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NEW NETWORKS FOR THE OLD PARADISE

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Abstract
Uncontrolled growth of the cities generates a loss of the city-planning quality because of the excess of urbanization and colonization of the environment. For many years it is taking place a progressive degradation of the natural environments, whose devastating effects are appearing in an exponential way. In this context, this paper pretends to remark the huge devastation that are suffering the tropical environments allover the world and tries to propose a global solution that concerns national and international institutions.
Keywords: paradise, global, network urban collapse

1. Introduction

"Networks" is a proposal to unravel the studding of problematic that happen in the coastal environments of the so called "paradise".

The word "paradise" comes from the Persian "pairidaeza, "enclosure", that it's is composed by "pairi-", (around) and "-diz", (to create). So ancient sources as Xenophon in his "Anábasis" (IV adC century) allude to the famous Persian garden "paradise". It's original meaning refers to an extensive and well orderly garden, that it appears as a beautiful and pleasant place, where besides trees and flowers, there are animals in freedom.

The form of the word that now-a-days means "heaven" or "something immensely pleasant" proceeds from the Greek παράδεισος "paradeisos", used in the "Septuaginta" to allude to the garden of the Eden.

The most similar concept to "paradise" that exists at present are the natural environments located specially in the southern areas: tropical climates, coastal areas, exuberant nature, old civilizations marked by history and practically virgin, with no human intervention (excepting for small settlings of natives completely adapted to the environment), until a few years ago definitely, a place to get lost and found.

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CCASP

TERUM

However, for a few years it is taking place a progressive degradation of these natural environments, whose devastating effects are appearing in an exponential way in the last times. There remains not even the memory of the longed for paradise and the situation seems to be irreversible if we don't act in an immediate and coordinated way.

We can find the reasons for this devastation in the models of tourist exploitation that is established all over the planet in name of the globalization, the capitalism and the common market. It is a global-scale problem that can lead to an irreversible situation for the territory in which these tourist resorts settle.

2. But, which is this model of tourist exploitation so harmful for the environment?

Generally big tourist complexes appear, in developing countries, with an incipient or non-existent legislation in the matter. The investment is for the most part a foreigner and the repercussion at an economic level for the country that receives the above mentioned resorts is practically null, exclusively based on the creation of precarious employment.

These macro-resorts settle on areas that probably should be declared as protected regions for its inestimable environmental and ecological value. Nevertheless they are unprotected and in addition they are sold for a residual value, on not being incorporated into any nearby population. That is to say, they are obtained to price of rustic soil.

They concentrate in a specific distant area far from the nucleuses of native population. In occasions, cells of native population are generated close to these resorts in which the employees of the hotels reside temporarily, carrying out marathon labour days of 15 hours and seasonally they live distant of their families.

On the other hand, they include enormous surfaces of area, destroying mangrove swamps, coral reefs and all kind of natural existing ecosystems, implanting edifications not adapted to any urban development regulation. It builds practically to level of coast without respecting distances to the littoral or international grateful limits and in most occasions the constructive systems, the techniques and the used materials are imported of the country of origin, and as a consequence, it moves aside completely from the native systems of construction.

Also it appears a problem of conversion of the natural landscape into an artificial one, since they look for a "light" paradise, much more commercial so that mosquitoes do not puncture, there are no

poisonous species or sharp rocks, the waters are crystalline and there are wild animal species but they don't bother the user…They create macro-parks of "natural" attractions turning river beds aside, lowing the slopes of the terrain (throwing concrete in the abrupt terrains), "placing" pretty animals that are neither autochthonous nor "authentic"…However, it happens funny things like the fact of being forced to use solar ecological protectors that only can be acquired in these places to "reasonable" prices to protect a supposed natural environment that has been previously on-exploited and completely manipulated.

That process of becoming artificial reaches also the social and cultural strata, so that the traditions and customs degenerate and turn into one more element of marketing, inside the great business that has been established around this way of tourism.

3. Which are the consequences of this type of implantations to short, average and long term?

In any way whatever logical and foregone the consequences produce and manifest to all levels. Following we present a short enumeration of the main problems that appear in each level.

