Track 15: Tourism, public spaces and urban cultures

‘What else?’: Community Perspectives on Tourism-led Urbanization in Spiti, India

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Abstract: The remote Spiti Valley in northern India, is experiencing a tourism boom, which, in turn, in fuelling a construction boom in the villages of the region. The region offers a unique landscape – a rocky high altitude desert with splashes of greenery. Rare wildlife can be spotted in winters, with the region under a cover of snow. Perhaps the most important component of the region’s cultural attractions are the monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism. Today the fragile Himalayan ecosystem is threatened by the rapid urbanization and increasing tourist loads. Social structures and cultural practices are under stress. Two questions lead this project. (a) What are the community’s aspirations and concerns with regards to tourism and urban development in the Spiti Valley? (b) Why, despite witnessing undesirable urban outcomes in numerous Himalayan towns, has very little changed in terms of tourism policy in this sensitive region? The study examines attitudes towards tourism in Kaza, a small town in the Spiti Valley, facing rapid urbanization as a hub for the fast-expanding tourism sector. Based on a survey of residents and business-owners (N=420), and in-depth interviews with key informants, the paper reports the principal narratives in the region on the themes of growth and sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Community based tourism, Himalayas, Small towns

Background

Spiti valley (also known as Spit) is located in the ‘Lahaul and Spiti’ district of the state of Himachal Pradesh in northern India. (Figure 1 shows a map of the area.) The town of Kaza is the main administrative center (known as a subdivisional headquarter) in Spiti. The valley can be accessed from two sides. The Eastern route, through Shimla, is an all-weather road that remains open throughout the year. The Western approach, through Manali, is not properly paved. Systems for clearing the snow in winter months do not exist. Consequently the route remains closed until well into spring when the snow begins to melt.

Spiti is known as a high altitude desert. Located at the height of 12,000 feet above mean sea level, Spiti features snow-capped Himalayan peaks, rock formations, wide valleys, lush agricultural patches amidst the dry rocks, pristine lakes, unique wildlife (most significantly the snow leopard), and perhaps most

importantly, solitude and the feeling of having left it all behind. The seabuckthorn plant is grown widely in the area and processed in various formats (soap, drinks, ointments etc.) for its health benefits.

The population is predominantly Buddhist. Monasteries are important social institutions. According to convention the second son of every family is sent to the monastery for religious training. "*The local population (ca. 10,000) belongs to one of the three Buddhist sects* Gelukpa, Shakyapa*, or* Ningmapa*, is related by blood, and shares a common Tibetan dialect*" (Mishra et al., 2003, p.595 original emphasis). Figure 2 shows the location of some of the main monasteries in the Spiti Valley. Handa (2014) provides an excellent description of Spiti's society and ecology in a book-length examination of the region.

The economy of the region has primarily been 'agro-pastoral'. "The main agricultural activities begin around mid-April with ploughing and sowing, following which the irrigation channels are repaired and the sown fields leveled for irrigating. The fallow lands are also ploughed around this time" (Mishra et al., 2003, p.598). In recent years tourism has risen sharply. In addition to spectacular landscapes of the upper Himalayas mentioned above, Spiti offers options for trekking and adventure sports, magnificent Buddhist monasteries, and a rich Buddhist-Himalayan culture featuring unique food, crafts and festivals. (Figure 3 shows Dhankar Monastery perched on a mountain top at 12,774 feet above sea level.)Numerous hotels and 'homestays' have opened up in Kaza and around the Spiti valley. Ancillary services such as tours, travel bookings, taxi and transportation, food and retail have also received a boost. Not surprisingly, Spiti is witnessing a construction boom at the moment as homestays and guest houses race to build new structure, add floors, or simply renovate, in preparation of the tourism boom. Meanwhile the lower Himalayas in India are littered with towns that have become victims of their own success. The larger concern driving this research is the need to break the cycle and find a way to keep Spiti and Kaza from going down the same path.

Sustainability of values, place and practice

Tourism development promises economic benefits for communities, especially in places with few economic resources, but often brings unwanted consequences for society, culture and the environment.

> Perhaps more than any other economic activity, tourism has an intricate interrelation with natural and cultural heritage. Tourism depends on the availability and quality of heritage and related resources. At the same time, uncontrolled tourism development may lead to the degradation of cultural and natural heritage, ultimately eroding the potential for sustaining tourism. (Coccossis, 2009).

This relationship has been studied in numerous contexts and is well understood (Cater, 1995; Faulkner and Tideswell, 1997; Garrod and Fyall, 1998; Scheyvens, 1999; Neto, 2003; Coccossis, 2009; Hunter, 2009; Williams and Ponsford, 2009). Tourism activity, if not properly controlled, can easily diminish the value of the natural or cultural resources, from which it is generated in the first place. Garrod and Fyall (1998) inquire whether "the unfettered growth of tourism inevitable kill the goose that so many are hoping will lay them a golden egg?" (p.199). Known as tourism's 'resource paradox' (Williams and Ponsford, 2009, p.396), this idea points to the need for models and practices that promote sustainability.

Several key ideas have emerged in response, such as 'sustainable tourism', 'ecotourism', 'carrying capacity', 'community-based tourism', 'responsible tourism' and 'pro-poor tourism'. It is not feasible to conduct an exhaustive review of all the literature on these terms. Arguably the two broad concepts of 'sustainable tourism' and 'community-based tourism' have received the most critical attention. These are discussed in greater depth below.

By the 1990s, the dangers of unplanned growth were clearly evident in the tourism sector, as were the direct impacts on natural and cultural assets. The need for sustainability - of the resources *and* their long-term business potential – was perhaps felt urgently. In this context, the idea of 'sustainable tourism' attempted to bridge tourism promotion and sustainable development (Butler, 1999; Hardy et al., 2002; Cole, 2007; Clarke, 2010; Lee, 2012; Carr et al., 2016; Budeanu et al., 2016; Dangi, 2016). Defining 'sustainable tourism' (much like sustainable development) has been a contested matter. To put it succinctly, sustainable tourism aims to develop tourism while preserving the destination's resource base for future development (Lane, 1994; Hunter, 1997).

