

ISSN 1970-9870 Volume 4 - SP - March 2011

**SP.10**

**TeMA**

***SELECTED PAPERS 2010***

trimestrale del *Laboratorio Territorio Mobilità e Ambiente - TeMA*Lab



Department of Urban and Regional Planning  
University of Naples Federico II

TeMA  
SP.10

# TeMA

TeMALab Journal of Mobility, Land Use and Environment

Volume 4 | SP | March 2011

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**Journal published by**

TeMALab of Mobility, Land Use and Environment  
Department of Urban and Regional Planning  
University of Naples Federico II

Print ISSN: 1970-9889  
Online ISSN: 1970-9870

Issue completed at march 2010

Authorization of the Court of Naples n. 6 del 29 gennaio 2008

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## Going Round in Circles: Mobility, Destination and Experience

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### TeMALab journal

[www.tema.unina.it](http://www.tema.unina.it)  
ISSN 1970-9870  
Vol 4 - SP - March 2011 (45-50)

Department of Urban and Regional Planning  
University of Naples Federico II

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#### Keywords:

Tourism transport  
Accessibility  
Urban Tourism

### ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the changing approaches to transport in urban tourism as seen through the move from functional sectoral accounts towards a perspective informed by the experience economy. By reviewing the traditional service offers, it is possible to unpack what lies within the service dominant logics that lead to co-creation of value and the realisation of quality tourism experiences. The paper then considers the adoption and adaptation of traditional forms of transport within the value proposition in urban tourism.

Mobility in tourism is a strangely new focus of attention, strangely because without it there would be no tourism to speak of. However mobility requires a framework of civil and legal entitlements that allow people to move and a transport infrastructure that allows those rights to be realised in both working and leisure time situations. This article will address the construction of the tourism transport infrastructure by examining the ways in which the transportation elements in mobility have been re-thought within tourism.

The first part of the paper will re-construct an account of transport and mobility which deals with it in terms of the functions and logistics of delivery, both between points of origin and destinations, and within destinations. These perspectives can be seen in the texts which shape the basic tourism curriculum (Cooper et al, 2008; Page, 2009) and explain how tourism and transport have developed over the years by integrating the opportunities provided by the new technologies – motorised vehicles (both cars and coaches), trains, ships and aeroplanes – to allow for the development of a range of destinations. Lumsdon and Page (2004) introduced a new approach to transport and tourism by distinguishing between transport for tourism and transport as tourism, which provides a linkage between the first and second parts of this article.

The second part will develop an account of mobility in tourism that demonstrates how their uniqueness derives from what the 'Service-dominant (S-D) logic' (Vargo and Lush, 2004; Vargo and Morgan, 2005; Vargo and Lush 2006) would call value co-creation.

Hyde and Laesser (2008) emphasised the important role of transport in the tourist decision-making process associated with destination choice behaviour but it is necessary to move beyond this construction of the interconnections (Andersson, 2007). These elements of transport were generally considered to be "goods" or "products" including both tangible and intangible factors. Physical goods become one element among others in a total service offering, from an exhibition to a living performance or a concert and transportation has become an integral part of that experience if not of the offer.

### Going round in circles: mobility, destination and experience

The industrial revolution brought the first major changes in transportation that is seen as among the first milestones in the development of modern tourism.

The introduction of railways and their use for tourism is still seen as one of the first step in the development of mass tourism. It is also possible to make the general claim that every technological innovation, from the steam engine to aeroplanes or modern railways have all contributed to providing faster and wider spatial linkages between the ever growing generating and receiving areas (destinations) (Hodgson, 1987).

These changes have also transformed the character of tourism, moving it from the privilege of the 'elite' to the pastime of the masses.

Transport is an integral part of tourism as in a simplistic view transport connects the supply elements of tourism, linking them into a product customers can purchase (Page, 2003).

If we consider the idea of tourism packages the two services that are usually elements of those packages are accommodation and transport. Although with the changing nature of (mass) tourism, packages not including travel have been introduced; the proportion of these compared to the traditional packages including transport is minimal.

