CREATIVE TOWNSHIP TOURISM

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INTRODUCTION

• Creative tourism has a potential role in reshaping township tourism in a responsible manner
• Creative tourism provides a number of avenues for catalysing economic opportunities to locals; upgrading physical township spaces; and offering alternatives to voyeuristic forms of slum tourism
• This exploratory investigation identifies the creative forms of tourism in Soweto and Langa
• Current examples and potential for future development are interrogated, and areas for further research are outlined
WHAT IS CREATIVE TOURISM?

Creative Spaces

Experiences

Spectacles
CREATIVE TOURISM

• Creative tourism is associated with the arrival of the ‘new tourist’ interested in active learning experiences and meaningful interactions with locals (Richards and Wilson, 2006)

• A shift in supply from tangible to intangible tourism resources and from passive to active cultural consumption (Richards, 2011)

• The concept encompasses creative experiences, cultural and tourism consumption in creative spaces/precincts, and creative spectacles/ events centred on culture linked to placemaking and urban (re) development (Duxbury et al., 2016; Lew, 2017; Richards, 2014; Richards and Wilson, 2006)
CREATIVE TOURISM (2)

• Creative spectacles include various cultural and performing arts events and festivals, parades, street art projects and outdoor art exhibitions

• Creative spaces comprise the spatial bundling of creative firms and when linked to tourism also include accommodation, restaurants, shopping facilities and markets

• In relation to creative tourism events and spaces, an emphasis on what is unique and authentic about local culture with a high experience value is needed (Richards and Wilson 2006)
TOWNSHIP TOURISM

- Developed as an urban tourism niche market since 1994
- Soweto in Johannesburg, and Cape Town’s townships (Langa, Gugulethu and Khayelitsha) are most visited
- A form of poverty and heritage tourism (‘struggle’ heritage)
- The typical township tour consists of taking mainly international visitors to anti-apartheid struggle sites and spaces of poverty in the townships
- Mostly overseas visitors
TOWNSHIP TOURISM (2)

- Often regarded as voyeuristic and unauthentic
- Local residents benefit little from current configurations of township tourism
- Local entrepreneurs face a number of barriers in terms of running tourism businesses successfully and sustainably
RATIONALE

• Currently, creative slum tourism are neither interrogated in existing slum tourism nor creative tourism literature and debates

• On the policy front, creative tourism has not entered the township tourism planning space or destination management and marketing initiatives

• Culture and creativity are important components of urban tourism and placemaking policies

• Within the creative economy debates, culture is seen as a resource

• From the view of development, a focus on cultural resources is significant for opening potential pathways of poverty by spreading the benefits of urban tourism to peripheral township areas
RATIONALE (2)

- Southern Urbanism perspective: slums should not merely be regarded as places of poverty, but also recognised as having a certain dynamism, vibrancy, social togetherness, resourcefulness and creativity (Choplin, 2016)
- Emphasis is upon informality, artistic and/or aesthetic expressions, livelihood and entrepreneurial resourcefulness, and complex social relationships (Deboulet, 2016; Pieterse, 2011; Lombard, 2014)
- Indeed, authors point to slums being places of vibrant culture and creativity (Bolay, 2006; Dovey and King 2012, Frenzel, 2016).
RATIONALE (3)

- Perceived latent international and domestic visitor demand for cultural tourism and leisure consumption in slums, and limited current township tourism mix, cultural resources under-utilised (Booyens, 2010; George and Booyens, 2014; Rogerson and Mthombeni, 2015)
- Potential arguably for:
  - more unique visitor experiences based on i.e. music and performance art, visual arts and crafts, traditional healing practices, local food, storytelling about local heritage and township life, and aesthetics i.e. dwellings and street art in townships;
  - multi-purpose cultural centres and tourism precincts (physical upgrading), and
  - the promotion of cultural events to international visitors and local residents alike.
EXAMPLES IN SOWETO
SOWETO

- Vilakazi precinct: mostly cultural heritage tourism i.e. struggle heritage sites and tourism services, few local crafters
- Little evidence of creative precincts in Soweto, exiting cultural sites are under-developed for tourism, for example Credo Mutwa and Ubuntu Kraal
- Emerging presence of creative firms are identified (i.e. audio visuals; creative services; new and print media; see Gregory and Rogerson, 2018)
- Various culture-related events incl. book festivals, food festivals, music performances, and theatre and performance art productions, as well as food markets, lifestyle/ street culture/ arts events
One example of a creative township experience is a street art tour in Langa (Maboneng Township Art Experience) – a walking street art tour and visits to home galleries.

Langa Cultural Precinct which is anchored upon the multi-purpose Guga S’Thebe Arts and Cultural Centre.

Emerging Langa Quarter – homes of notable people marked with heritage plaques and homestays via Airbnb.

Few cultural events, one example is an annual street culture and art festival with homes turned into galleries, music venues or to accommodate storytelling.
CONCLUSIONS

• Considerable potential exists to expand and diversify the existing township tour product by focussing on creative tourism

• Diversity township tourism offering to 1) enable more persons to participate in the tourism economy, 2) offer opportunities for the physical upgrading and 3) stimulate more domestic leisure consumption

• The recreating of township tourism negates the view of visits to townships as voyeuristic since the emphasis in no longer on visitors simply viewing slums and poverty, but instead on visitors participating in cultural heritage with locals
IDEAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

• Mapping the supply of creative forms of tourism in key townships;
• Interrogating the demand for creative tourism further;
• Considering spatial planning and creative placemaking for the physical upgrading of township areas;
• Understanding cultural expressions and representation in relation to creative tourism offerings better; and
• Outlining public policy responses to creative forms of tourism in townships including mechanisms to support to local creative entrepreneurs