Although a seemingly significant step forward in thinking about tourism, the idea of 'sustainable tourism' has been critiqued on various grounds. The following issues are the most prominent: (i) lack of a clear definition, (ii) difficulty translating principles into practice, (iii) parameters not easy to measure, (iv) undervaluing the role of the community, and, not least, (v) losing touch with the goals of 'sustainable development' (Cater, 1995; Berry and Ladkin, 1997; Garrod and Fyall, 1998; Hunter, 2009; Scott, 2011). These tensions are experienced all the more acutely in developing countries where resources scarcity is already a challenge and institutions of planning and control tend to be weak.

In particular it is important to note that there is broad consensus in literature that for tourism to be successful the local community must be engaged and invested in the planning and management of the destination. This understanding has given rise to the idea of 'community based tourism' (CBT). Proponents of CBT see the community - the guardians and stewards of the local tourism resources – as

the principal agents of sustainability, and beneficiaries of the tourism industry. The main objective is to empower communities, through equitable distribution of resources and benefits, by supporting collaborative practices and participatory methods. CBT is considered particularly important for building capacities and capabilities in poorer communities. Faulkner and Tideswell, 1997; Scheyvens, 1999; Simpson, 2001; Byrd, 2006; Salazar, 2012; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2010; Giampiccoli and Kalis, 2012; Sutawa, 2012; Tolkach and King, 2015; Richards and Hall (2000) summarize the argument for community-based understanding of sustainability.

> Communities are a basic reason for tourists to travel, to experience the way of life and material products of different communities. Communities also shape the 'natural' landscapes which many tourists consume….without community sustainability, tourism development cannot be expected to be sustainable (Richards and Hall, 2000, p.1).

Community based tourism has received its share of criticism with doubts have been raised about tokenism in participatory models, distortions in distribution of benefits, exclusion of others by the power elite, political manipulation etc. (Goodwin and Santilli, 2009; Joppe, 1996; Blackstock, 2005). Yet community participation in tourism development is seen as a vehicle for empowerment, sustainability and development.

The existing literatures on both 'sustainable tourism' and on 'community based tourism' miss out on an important aspect of sustainability. Most of the literature sees 'sustainability' (at any level) as comprised of social, economic and environmental dimensions. Durovic and Lovrentjev (2014) have compiled an extensive survey of literature, where each of the three dimensions is explored in depth.

In much of the literature, little attention is paid to the mutually constitutive interactions and interconnections between the three dimensions of sustainable tourism. Sorely missing from scholarship is a deep understanding of how society, culture and ecological systems are bound together *in* places and communities*, through* values, practices and everyday life.Theories and models of sustainability are likely to remain flawed, if the concept is approached as a set of discrete elements, that are measured separately using 'indicators', without appreciating their interconnectedness. This study attempts to show how adopting a socio-spatial outlook to understanding human ecology can help gain insights for the development of tourism.

Tourism in Himalayan towns

The Indian Himalayas are dotted with a number of attractive 'hill stations'. These small- and medium-sized towns (in comparison to metropolitan centers in South Asia) were mainly summer destinations for tourists from the plains. With investment in infrastructure and growing incomes of the middle class the

tourism sector grew rapidly since the 1990s. Unfortunately, while provincial (state) governments continued to push tourism, local governments were unable to keep up with the pace of urbanization. Unplanned urban growth, fuelled by entrepreneurial construction, became the bane of these hill towns. Studies from various town, across the Himalayan belt, tell the same story of tourism-led development leading environmental damage, lower quality of life, and, ironically, a diminishing quality of experience for tourists. Himalayan towns like Kullu, Manali, Shimla, Dehradun etc. have benefited tremendously from tourism, but have become overcrowded and polluted in the process. The promotion of the tourism sector seemed to have been done without forethought to issues of infrastructure, capacity, culture or environment. The warnings have been sounded by a number of scholars, specifically for the state of Himachal Pradesh, where Spiti is located (Jutla, 2000; Batra, 2001; Kirch, 2002; Kuniyali et. al., 2003; Singh and Mishra, 2004; Singh, 2008; Gardner et. al., 2015; Kumar and Pushplata, 2017). More literature is available for the Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Meghalaya amongst others. Many would argue that tourism centers in the Himalayas have lost their identity in the process of growing tourism. Water shortages, traffic jams, noise, poor air quality, deforestation and visual pollution are commonplace. But the development of tourism has brought jobs, taxes and business opportunities to these cities. Laissez-faire treatment of tourism has also, therefore, been popular amongst voters. Kaza is poised to go down the same path, exposed to what Holden (2009) calls the "environmental ethics of the market" (p.373). One of the last remaining areas untouched by unbridled commerce, and home to a unique culture and way of life, Spiti raises cause for concern.

Despite the phenomenon being repeated in all major hill stations, the 'resource paradox' problem has proven to be intractable. Elected representatives find it risky to apply any measure of control on an industry that brings prosperity to their constituencies. Capacity for urban and environmental planning is weak at the local level. Financial resources are limited. And once the door is opened investment floods in too quickly for regulation to keep up. There is a need for two bodies of literature to be considered in tandem. We know that tourism promotion in places like Spiti can cause great harm to the ecology and culture of region. There is also a growing understanding of the need to study the urbanization dynamics of small- and medium-sized towns. It is high time to give special consideration to small towns that have limited capacity for planning but must deal with the responsibility of managing high-value tourism resources, both cultural and environmental. Creative institutional solutions will be required. It might not be sufficient to rely on buzzwords that are not uniformly successful to begin with.