(Nevertheless, it must be noted that packages not including travel are popular mostly in the case of destinations that are accessible by car within a reasonably short period (24-36 hours). In the case of holiday destinations that are most easily accessible by plane, it is still – despite the growth of online bookings – a much less frequent occurrence for leisure tourists to purchase their own accom-

modation and organise their transport arrangements by themselves.) With dynamic packaging and micro packaging becoming more widespread in the 21st century tour operators are even more focussed on adapting to the changing needs of tourists, also by offering a wider choice of transport options.

It should also be recognised that the transport may not only be part of the tourism package but the tourism attraction as well. Cruise liners may be taken as providing a useful example of this, as being on board these luxury liners is itself one of the key motivating factors, the voyage is the attraction itself and not simply the means of getting from one point to another. This was especially true when the first cruise liners started their operation, when people opted for spending their holiday in one of these floating hotels with all the services that usually only landlocked pleasure centres could offer. However, it must be noted that the nature of the cruise holiday has also been changing as a reaction to changing consumer needs. As the offer matured, tourists started to look for more and sought added value from their cruises, which resulted in the development of a diversification of cruise routes and the emergence of themed packages for cruise passengers. Themes (like the Baltic Cruises, World of the Norwegian Fjords, etc), may be based on the similar character of the seascapes or on the activities offered onboard (such as cookery courses with famous chefs). At the other extreme, the emergence of easycruise should be noted offering the cruise experience to those on a more limited budget.

The world famous Orient Express provides one of the best examples of a train journey as an attraction, since it began in 1883 it has epitomised luxury train travel with only two short periods of interruption: during World War II and in the 1960s when it operated with standard sleeper carriages only (Page, 2009). Other examples where the journey itself is the focus of the experience can be found in the initiatives in the United Kingdom and Austria to bring back steam locomotives and offer 2-3 hour train rides and now, in the UK, new steam locomotives are being built especially for tourism use. The Hungarian Railways also offer nostalgia train rides with steam trains, very often giving the offer a special theme to the journey such as the Moonlight Express on St Martin's Days, the Moonlight Express with culinary delights and so on.

The discussion about the linkages of transport and tourism cannot ignore the impacts of transport on the destinations, as means of transport have played and continue to play an important role in shaping the image and growth of tourism destinations. The gondolas of the Italian city of Venice provide an excellent example, as with the mention of gondolas the image of the canals or lagoons of Venice immediately presents itself.

The role of technological changes impacts on the destination level as well. Most destinations want to be accessible as quickly, as conveniently and with as many means of transport as possible. However, the price of that is that highways and motorways are built

bypassing some (smaller) settlements to connect the more important destinations with the generating regions. Equally, higher speed trains may operate on routes considered to lead to important destinations, which then will not call at the smaller stops. Therefore the process of making access faster and more convenient will produce winners and losers at the same time, as some settlements, potential destinations, will be left out of the main streams of transport. The impacts of technological changes could also be observed in the small fishing villages of Spain that have been transformed into tourism destinations. Here the small fishing boats were replaced by larger vessels able to carry more passengers, which in turn required the redevelopment of the marinas and ports so that they could accommodate these larger boats. As a result, areas were taken over from beaches, changing the coastline and with that the nature of the destination.

It is also demonstrable that the competition in transport also influences both the development of and the competitiveness of destinations. The best current example of this is provided by the competition between the low-cost carriers since the beginning of the 21st century in Europe (Ács, 2007). The impact of the low-cost competition was first felt in Hungary in 2004; the year Hungary joined the European Union with the first no-frills flights. The introduction of these cheap flights to Budapest resulted in the rising popularity of the destination, as the low-cost carriers flew tens of thousands of tourists from the Western parts of Europe to the capital city – a phenomenon that Prague experienced and enjoyed for many years before Budapest. (Magyar Turisztikai Hivatal Hírlevele, 13.05.2005) The emergence of Budapest as a major destination in the Central European tourism market has also resulted in the arrival of tourists with lower propensity to spend, which in turn impacted on the image of the destination. Due to the wide choice of cheap flights several young tourists arrived from the United Kingdom for example to hold their stag or hen nights in Budapest, putting the capital on the party-map of Europe but questioning its significance to other markets.

