaution, adaptation and non-attachment (Du Plessis, 2009). When social capital is gained, there should be no distinction between how a person

should treat other people and how a society should treat the natural and social systems with which it is in relationship.

Maintaining the wholeness of the world is therefore vital to the continued wellbeing of both the human individual and human society, as the relationship between self (the individual) and non-self (everything with which the individual is in relationship) is seen as essentially non-dual, i.e. the non-self is an extension of the self and not separate from it. The wellbeing of the individual can therefore not be separated from the wellbeing of the whole.

### *Spiritual Capital*

Spirituality has, according to Brown (1998) become a kind of buzz-word of the age that describes what is felt to be missing rather than specifying what is hoped to be found. Spirituality may be thought of simply as a connection between the self and the 'this world', implying that a spiritual or emotional relationship exists or is sought between people, 'this world' and specific places (Sharpley & Jepsen, 2010). Such experiences promote a transcendental state of wellness and oneness and humility. In a case study of Machu Picchu, Peru pilgrims were able to get in touch with their creative energies, return to basics, reconnect with nature and with the sustaining power of the ancient Inca civilization (Raj & Morpeth, 2007). The emerging form of tourism to sacred places, such as transformational pilgrimages, have elevated places like Machu Picchu, Stonehenge, the Egyptian pyramids, the Taj Majal, and Mount Everest into a global network of 'power places' where ancient and prehistoric civilizations are connected by means of linked energies (Raj & Morpeth, 2007). More than simply seeking to gaze at an authentic culture, people or landscape, the 'post-tourist' wants to live an experience (Urry, 1990). These newly developing tourist quests are centered towards self transformation and constitute a new ground for authentic experiences.

Modern life generates uncertainty so people seek authentic experiences as a means of revitalizing fragmented personal identity. The “whole” community, as mentioned earlier, is a refuge for those seeking self. The New Age experience (Raj & Morpeth, 2007) is aesthetic, kinesthetic, but also self transformational and healing. Seeking reality inside the self rather than outside defines not only the New Age movement but also what it means to seek spirituality. It is widely suggested that contemporary western society has come to be defined by a ‘spiritual revolution’ (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). There has been a shift in the sacred landscape and a search for spiritual nourishment through the pursuit of an enormous variety of beliefs and practices, such as holism, fen shui, yoga, or New Age (Drury, 2004) Looking to yoga, the entire practice works at achieving higher awareness, a new state of mind, or “mindfulness”. This mindfulness may facilitate stronger connections between individuals and place in that what is good for the environment is good for the self. Thereby giving rise to not only transformative tourism but also a form of spiritual tourism which leads to social and spiritual capital.

The Dalai Lama (1999) recently warned that “change only takes place through action, not through meditation and prayer.” However, if meditation and prayer are used to open us to clearer integral understandings of ourselves and the world, our action is made all the more effective (Combs, 2002). After many years of political activism that included building the Green Movement in Europe, Rudolf Bahro (1994) came to believe that a personal meditation practice provides an important foundation for practical action. He found that meditation “serves the most political purpose conceivable today, of liberation from ego-perspective and self-will, and liberation for rescuing action, for building the culture anew, and for the transformation of institutions.” Virtually all forms of meditation lead to the development of a more calm and objective mental and emotional poise. To the extent that integral consciousness resembles goals

of certain wisdom traditions, such as those found in Buddhism and Indian Yoga (Combs, 2002). Thus it would seem that the practice of meditation leads in the direction of integral consciousness which would lead to an enlightened community.

A case study of the Lake District in the United Kingdom found that those who visited were motivated by or achieved, consciously or otherwise, spiritual meaning or fulfillment through their visits (Sharpley & Jepsen, 2010). The landscape offered travelers an emotional connection to a greater power. The landscape held a sacred meaning that compensated for the increasing spiritual void in urban society. Since the late 1700s, the Lake District has communicated a sense of something especially alluring and enthralling, capable of conferring mental and spiritual as well as physical benefits upon the discerning visitor. Sharpley & Jepsen (2010) wrote of one person's definition of spirituality:

“Spirituality is a ‘oneness’ with the world, clarity of thought... just feeling the best that I can be. It's any kind of connection with your inner self and with whatever is surrounding you whether it's living or not.”

Prominent in the discussion of the Lake District was idea of examining one's life in relation to the world around and how spirituality was related directly to nature and the earth (Sharpley & Jepsen, 2010). Landscape, scenic beauty, open space, fresh air and exercise were the main reasons people visited. Either during or as a result of their visit, the spirituality was reflected in the interpretation of the feelings they experienced: sense of oneness and connection to the world, feelings of being part of something bigger and infinite, the sense of a greater power and the appreciation of creation, a sense of timelessness and of scale, euphoria, a feeling of being blessed and a sense of renewal. The Lake District lead to a temporary fellowship with other tourists, a sense of ‘communitas’ bound by common interests and shared experiences, where social status

and normal boundaries were disregarded (Digance, 2006). Enabling communities to share in this type of thinking allows boundaries to be broken down, inviting respect for everything around. No matter race, religion or politics, everyone understands love and compassion. This is spirituality.

People seek spiritual nourishment through many practices, including tourism. The concept of tourism as a spiritual journey has been considered by a number of people (Olsen, 2006; Sharpley, 2009) with the spiritual concept under the guise of other categories such as holistic or wellness tourism (Smith & Kelly, 2006). The various studies also reveal a correlation between the natural environment and a deep sense of belonging, a sense of place, a profound connection with the world and harmonious feelings. Solitude, silence, time and space are all important factors in spiritual well-being and nature is seen as life-giving and rejuvenating (Heintzman, 1999) leading to an increase in human development and spirituality.

The psychological theory of a “hierarchy of Needs” by Maslow (1954) is one that has been applied to tourism (Pearce, 1988). Maslow classified human needs into five basic categories: physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization. Using fundamental levels of human satisfaction, ultimately self actualization, I believe there are basic levels of community planning that can be met and implemented in order for there to be an enlightened community which transforms not only the residents mentality on living but creates a transformational tourism experience for those visiting.

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