Methodology

Two questions lead this project. (i) What are the community's aspirations and concerns with regards to tourism and urban development in the Spiti Valley? (ii) Why, despite witnessing undesirable urban outcomes in numerous Himalayan towns, has very little changed in terms of tourism policy in this sensitive region?

This study uses mixed methods to answer the research questions and report comprehensively the nature of urbanization in the small rapidly growing town. A household survey (N=420) was conducted gauge the residents' opinions on tourism and development in the Kaza and the Spiti Valley. Survey respondents included 253 men and 167 women. The sample was selected by visiting homes (door-to-door), making sure all areas of the town were covered. The survey sought to garner perceptions on the effects of rapid urbanization, and prospects for the future of the tourism sector. 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with residents to triangulate findings of the survey and to obtain a deeper understanding of their everyday lives and opinions. Not least, observations in the town of Kaza were compiled on annotated maps and complemented with photographic documentation. The next section discusses findings from the survey and interviews keeping in mind the idea of the 'resource paradox'. The analysis attempts to bring out the tensions between the local population's aspirations and trepidations.

Needs and opinions

The survey asked local residents to rate their satisfaction with service and facilities (on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 indicating poor and 5 indicating excellent). Figure 4 shows the various categories of services, along with the average scores awarded by men and women. The overall average is indicated for each category. Scores are low across the board, with 'higher education', 'mobile phone services' and 'access to the internet' receiving the lowest scores. The scores awarded by men and women were comparable in all cases. These results are discussed in greater depth in this section.

The survey shows that people are aware of the costs and challenges of economic growth. It is less clear if respondents understand the difficulty of obtaining economic growth without putting social and environmental sustainability at risk. When asked whether tourism will bring prosperity to Spiti, an overwhelming majority (88%) of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Respondents cited employment opportunities, growth of the size of the economy, and new business openings as the main benefits of the growing tourism sector. There is no doubt in the community that the tourism sector is the future of the region, and is necessary for achieving a better quality of life. The small minority that had reservations on the question indicated that more tourism would mean more pollution (waste, garbage, noise etc.), threats to indigenous culture, and increased pressure on scarce resources.

The same question was approached from a different angle by invoking a comparison with Manali and Shimla – small cities in the same province that have been overrun by tourism. Opinions were divided. It was noted by a large number of people expressed the need for caution. Manali and Shimla were reported as having better infrastructure and facilities (particularly for health and education), markets where "everything is available", "fresh fruits and vegetables", tourist attractions, greenery, jobs and business opportunities. The responses showed a sense of awareness amongst respondents that they were living in a backward, underdeveloped area, even in comparison with two medium-sized towns. At the same time, however, imagining Spiti going down the same path caused a great deal of concern. Ironically, Manali and Shimla were also seen widely as expensive, polluted, commercialized, overcrowded, and over-exploited. Respondents were wary that Spiti might face a similar fate. "Spiti must grow similarly – but sustainably – in a balanced way, limited way". "Spiti should not get crowded". "Preserve culture and environment". Growth, but in a restricted, controlled manner, is a popular idea. This is discussed in greater detail later in the paper.

Table 1 summarizes the most frequently reported needs for the community. The table shows two groups of needs. 'Primary needs' were reported most frequently in the survey and stressed upon in interviews. 'Additional needs' were expressed by fewer respondents, but their saliency has been verified through observations. These needs still exist, even though people do acknowledge and appreciate the development works that have transformed the region over the last 20-30 years. It is widely expected that growth of the tourism sector could pave the way for other investment and infrastructure upgrades. The aspirations are tempered, however, by the fear of rapid change and its destructive effects. The second column of Table 1 shows the main concerns. Each point listed in the table is discussed in the following sections. The desire for a better quality of life is palpable, and so is the fear that rapid change might destroy everything that is beautiful in the region.

Primary needs

Water

The fieldwork for this project was conducted in the summer of 2018. The region (far beyond Spiti) was reeling under conditions of drought and chronic water shortage. (Figures 5 and 6 shows low water levels in Spiti.) Interviews conducted in these conditions show that the risks of exceeding the environmental carrying capacity of the fragile ecosystem are felt by the community in a direct and immediate manner.

Snowfall had been sparse in the previous winter and the Spiti river, fed by melting ice in summer months, was running low. In Shimla (erstwhile 'summer capital' of British India), a popular summer destination in the same province, water shortage was causing riots. The local narrative was clear that a large part of the blame lay with tourists and hotels. When water resources were scarce the tourism sector was seen as exacerbating the problem. In Spiti, numerous hotels and homestays have sprung up, particularly in the last 2-3 years, and provide valuable additional income to families. But they are at the risk of becoming victims of their own success when water runs dry. Although no comments were made against tourists on account of their contribution to water demand, respondents did point out that the situation was not sustainable unless reliable piped water supply is ensured to all homes. Both the amount and quality of water were mentioned in interviews.

Access and connectivity

Roads have been improved periodically in Kaza and around the Spiti Valley. Large sections, however, still remain unpaved. Moreover as traffic increases there are new concerns regarding capacity and safety. With regards to safety respondents brought up the issue of surface quality, influx of drivers not used to mountain conditions, and poor street lighting. Figure 7 shows a market street in Kaza. The road surface is not properly paved, with traffic and construction activity growing every summer.

Spiti can be approached from Manali and from Shimla. The approach from Shimla is in good condition and remains open throughout the year. The approach from the Manali side, however, is unpaved and makes for very uncomfortable rides. At several points along the way smaller automobiles run the risk of getting stuck in water, leading to traffic jams that last for hours. In winter the road from Manali remains closed as the snow cannot be cleared. These issues were brought up by respondents, along with the need for more regular air services, especially in the winter months. Kaza is served by a helipad for emergency landings. But residents would like to see more regular helicopter services to and from Kaza. Residents would also like to see more frequent bus services to nearby towns and to Shimla and Manali.