#### **Accessibility, affordability and amenity**

The continuous development of transport routes and the ever more advanced means of transport make certain areas available for tourism. Besides ensuring physical accessibility, transport plays an important role in making destinations affordable for tourists, more precisely in making destinations affordable for a wider audience. The competition in air travel started in the 1980s with the deregulation of the air space, which opened up one of the key elements of competition in the area of pricing between the various airlines. As a result of deregulation and liberalisation, new airlines were established which used lower prices as a tool to enter the

market, and the already established airlines had to keep up with them if they did not want to lose out in the competition. The same process was enhanced by the diminishing role of the state in ticket pricing, and air passengers were seen to be the clear winners in this context (Evans, 2003). This process started in Northern America and Europe first felt a similar experience towards the end of the 1990s when a similarly spectacular process started with the introduction of no-frills carriers. These cheap airlines have also become major competitors of railways and other transport companies where in the case of several routes it became cheaper to travel the same distance by air than by road or rail. According to Polgár (2008), leisure tourists are more likely to prefer rail travel to air travel if the journey by train is no more than 6 hours.

The development of transport was originally driven by the aim to conquer distances, later it changed to cover distances faster and being able to transport large numbers of passengers. One issue has always been present during the development of transport technologies: amenity/comfort. Our ancestors used animals to pull carts and carriages so that they did not have to walk long distances and/or carry heavy loads. The same reason was behind the introduction of overnight carriages on trains and cabins on ships just to name a few examples where people's comfort motivated the development of new techniques and means of transport. This tendency met with the growing and at the same time changing customer needs, as a result of which various means of transport were transformed and new ones were designed to meet the changed and enhanced needs of tourists.

Pine and Gilmore (1999: 11) identified the central roles of the customer in experience and experience creation but also observed that "Experiences occur whenever a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage the individual". Darmer and Sundbo (2008: 6) recognised that "The engagement of the customer in the experience also means that customers rarely have the same experience, even though it is the same experience they are experiencing. The reasoning behind this is that the experience of the customer derives from the customer's personal interaction with the experience, as she or he is engaged in it, and all customers engage differently, depending on their background, emotions, interpretations and associations."

Tourism offers create values for the users. Traditionally, it has been argued that social, economic or educational values emerge. There are embedded values bringing about social or educational benefits as value-added services where the users are the recipients. This "exchange-value" perspective, in which the "producer" determines value, hinders a full appreciation of the role of services to diagnose a cultural situation in a territory and to manage a tourism policy. Furthermore, that may partially block a complete understanding of what is the very nature of tourism supply and demand. These

embedded values suggest that tourism practices produce an exchange of intangibles, specialized skills, knowledge and processes. This definition points towards a prevailing view of tourism actions that is reinforced from the marketing perspective (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2000) that tourism offers have been traditionally, above all, a supply rather than a demand output. This view is supportive of the specifics of service exchanges as a co-production. Co-production, in this service-centred view, is a continuous social and economic process in which intangibility, exchange processes and relationships are central. In tourism activities, the users do not use things but are constructed as seeking need or want fulfilment. This integrative view suggests that tourism offers are not a residual something offered to enhance a good, as with older notions of value added services (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Tourism resources come to be viewed not only as 'goods', with value added services, but also as intangible and dynamic functions of human ingenuity and appraisal, and consequently they cannot be regarded as static or fixed.

The shift in focus to tourism in a Service dominant logic is a shift from the means and the producer perspective to the utilization and the user perspective. Since it is inherently both user-centric and relational (Vargo and Lusch 2004), the S-D logic provides a better foundation to examine tourism activities in a destination. The societal purpose of S-D logic implies that service is the fundamental basis of exchange (Vargo and Lusch 2008).

This purpose highlights the interactive and the networked nature of value creation and exchange and is extending this value creation to a value co-creation.