City-planning and environmental level:

Uncontrolled growth of cities or concentration areas of hotel services, that generate a loss of the city-planning quality because of the excess of urbanization and colonization of the environment.

Un-location and isolation of the local population. In occasions the existing populations remain isolated to infra-structural level due to the overload that suffer the communication routes, in whose design the real flow of transport was not previewed. On the other hand, the hotel equipments occupy big surfaces of area to which the inhabitants have no access, so the native populations appear as isolated bags in an inaccessible magma within the exclusive reach of those that have economic sufficient resources.

On the other hand, this overcharge of the substructures brings equal problems of environmental pollution and possible contamination consequences on the health.

Loss or damage of the autochthonous vegetation. The impact of the conventional tourism on the vegetation of a natural environment is evident for multiple causes: first for the fellings of trees (always affecting more to youngest species) not always controlled that the construction of this kind of resorts

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CCASP

TERUM

generates. On the other hand it produces some other series of alterations as the change of percentage of vegetable cover (that in certain environments it can come to the desertification of the specific habitat) or changes in the variety of species and even the disappearance of autochthonous species of strongly settling. In occasions the natural resources are also affected for the insertion of foreign species for the gardening of spaces of idleness, parks, hotels, and etcetera that break the natural balance of the environment.

Loss of the quality of the water. This problem is produced for several causes that coexist to the time. The first cause is the pollution of the water generated by the activities developed around these resorts (use of aquatic boats, pouring of ships or cruises in the ports, etc.) that decrease the oxygen and alter the colour of the water. On the other hand, spillages of waste water treated inadequately take place usually in beaches, lakes and rivers. Finally, the great flowing of tourists in certain moments produces the shortage of supplies in the region and consequently the extreme fatigue of the natural auriferous.

Drift to an artificial landscape. In this section we refer so much to the action on natural environments that it are modified and altered to obtain more adapted "paradises" to the model that the investor requires and the conventional tourist requests, as also to the effect on the cities and urban centres. In this sense, it is necessary to emphasize the architectural pollution that is produced with the re-interpretation of what "integration in the environment" means, which is generally quite different from the real construction tradition of the area.

Economic level:

Lack of economic long-term repercussion in the country. In occasions they are the administrative, juridical or political problems those that generate a certain lack of control on the flow of investments and the return of the capital towards the foreigner. Nevertheless, there must exist a firm commitment between all agents, as it's suggested in the Code of the Sustainable Tourism (WTO, 1999) (that we will develop afterwards), in order to make work correctly all the necessary substructures, endowments and services, so that the benefit is reciprocal between the next cities and these new settlements.

Creation of precarious, temporal employment (concentrated in the summery time) and disintegrated for the territory. Moreover this fact ends in the social segregation of the local residents, lodged in next satellites cities to the tourist centres, without any type of urban development classification, services or endowments.

Creation of economic dependence from foreign investors. This dependence can turn out to be very dangerous for the evolution of the economy of the receiving country. Also it results highly harmful the fact that a country depends of an unique sector, as it can be the tourism, for its development and progress, since it turns its economy in highly vulnerable and unpredictable. Any external agent (a meteorological phenomenon, a terrorist threat, etc.) could modify the guidelines of preference of the majority tourists and therefore could carry very serious consequences on the receiving country.

Socio-cultural level:

The fundamental problem is the loss of identity that takes place between the native population, due to the social and cultural isolation that it's generated as a consequence of the dispersion that promotes this type of systems of labour contracting and for the infrastructural isolation that was mentioned previously.

On the other hand the profile of the tourist is getting modified, it's usually an upper-middle class citizen that travels as form of dispersion and not in order to know new environments who, in many occasions changes negatively its habitual guidelines of conduct. This fact affects in a radical way in the vision of the natives from their visitors and vice versa and acts of cultural barrier between both.

4. What do this macro-resorts offer to turn out to be so attractive to thousands of tourists that give up the traditional way of knowing new territories?