Education

When asked about their hopes for the next generation (open-ended question, no options provided), as many as 92% of the respondents mentioned better education. Through interviews it became clear that people rued the absence of an institute of higher education. The lack of education options, it was felt, was taking children far away from their homes. As a result, not only is the community losing youth and talent, but also its traditions and way of life.

It was also felt that the lack of business training was causing locals to be left behind in the tourism boom. This aspect is discussed further in the next section, on 'employment'. Several respondents indicated that because of the lack of education locals are left with few options for securing their livelihoods.

Employment

The lack of work is the biggest worry for residents of Kaza after infrastructure shortages. Jobs are hard to find locally. The economy is growing fast due to tourism, but this has not brought the expected benefits to local people. Due to restrictions on acquisition of property on outsiders, it has become common practice for entrepreneurs from outside the region to lease properties in Kaza and around Spiti to operate businesses. Most of these businesses are in the sectors of food, hospitality, retail, tourist services (such as organized tours, adventure sports etc.) and social entrepreneurship. The businesses tend to bring employees from their place of origin – mainly due to kinship. Deeper motivations vary and could include trust, creating opportunities for younger members of the family, suppressed wages etc. As a result locals feel left out of the economic opportunities coming to the region. Further, as mentioned earlier, locals feel that they are not benefitting enough from either partnership or transfer of skills. One respondent was clear in his evaluation. "Bringing outsiders to work is not good. Locals should be able to find work and benefit from the tourism growth." Another respondent seconded the opinion. "We would like locals to benefit from the business opportunities created by tourism." The community is already discussing ways to insist on partnerships between locals and outsiders as an alternative to simply leasing land.

Communications and Internet

Another piece of critical infrastructure lamented by many respondents was mobile communications and Internet. Although mobile services are available, there is only one provider (government-owned BSNL) and coverage is patchy at best. Internet connectivity, through the same provider, is poor to non-existent. A tourism-based economy will find it difficult to prosper in the absence of reliable telecommunications and Internet services. Moreover the digital divide tilts the playing field in favor of businesses that have large networks and multiple offices, allowing sales and other business functions to be conducted elsewhere. Small local businesses will struggle to compete in such a market. It is also embarrassing for the larger polity for a section of the population to remain effectively disconnected the Internet.

Additional needs

The issues identified above were mentioned most frequently in the survey and interviews. In addition to these, several other needs were mentioned, with less regularity. These include better health care

(including more doctors and better local facilities), reliable electricity, better banking facilities, support for traditional agricultural practices, sports facilities, and a new petrol pump (gas station).

Many of the needs discussed above may be considered as falling within the domain of state welfare for a remote region with a low population density, and few resources. There is an expectation, however, that growth of tourism will add economic weight to the region, which could, in turn, propel the government to upgrade infrastructure and services. As one man put it in an interview, "If tourism grows but the people of Spiti don't grow, then what's the use?" The desire for greater tourism revenues is tempered with a great deal of anxiety regarding the unintended consequences of economic growth. Certainly rapid development threatens environmental quality in the region. It is important to note, however, that respondents feel a pressing need to guard the identity of the community and its individuals.

A way of life at stake

After discussing the improvements they hoped to see in Spiti, respondents were asked what they would like to not have change. The answers illustrate the connectedness of people, place and practice. The very identity and way of life of the community is threatened if tourism is allowed to grow in an unplanned manner, as has been the case in many other towns in the Himalayas. To be clear, the word 'identity' did not appear in the question. Further, not a single respondent used this word in answering the question. This was not an attempt by the respondents to define themselves as individuals or as members of the community. As indicated above, the responses represent a degree of reflection on the most cherished aspects of life in Spiti, to which people are attached, and which they consider worth saving. It is only upon analysis of the survey data that it becomes clear that for this community self-concept is tied very closely to their way of life.

Table 3 shows some of the responses received in the survey. But it would not do justice to the people of the region simply to enumerate these answers. It is important to consider the connections between these ideas, and the coherent narrative they provide of a sustainable and rich way of life. Three aspects of the way of life can be discerned from survey responses and interviews – (i) values, (ii) practices, (iii) the environment.

The idea of 'peace' is particularly important to understand Spiti society. The word is mentioned in the context of faith, community life, personal values, and negotiating everyday life in a difficult climate and sparse landscape. "We like the peace up here", says one interviewee, referring at once to the mountains, the solitude, the pace of life, and the practice of faith. A strong sense of community, too, is a thread

running through the various aspects of the local way of life. One respondent, a businessman from outside Spiti, expresses his admiration for the people of Spiti. “People here are honest and nice. They will not give you an unfair deal to make a profit. The local culture is special. People help each other.” These values do translate to practices of agriculture and architecture, both of which were carried out traditionally with shared labor. The importance of community is evident in personal values, collective practices, and in the work of living in a high-altitude desert. The notions of ‘peace’ and ‘community’ are perhaps the most important pillars of the local way of life. It is no surprise then that when threats are expressed, they can be traced back to one of these two ideas.

Being at peace with nature is Spiti’s definition of sustainability. Mud-brick architecture, agriculture based on traditional crops following the natural cycle of snowfall and melting ice, sharing labor, protection of wildlife (particularly the Snow Leopard) are all examples of environmentally sustainable practices drawn from the idea of ‘being at peace’.

All anxieties expressed with regards to the potential negative fallout of tourism development (summarized in Table 2) may be seen as the fear of the collapse of one of the two pillars – peace and community. Community member expressed concerns of cultural changes occurring due to the influx of tourists. Monks at the local monasteries expressed similar views. A senior monk at Tabo monastery was concerned about the apathy of the younger generation. In particular, he is troubled by the preoccupation with digital screens, the growing culture of partying, and the influence of the drugs in the state (even though it has not yet become a major phenomenon in the Spiti region). “Our culture and traditions are being diluted.” Another respondent adds, “the locals are changing by looking at tourists.”

