Guest editorial

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Walking tourism in cities: introducing the special issue

Walking is one of the most common activities undertaken by tourists when they travel (Hall *et al.*, 2018). However, it is also one of the most invisible activities when it comes to tourism research (Hall and Ram, 2018a; Ram and Hall, 2018a). Walking is a form of active transport and is usually conceived of in two main ways (Scheepers *et al.*, 2014; Hall and Ram, 2018b). First, walking is fundamental to getting from A to B and is an important part of getting between different modes of transport and can be a mode of transport in its own right in getting to attractions. This is usually described as purposive or utilitarian transport. The second form of walking is for recreation or leisure where "walking itself is the goal and not a means of getting somewhere" (Karupiah and Bello Bada, 2018, p. 199).

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Given growing concerns for individual and public health, sustainability, liveability and urban design, there is a very substantial literature on walking and walkability, the conditions that enable or constrain walking (Forsyth, 2015). However, tourism does not figure in this very well in an urban context although there is a significant literature on trails, hiking and long-distance walking. Nevertheless, the literature that does exist reinforces the extent to which tourists engage in walking as an activity in urban destinations (Ram and Hall, 2018a). Transport for London (2013) reported that international tourists were more likely to use walking as a means of transport than visitors from the UK, with 71 per cent of European visitors and 65 per cent of other international visitors walking as a means of transport as opposed to 61 per cent of UK visitors. Le-Klähn *et al.* (2015), in a survey of 466 domestic and international tourists in Munich, Germany, reported that 60 per cent of visitors engaged walked as a means of active transport either in conjunction with public transport or separately. Importantly, walking around a destination to experience a place is an attraction in its own right. In their study of visitors to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Ujang and Muslim (2014) identified accessibility, connectivity, comfort, safety, attractiveness and pleasantness as leading dimensions of walkability for tourists. In the same location, Mansouri and Ujang (2016) found that spatial features such as accessibility, connectivity and continuity strongly determine tourists' expectation and satisfaction while walking.

Given the importance of accessibility for tourists within destinations there is an emerging research on the relationship between location walkability and accommodation or attractions (Ram and Hall, 2018b). This research reflects a wider research interest in the relationship between real estate, desirable urban locations and walkability (Pivo and Fisher, 2011), and also connects to the role of tourism and leisure within urban regeneration strategies (Richards, 2014; Mordue, 2017). However, such relationships also highlight the potential conflicts that are emerging between tourism, especially privately rented accommodation and crowding, and local residents in destination communities as the accessibility and walkability that residents value is the same as that sought by tourists (Guttentag, 2015; Shi *et al.*, 2017). Research on tourism and walkability, therefore, feeds into larger debates over urban design and planning (Forsyth, 2015; Vale *et al.*, 2016; Henderson, 2018), the role of tourism in urban sustainability (Wise, 2016), and the relationship between citizenship and access to public space (Kanellopoulou, 2018; Sánchez-Fernández *et al.*, 2018).

Importantly for research on tourists and walking in urban environments, there are a number of significant differences between resident and tourist walking that means that resident walking

behaviour cannot be used as a surrogate for understanding tourist patterns and behaviours. First, tourists are on a limited time budget which substantially constrains their activity space relative to that of permanent residents. Second, they are much more limited in their knowledge of the urban space they are visiting, this therefore creates different perceptions of safety as well as more mundane aspects such as route choice. This may also mean that visitors are more dependent on mediating knowledge, such as that provided by guide maps, platforms and social media, recommendations and word-of-mouth (Garay Tamajón and Canoves Valiente, 2017), in their selection of route choice. Third, the time constraints facing tourists means that different forms of walking such as physical activity, i.e. for exercise; leisure, as an item of enjoyment in its own right; utilitarian, i.e. to get to a specific restaurant, museum or attraction; and purposive, i.e. to deliberately seek to experience the social and sensory aspect of place, become much more enmeshed with each other than for permanent residents of place. For a visitor to a new destination, the walk to an attraction, such as a museum for example, is integral to the destination experience as well as being a means of transport. Therefore, distinguishing between different walking categories is much more difficult in the case of tourists than permanent residents.