This question is answered briefly: easy holidays, without worries, "safe", with no need to think or take any decisions, with days "full" of non-transcendental activities, without big transfers…

Another strong point of this type of offers is the economic plane. The big tour-operators can allow reducing the costs to the maximum. The paradox is that it results much more expensive contracting hotels, transports, different transfers and activities separately that shelter to one of these "vacation packages" that in addition they include the whole maintenance and a wide offer of leisure and entertainment facilities, of doubtful quality.

Neither the small agencies nor much less the individuals can obtain more economic prices, for what many tourists take refuge in this system and then once there they try to live through the more authentic experience that the above mentioned system allows them (which is not always easy).

5. How could we recover these degraded environments?

There is no doubt that such a complex and established problematic (in spite of the fact that the phenomenon is relatively young) only can be settled through a coordinated intervention to different levels.

Following we describe the fundamental keys or lines of action in each of the levels

Supra-territorial level

First it is a fundamental to un-locate the problematic, understanding that this is a global problem and the solution only can be global.

It is important that all socio-political strata are involved in the solution and are related not only to ethical levels but also to economic, juridical and territorial commitments.

The fact to detect the global dimension of the problem implies that the international community cannot give the back to this problem and that must assume a responsibility across the draft of laws that define protection levels for the natural media, so that they could not be abandoned before the possible legal existent emptiness in the local media.

These laws have to promote, among other things, intensive procedures based on rhythms of fillings and emptiness in which important factors such as urban development, economic, environmental, social or cultural are taken into account.

In the moment in which one of these ecotourism experiences is carried out in a way that it could be validated at all levels (even at level of the investor) it will be possible to extrapolate the solution to global scale.

We all must be conscious of that the fingerprint or, rather, the scar of this wound can remain opened by generations and can affect not only our children, but to the children of our children.

Territorial level

At urban scale the solution cannot come from the hand of closed procedures, located in an environment that suffers a high degree of degradation. We propose interventions across mesh systems, interrelational, nets opposite to linear or punctual systems.

These networks symbolize actions that include multiple factors. In its vertexes are placed intensive actions related among themselves that are inserted in the territory integrated in the urban existing plot, respecting the natural spaces and raising a solution of territorial continuity instead of generating isolated and unconnected bags, as it happens at present time.

Only in this way it will be possible to break the physical barriers that it are generated between the native populations and the tourism, as well as preserving the natural landscape and consequently preserve the environment.

To do this, one of the more effective measures than could be taken would be to promote the public management of the natural resources, which would ensure their protection and it would avoid their gradual degradation due to the inadequate use or overexploitation.

Cognitive level

The tourism must have positive repercussion to all levels on the life of the inhabitants and that repercussion must be quantifiable and tangibly, so much at economic level, as we already have mentioned, as at cultural and sociological level.

This means breaking the cultural barriers and promoting the interchange, to increase the richness of the environment and to settle the lacks, to act from the concept of adding up and not of subtracting. More is more.

Sensory level

The objective is o recover the positive perception on the phenomenon of the tourism, so much on the part of the receivers of the travellers.

This means a process of going and return: first, breaking with the mercantilist perception of the tourist considered as an object of marketing and business, trying to take advantage of the fragility that the tourist has abroad, far away from his environment and with an absolute ignorance of procedures, customs and certainly, of the language, which turns him into a vulnerable person...

Secondly, it is equally important to avoid the paternalistic and protectionist vision from the part of the tourist with regard to the environment that he is visiting under the wrong assumption that the own customs are the unique good and authentic and the rest just correspond to archaic concepts based on a minor development.

The interaction between the visitor and the native is the key for the mutual respect and knowledge, for which is important to re-compose the links of union between both through not invasive and integrating proposals.

It is necessary and fundamental to foment the value of the difference as richness ands to affect on the positive facts that the cultural interchange has. Only from the setting in value of the traditions and the spreading of its real values we would be able to keep their authentic and autochthonous character, preventing the above mentioned traditions and customs from degenerating and turning into artificial elements of marketing and consumption.

In conclusion, since we have tried to demonstrate, the measures to take and strategies to continuing include several strata.

First there must be decisions taken from international authorities, destined to safeguard the natural resources of all the affected areas, without importing its specific location.