Thus, the idea that 'the user is always a co-creator of value' has become a fundamental premise of S-D logic, for the tourism area, this means that tourism suppliers cannot deliver value, but can only make value propositions (Macbeth, Carson and Northcote, 2004). According to this premise, the value in use takes place within the exchange-value and requires new metrics of the user's perceptions of this value. The Value Experience can be presented in three phases (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009) which outline the significance of seeing the experience as a process or set of processes. Transport operates within every phase of this model both as an activity and value source but also as a significant element in the value of the outcomes.

The following factors can be seen to influence the spatial links:

1. The complementary character – we usually travel for an experience that we cannot have in our usual environment. We want to see and do things that we lack at home.
2. The transferability of the experience – whether it is possible to transport the experience, (to transfer it spatially) which motivates us to travel. Transferability depends mostly on the time and costs necessary for this transfer (Ullman, 1973).



The paper will now explore the role of innovation in tourism transport in contributing to value creation within tourism. Both complementarity and transferability will be considered in looking at the ways in which the value propositions have been impacted on by the adoption and adaptations of transport means within the tourism experience.

To start with one of the most traditional means of transport that serves tourism purposes as well we can recall the use of animals to transport people or goods from one location to another or back to the same place. Camels have been used for taking tourists out to the desert for decades, just like elephants have long been used to transport tourists on the Asian continent. We could name (and shame) several seaside resorts, which offer donkey rides for tourists, in the best case only for young ones, but sometimes even fully-grown people are allowed to mount the poor animals, fortunately only for short trips. On the Greek island of Hydra donkeys are used to transport the tourists' luggage to their accommodation, as some of the narrow streets are not wide enough for cars. In terms of co-creation, the experience is taken differently by all of the users and can generate different meanings and different value for every one of the users. There are many examples of ground transport that have been converted from vehicles that had served public transport functions before and therefore come with associations and memories that also influence the value creation of the experience. Open-top buses are a good example as they have gained their current form by transforming the 'ordinary' functions of buses according to the (assumed or surveyed) needs of sightseeing tourists. These buses are ideal for taking pictures from, not only because of the slower speed they maintain but also because the roof or reflected window panels cannot get in the way of the tourists wishing to take shots of the attractions as they drive past.

Another example of converted public transport vehicles can be found in Vienna, where sightseeing trams started operating from April 2009. The new tram route is a modified version of a previous one that had proved quite popular with tourists, taking in most of the attractions along the Ring. The trams are equipped with LCD monitors so that tourists can get a closer picture of the attractions along the route and they can also listen to information about them in 7 different languages. This again offers an incentive to value creation as the meaning of the tour can be more fully explored. Another change to the original Vienna tram is the price of tickets, which is higher than the average transport tickets in Vienna, which is justified by the extra services passengers are offered and the promise of greater satisfaction. These examples serve the travel of smaller or larger groups of people, but transport also needs to reflect on the growing individualisation of tourists. As a result, more and more new means are introduced that are recommended for small groups, even as small as individuals or families. Besides

cycling sightseeing tours, Segway or push-scooter tours are also organised in some destinations, where groups of 10 to 15 people visit the various sights by use of the two-wheel vehicles. Tourists seeking ease and convenience usually prefer Segways as these are motorized while riding scooters still requires some effort from the tourists, even though it may still be faster and more convenient than walking. These new offers provide an opportunity to tailor the experience to the users' own particular interests and motivations, thus inviting a greater sense of participation and involvement in the creation and experience of tourism.

Tourists who can find even a group of ten as a crowd are offered various individual solutions in a number of urban destinations. In Paris, for example, we can go sightseeing on a scooter driven by a professional driver/guide, where the driver and the passenger can communicate via a headset, and the passenger is provided with a leg cover so that their clothes do not get dirty when splashed with water. Besides allowing the individual use of these vehicles, another advantage of using scooters for sightseeing is undoubtedly their size which makes it possible to get through big queues of car in traffic jams.

Also the French capital offers the certainly – at the moment – unique means of transport in the form of the so-called cyclobulle. This three-wheel partly covered vehicle is ideal for families of three or four for getting around in the destination.