In terms of sustainable urban design walkable places are regarded as preferable for locals and tourists alike. However, many urban planners have not fully considered the means by which place becomes legible to tourists and how visitors can be encouraged to walk and use public transport (Le-Klähn and Hall, 2015; Hall et al., 2017). Items such as access to toilets and Wi-Fi become extremely important for visitors in their use of the city. Ram and Hall (2018a) noted that walkable places for tourists required attention to tourists' special needs including consideration of the connectivity between attractions, hotels, restaurants and shopping areas (see also Sharipov and Günseli Demirkol, 2018). Although they stressed, "In designing walkable places, destination managers should pay attention, not only to the destination as a whole, but also to each attraction to avoid an under-optimization of performance in the single attraction level, for reasons such as congestion and cannibalization" (Ram and Hall, 2018a, p. 326). For example, Gorrini and Bertini (2018) found that the level of walkability in Venice is deeply affected by the lack of base services, the presence of massive tourism flows and the scarcity of road signage. Nevertheless, even when a favourable urban design has been created, e.g. with respect to security, shade and connectivity, tourists may still not walk unless higher-order communal and personal needs have been attended to. As Mansouri and Ujang (2016) noted in the case of Kuala Lumpur, the social aspect of place experience defines pedestrian experience within tourism locations, more than the mobility and urban design qualities that support walking.

In this special issue, tourism walking and walkability is examined using both qualitative (Kanellopoulou, 2018; Morris, 2018; Vural Arslan et al., 2018; Wee and Küpers, 2018) and quantitative methods (Ram and Hall, 2018a, b; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2018; Vural Arslan et al., 2018), in a range of different locations. The global and multidimensional investigation of the concept of walkability revealed several complementary ways in which walkability is contributing to the understanding of urban tourism and vice versa. First, walkability was targeted as an activity that is promoted by local authorities as a "top–down" initiative (Henderson, 2018; Kanellopoulou, 2018; Morris, 2018) to promote tourism and improve urban livability. Second, walkability was also examined as a "bottom–up" structure, that is shaped by the behaviours of the tourists, who want to experience the so called "authentic" city (Kanellopoulou, 2018), and as experienced by local residents of the tourist city (Vural Arslan et al., 2018). Third, walkability was also seen as a managerial tool by local authorities for potentially improving the quality of public spaces (Sharipov and Günseli Demirkol, 2018) and managing issues of overtourism and crowding. Fourth, walkability, as measured by the Walk Score index, was used to assess tourist accommodation options and offers (Ram and Hall, 2018a, b).

As Forsyth (2015) noted, walkability is used to refer to three related though different concepts: environmental features or means of making walkable environments, including areas being traversable, compact, physically enticing and safe; outcomes potentially fostered by such environments, such as making places lively, enhancing sustainable transportation options and inducing exercise; and as a proxy for better urban design. The range of papers in this special issue therefore builds-on and contributes to these wider themes of walkability in an urban context. However, it also brings in a missing component in much work on walkability and urban

locations, which is the role of tourists and tourism as mediating factors in urban design and sustainability. This special issue contributes to the development of a touristic research agenda with respect to walkability that can inform current debates over destination carrying capacity and the economic, social and environmental pressures that tourism brings to locations. In addition, consideration of walkability is important to help better understand the pressures of climate change on tourist behaviour in urban contexts, particularly given increases in Summer temperatures, and urban heat island effects. Given the growing importance of walking for urban public health, livability, attractiveness, and sustainability, it is therefore vital that given growing concerns over tourism pressures in destination and urban environments that the relationship between tourism and walkability also be given recognition in the research literature and in tourism, transport and urban policy-making.

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