On the other hand, at the particular level of each State it is necessary to avoid speculations on natural environments that must be protected and to take part actively in the protection of the same ones. The State must equally plan the evolution of the tourist settlings, so much at urban level as socioeconomic level, valuing not only the economic immediate repercussion but its long term repercussion in all aspects.

Finally, it's the responsibility of everyone, but specially it is our responsibility as architects, to divulge the importance of promoting a SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, so we can breaks all those pre-established barriers and make the conventional tourist conscious of his responsibility with the receiving environment.

6. Which are the principles of a sustainable tourism?

A very good definition of sustainable tourism can be found in the Charter of Lanzarote (World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, 1995), that defines it in the following way: "Those tourist activities respectful with the natural, cultural and social environment, and with the values of a community, that allows enjoying a positive interchange of experiences between residents and visitors, where the relationship between the tourist and the community is fair and the benefits of the activity is distributed equally, and where the visitors have a truly participatory approach in their travel experience".

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TERUM

Definitively, it express that, being the tourism a powerful tool of development, it can and must participate actively in the strategy of sustainable| development. A good tourism management requires ensuring the sustainability of the resources on which it depends.

In 1999, a Global Code of Ethic for Tourism (WTO, 1999) was adopted to establish a few basic principles destined to conciliate sustainable environmental protection, economic development and combating poverty. These principles are content in ten articles that basically summarize the main points we've been trying to develop along this paper:

Tourism's contribution to the mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies.

The agents of the tourist development and the own tourists have the responsibility of paying attention to the traditions and social and cultural practices of all peoples, including minorities. Moreover, host communities and the local professional agents must learn to understand and respect the tourists who visit them and learn about their lifestyle, their preferences and their expectations. On the other hand, the public authorities must ensure the protection of the tourists and visitors and their properties, paying particular attention to the safety of foreign tourists for their particular vulnerability.

Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment.

Tourism is an activity usually associated with rest, leisure, sport and access to culture and nature. It should be conceived as a privilege for the individual and collective development. It is an irreplaceable factor of self education, tolerance and mutual learning of the legitimate differences between peoples and cultures and their diversity.

Tourism as a factor of sustainable development.

The stakeholders in tourism development have the duty to safeguard the environment and natural resources, with a growth rate healthy, steady and sustainable, that satisfies equitably the needs and aspirations of present and future generations. Activities should be limited in particularly vulnerable areas such as desert regions, polar or high mountain, coastal, tropical forests or wetlands.

Tourism as a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and a contributor to its enhancement.

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Tourism resources belong to the common heritage of mankind and the communities in whose territory they have regarding rights and obligations. It is fundamental the protection and rehabilitation of monuments or places of historical or archaeological interest and also its opening to the tourism with guarantees. On the other hand, it is fundamental the protection and promotion of the cultural and handicraft production, as well as the folklore so it does not lead to their disappearance, impoverishment or falsification.

Tourism as a beneficial activity for host countries and communities.

Local populations and communities have the right to receive a fair share of economic benefits, social and cultural reporting, especially in the creation of direct and indirect employment. Multinational companies in the tourism sector may not abuse on the dominant position they can occupy. They must commit to local development by avoiding excessive repatriation of profits or induction of imports that reduce the contribution to the economies in which they are implanted.

Right to tourism and liberty of tourist movements

All inhabitants of the planet have right to the discovery of the riches of our world. This right must be promoted by public authorities that must facilitate access for most people to international tourism.

6. Final conclusion

As ARCHITECTS and URBAN PLANNERS we consider necessary to affect these values and promote its dissemination and application. Sometimes we are not aware that our performance and our work leave a print in the territory that may be irreversible.

It is our duty to keep in mind these principles and move their content in terms of its scale to reflect territorial and environmental. The economic and social developments in an environment must always safeguard and protect their natural resources, its traditions and culture. We must all realize that the destiny of humankind depends on what happens in each particular place on Earth and that we can not consider it's not our duty in the short term because, as we have said, it's a GLOBAL-wide problem and the solution must also be global.

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TERUM

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