The consumer economy threatens to destabilize traditional communitarian practices, such as building houses by sharing labor. An outsider, who runs a hotel in Kaza, shared his insight regarding local culture and the risk it faces. “They are very content and self-sufficient people. More money brings more insecurity. You see more consumer options you start thinking about what you can buy and afford.” The potential risk of the consumer economy was also noticed by the monasteries. “These days people are spending their days looking at other people’s news and pictures. That is a world of lies. They are losing touch with their own life. Young generation has no time for the monastery. No time to participate in ceremonies. At the ceremonies also they are on the phone.” He says the last line with a laugh.

The effects of commercialization is not limited to personal values. There is a materiality to this social change. Concrete houses have replaced the bud brick houses that are the traditional architectural form in

this part of the world. Mud brick houses have thick walls, are good for retaining heat inside the house in winters, easy for people to construct for themselves by pooling their labor, and relatively cheap to build. But concrete is taking over, despite being less than optimum for the local climate. It is stronger, allows taller structures, and can be built by hired workers brought in from other parts of the country. The dilution of the values goes hand in hand with the changes in material culture, and, in turn, with environmental concerns.

The tension between economic growth and fear of loss of cultural values is not new.

> Ambivalence, tensions and local resistance emerge in the process of commodifying culture at Goo-Moremi village. Some local people embrace the commodification of their culture into a tourism product because of anticipated socio-economic benefits whereas others resist cultural commodification as a result of fears that it may devalue their culture and belief system. (Mbaiwa, 2011).

Similarly, Joseph and Kavoori (2001), writing on Pushkar (Rajasthan, India), assert that "tourism is perceived as a threat to "tradition" and religion even while a large segment of the population is dependent on its economic benefits" (p.998).

In Spiti, the concern over "dilution" of culture and identity is deeply connected with everyday life and environmental sustainability. Moreover, there are already issues of distributive justice, inclusion and community engagement. Thus planning for tourism in Kaza and the Spiti region must be approached as the "wicked" problem that it is. It is not simply a matter of calculating the correct *number* of tourists. A very fine line separates the appropriate level of tourism exploitation from its excess.

A contribution of this study is to highlight the interconnectedness of social, cultural and environmental dimensions of tourist destinations. Although it is well established in urban planning, geography and allied fields, this lesson seems to be underplayed when it comes to tourism policy. Durovic and Lovrentjev (2014), for example, have compiled an extensive survey of literature, looking deeply at the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. There is, however, no acknowledgement of the ways in which these dimensions of sustainability are connected *in communities* through values, practices, and everyday life. Any understanding or evaluation of sustainability remains incomplete, if the concept is approached as a set of discrete elements, that are measured using 'indicators', and without a thick understanding of their interconnectedness.

Paradoxical prescriptions

The challenge of the balancing act is illustrated by the variety of policy directions being suggested by the various stakeholders. Caught between the desire to leverage tourism for the development of the region, and aware of the risk of destabilizing the way of life altogether, community members have curated a number of narratives that attempt to strike the balance between growth and sustainability. The three narratives discussed here are instructive for understanding the tensions at play.

Good tourist/ bad tourist

Opinions of community members regarding increasing versus controlling tourism seem evenly split. A recurring theme is the imagined good tourist/ bad tourist dichotomy. "Tourism is good, but some tourists are bad." This, perhaps, is true of any popular destination. In Spiti, however, this truism is mentioned not simply an analytical statement, but rather a proposal for segregating the good tourists from the bad tourists. The narrative attempts, a bit crudely, to bridge the gap between wanting tourism and avoiding its negative consequences. It follows inevitably that people try to define 'the ideal tourist'. In the words of one respondent the ideal tourist is "respectful and culturally sensitive". Another voice added that "tourists must also understand this area and the people who live here." While there is merit to promoting "responsible tourism" options, such a policy can hardly contribute to the selection of a certain type of tourist.

Regulate the number of tourists

This narrative points to a cleft in society. Those in favor of this option tend to be people who have already established a business. They only stand to lose their margins if competition increases, especially if bigger players arrive in the market. The vast majority of locals, still waiting to benefit directly from tourism or from state investment, seldom hold this view. In addition, many respondents also held tourists responsible for promoting a permissive culture, drugs, pollution, noise etc. Although mass tourism could cause or exacerbate these problems, regulating the number of tourists may not be a sufficient control. Nor can we be sure that there are no other policies available to contain such problems. Moreover, it still leaves open the question of the aspirations of those who have not yet benefitted from the lucrative tourism sector. It is useful also to remember that local representatives will be sensitive to voters' demands.

The Bhutan model

Tourism in Bhutan is closely controlled to preserve the ecology and culture. Bhutan "took a cautious approach towards tourism, designing a policy of 'high-yield, low-impact' tourism, aimed at providing high quality service to wealthy tourists who are interested in and sensitive to Bhutan's culture and traditions (Brunet 2001). The objective of the policy is to generate revenue and achieve economic self-

sufficiency, but prevent cultural pollution (Reinfeld, 2003). As a sovereign nation Bhutan is able to control the number of tourist visas issued, and is also able to set certain requirements (such as planning the trip through local tour operators) in order to obtain the visa. It is clear why the 'Bhutan model' appears attractive to anyone concerned with controlling tourism growth. It regulates the number of tourists, while ensuring expenditure, and also, to an extent, filtering through only those tourists who are really interested in the country. India, however, allows free movement of citizens within the country. Domestic tourists are by far the majority of visitors in Spiti (as in all major tourist attractions across the country). Granting access to a select few individuals is not an attractive idea politically or economically. Nor is it possible for any authority to insist on employing certain services to visit the area. Again, we see the desire for growth and professionalization of tourism, but without exceeding limits.