We could list several other means of ground transport adaptations offered to the individual tourists in the destinations, such as the horse-drawn carriages of Vienna or the different types of rickshaws which originated in the Far East but are now found in the cities of Europe and North America. There are also some innovative solutions that have been introduced within the urban tourism offer. One of these unique inventions is the bicycle lift introduced in Trondheim in Norway, which is used by most to help to reach the top of the steep street by bike. However, creative people can use it to help in other circumstances, such as pushing a baby buggy uphill, or even just using it to push you to the top by standing on the foot holder of the lift. The other example of the specialist means of surface transport is the street escalator in the Spanish city of Toledo, which makes accessing the historic city centre very easy for the pedestrians. The escalator carved into rock connects one of the large underground car parks with the most frequented tourist attraction of the historic city. The transition between surface transport and water transport can be found in the amphibious vehicle offering sightseeing tours on the streets of Budapest as well as in the River Danube.

The RiverRide service was first introduced to Europe in Budapest in the summer of 2009. The vehicle is designed to be suitable for road

transport and for river use as well, and it offers sightseeing tours on land and water. When the service was launched the spokesperson of the Hungarian National Tourist Office explained the idea was to give Budapest a competitive edge in Europe by offering something special and something which is, so far, unique.

Water transport offers a narrower range but no less spectacular means of transport for tourism use. The first part of the paper mentioned cruise lines and gondolas, this section wishes to discuss other special means of water transport that have gained their current form by the conversion of vessels based on the needs of the tourist. Hydrofoils, operating on seas, lakes as well as rivers provide a good example of a means of transport where the attraction is not only the speed with which we can get to a destination but the travel itself. The hydrofoil service between Budapest and Vienna is certainly the slowest mode of transport between the two destinations but probably the most spectacular as well. The hydrofoils operating on this stretch of the Danube are equipped not only with proper comfortable seats but also with LCD monitors to bring the panorama along the route a bit closer to the passengers.

The last example of special (or rather interesting) use of water transport for tourism offers great contrast to the specially designed boats described earlier. There are some cargo ships that will take 'live freight' or as we would call them a few tourists on board presumably to bring some changes to the monotonous long journeys at sea. Contrary to popular belief, travelling this way is not necessarily cheaper than travelling by air but the price of the ticket includes accommodation and meals as well, but mostly it includes the experience and adventures for the passengers.

Helicopters have been adapted for sightseeing tours in a wide range of destinations but only a few of them would offer sightseeing by hot air balloon. Examples from Paris have been used before and here is another one, hot air balloon tours are organised for tourists at regular intervals. Although the claim has been made before that the special means of transport are often developed for the individual tourists, the hot air balloons operating in or rather above Paris can take up to 30 people at a time. Given the urban congestion problems, these trips have to be cancelled or postponed if air pollution reaches a certain level.

### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to move the consideration of transport in urban tourism beyond the functional role that transport plays in mobility to a deeper understanding of the ways in which the transport element can be used in the co-creation of value within the development of tourism. The innovative reinterpretation of transport forms has to be considered as a value proposition which is

either accepted or rejected by the tourists. Only where there is recognition and acceptance can the offer be seen as valid and valued. This requires a presentation, a staging, which draws attention to the offer and a context in which participation is invited in ways that are meaningful to the tourists. In urban settings, tourists are not necessarily looking to travel in one direction; most tourist routes are circular, bringing the tourists back to where they started from. However the co-creation of value should ensure that the tourists return in a different state than they left – there should be an experience of satisfaction and fulfilment that informs the continued journeys of the user and shapes their further touristic experiences. By engaging the tourists, as well as the suppliers, in the process of experience creation and consumption, transport can be seen as more than a functional resource in the tourist offer and become a source of value creation. Urban tourism requires complex transport infrastructures that are recognised and valued by the tourists that may exist within or outside the local transport provisions as tourist requirements are often different to that of the local populations. The argument emphasises the contributions of both the supply and demand sides in the provision of a touristic offer and suggests that only when there is a coming together of the resources that both sides can bring to the experience can value be truly recognised and realised.

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