Conclusions

Infrastructure

The infrastructure needs that have been mentioned by community members in our extensive survey should be prioritized. Water, electricity, internet, mobile communications, health, higher education, roads and banking are indispensable – whether seen in terms of human development or tourism. In addition, there should be an immediate enhancement of the region's city and regional planning capabilities.

Avoiding dependency

The title of this paper is derived from words spoken by a respondent in an interview. Speaking about the lack of higher education and the difficulty in finding jobs, he said his children would probably work in the tourism industry when they grow up. "What else?", he added. This lack of choice points to the inevitable dependency that will be created on the tourism sector if the benefits are not diverted towards overall development of the region, including other economic sectors and traditional sources of income – including crafts and agriculture.

Community at the center instead of carrying capacity

Bringing revenues to the community and spreading the benefits to the entire community should be the economic goal of tourism development. The long-term growth of the entire community is more important that the profitability of the businesses of an elite minority (Brohman, 1996).

> The more that local residents gain from tourism, the more they will be motivated to protect the area's natural and cultural heritage and support tourism activities. If they do not benefit from tourism development, they may become resentful (Liu, 2003, p.466).

That said, however, the community should be able to continue to practice their way of life without having to succumb to tourist expectations. Promoting cultural tourism also runs the risk of essentializing and commodifying the local culture to suit the tourists' vision of authenticity. Writing on the successful transformation of Yogyakarta into a tourism destination, Dahles argues that "the policy of 'quality' tourism which offers carefully constructed and controlled touris experiences" (2001, p.vii) led to losses in equity and welfare of low-income groups. As Richards and Hall (2000) put it,

> [t]he realisation that the community itself has become an object of tourism consumption has in turn encouraged some communities to reproduce themselves specifically for tourists. Through the process of site sacralisation, whole communities can begin to identify themselves with the way in which they are 'named' and 'framed' as tourist attractions. (Richards and Hall, 2000).

But the choice is not simply between preserving a way of life and promoting tourism, or finding a way to do both at the same time. The real challenge facing policy-makers is to grow tourism in a planned manner versus letting it grow entirely under market forces. It is the latter approach that has destroyed other mountain destinations in the region. Preserving culture exactly as it is now (or as it was practiced by previous generations) may not be a viable option. Nor is it tenable, given the aspirations of the people, to allow society to get left behind in this age of digital divides. Local business, entrepreneurship, innovation, and capabilities will suffer. Planning the growth in a participatory manner will at least give stakeholders an opportunity to direct future growth, to inscribe their values in the vision, and to offer a strong counterpoint to consumerism.

Focus on interconnections

Based on the foregoing discussion - on the connectedness of values, practices and the environment – it is necessary that policies are made first and foremost to preserve the most essential elements of the traditional way of life. In particular, the state has to create institutions to support agricultural practices, local architecture, wildlife conservation, Monasteries, festivals and self-governance. Only on a strong foundation of these aspects of society can we build a model of tourism for Spiti and for other Himalayan destinations.

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible through generous funding from the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. The author is grateful for the research support. The author also wishes to thank three research assistants who helped with data collection: Ms. Shreya Bansod, Ms. Akshara Shibu and Ms. Stuti Gangwar. Thank you for your commitment to the project. Not least, the author is grateful to Ms. Ishita Khanna and Mr. Norbu of Spiti Ecosphere for their hospitality and support.

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Figure 1: Map of the Spiti region

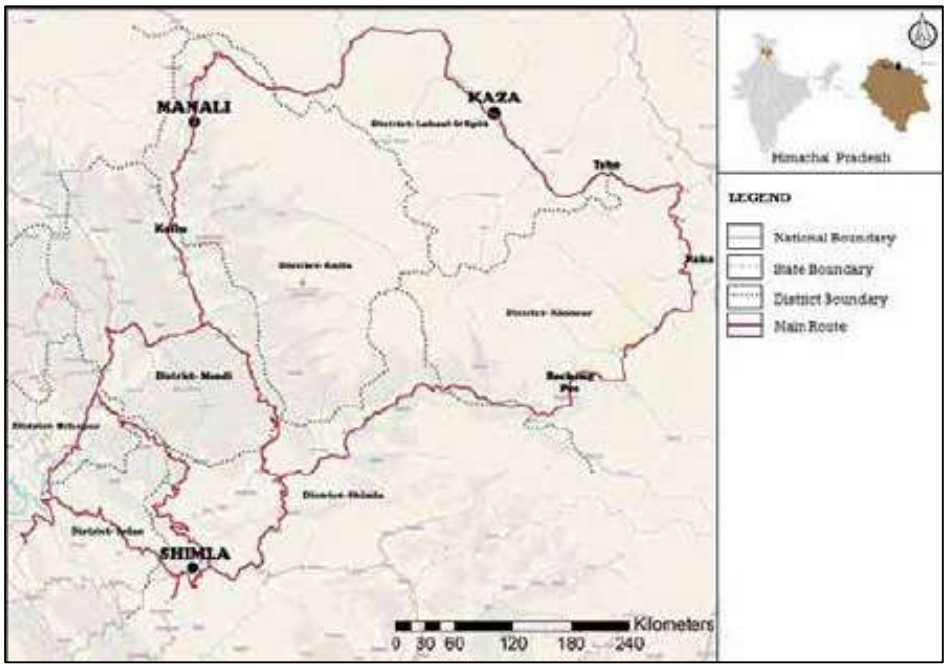


Figure 2: Monasteries in the Spiti region

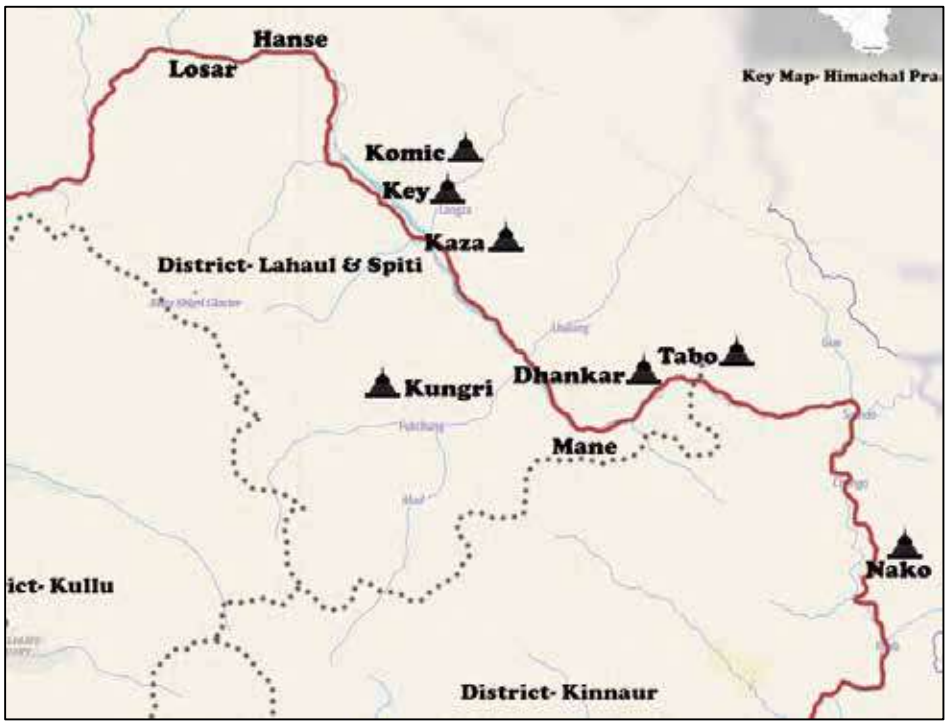


Figure 3: Dhankar Monastery, 12,774 feet above sea level

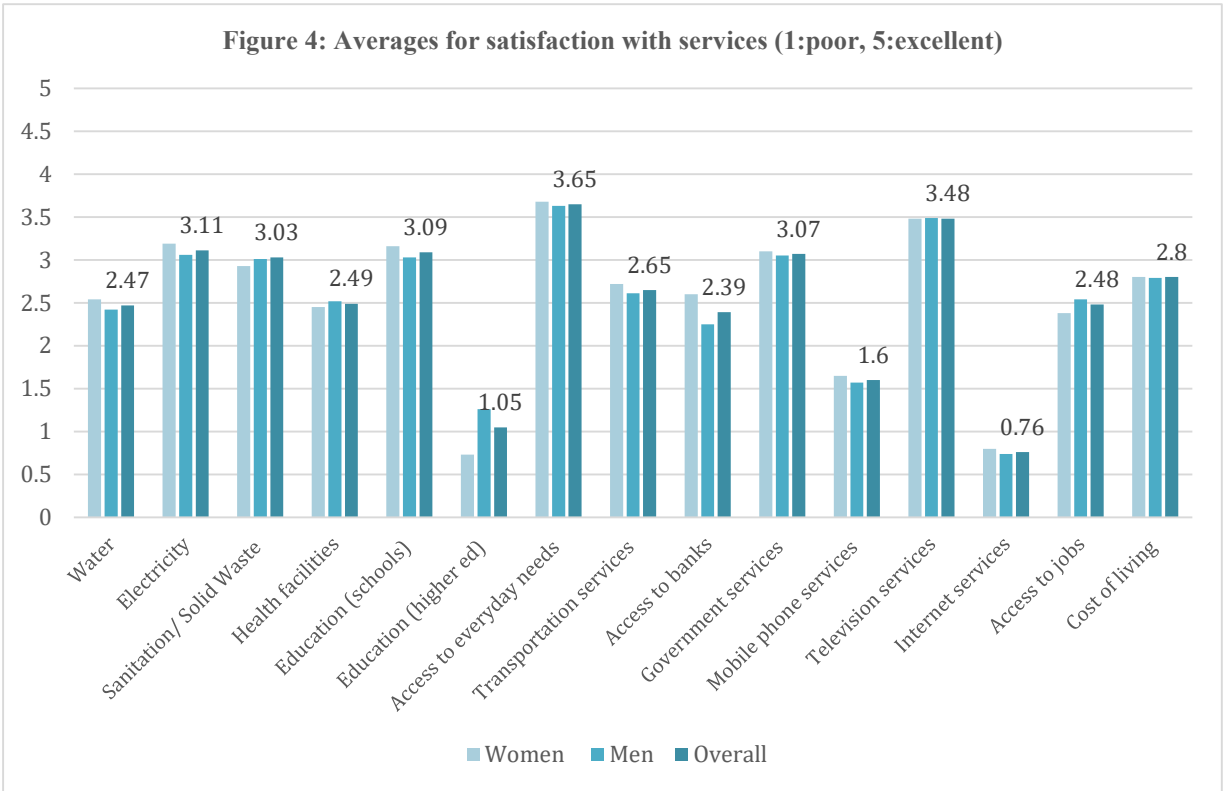


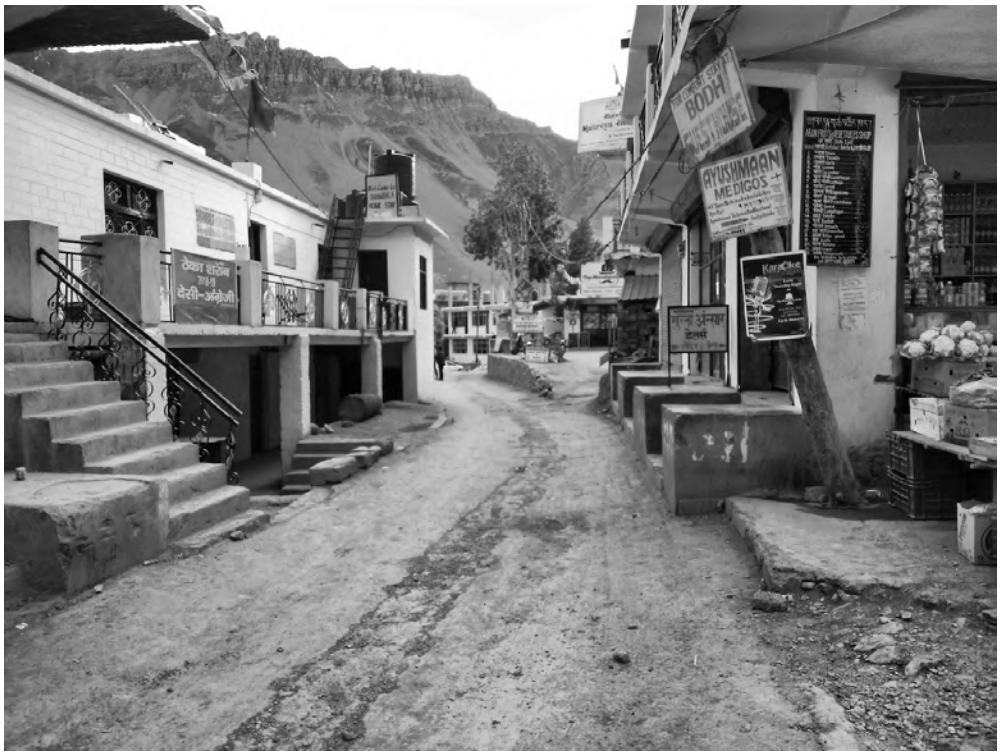
Table 1: People's needs and perceived threats of rapid economic growth	
Primary needs	*Threats*
Water	Crowds
Access and connectivity	Pollution
Education	Stress on resources
Employment	Commercialism
Communications and Internet	
Additional needs	
Better healthcare, more doctors	
Electricity	
Better banking facilities	
Support for agriculture	
Sports facilities	
Petrol pump	

Table 2: Aspects of local way of life considered necessary for protection	
Values	
	Peace
	Honesty, Politeness, Humility, Innocence
	Hospitality, Helpfulness
	Strong sense of community
	Respect for elders
Practices	
Traditions	
	Festivals
	Dance, dress, rituals, customs
Buddhism	
	Second son becomes a lama
	Faith structures society
Language	
	Bhoti language, Tibetan script
Architecture	
	Monasteries
	Mud-brick construction
Agriculture	
	Barley, peas, potato, seabuckthorn
Environment	
	Landscape
	Wildlife

Figure 5: Spiti river, running through the high altitude desert

Figure 6: Channel that drains into Spiti River, dry due to low snowfall in the winter of 2017-18

Figure 7: Market town of Kaza



How well can privately owned public spaces (POPS) facilitate social interactions in Taipei City? A case study of the community residents' daily life

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Abstract

In Taiwan, the high-density urban environment is the normal urban form as many highly populated counties. The concerns of possible impacts of vertical-developed cities have long discussed for several decades. Since the 1980s, in order to improve the urban environment and increase open spaces, the Taipei City Government granted additional floor area bonus as incentives in exchange of the private developers providing privately owned public space (POPS) for public use. Nevertheless many studies identify that the openness and the publicness of most POPSs are lower than expected. However, other concerns such as the possible external costs of the urban environment i.e. the decline of public service quality, more energy consumptions, increasing residential density, and skyline destruction derived from the additional floor area bonus as incentives for POPS are still to be studied. Early local research regarding the POPS usually focused on the usage of such space, and has given advices on design details. There is a lack of discussion about the impacts on the social behavior of residents by the POPS. Hence, this paper will discuss the possible impacts of the POPS on the social interactions（social relation）. We will conduct questionnaire survey and field studies at the selected communities with more POPSs in Taipei. The research results will expect to gather some information about how can POPS benefit residents daily life at the community level and provide policy feedbacks on future POPS in Taipei.

Keywords: privately owned public space (POPS), People-environment fit, social connection

INTRODUCTION

To achieve the goal of improving the urban environment and the capacity for disaster prevention, some building site owners in high density cities can apply for additional floor area bonuses (bulk reward) in exchange for converting part of the private property into privately owned public spaces (POPSs). It is considered as an

effective approach to improve the quality and quantity of existing open space system in many highly urbanized metropolitan areas around the world. In the case of the New York City, since 1890s, a lot of skyscraper builders have joint the competition to build building taller in height and larger in volume and resulted in degradation of urban environment and living quality. As a result, the 1916 zoning resolution came to create a sense of openness, also known as "light and air," at street level. Further, the Voorhees draft in 1958 proposed the first concept about POPS. "In order to bring more light and air into streets surrounded by tall buildings, as well as to create more usable open space, a bonus device has been established to encourage the setting back of buildings from the street line." (Kayden, J, S., 2000) Likewise, Taipei as the capital of Taiwan encounters similar problems of poor open space provisions due to the high density built environment and economic development pressures. In addition, the city cannot expand its border due to the limit of basin and range topography geographically. The urban grows close to saturation, so it cannot afford more construction of open space land. Hence, Taipei City Government has been seeking alternatives to improve open space system and adopting approaches of authorizing extra bulk bonus in exchange of POPSs since 1980s.

The promotion of POPS has been encouraged for nearly 40 years until now. However, there was lack of evaluations of the actual contributions that POPSs provided. Questions such as "does it achieve the goal of improving open space system?" or "how well-managed are these POPSs?" popped out frequently. More importantly, "how can those POPSs actual serve citizen's social life?" Common problems discovered in the New York Cities are poorly management of the POPS environment and quite a lot of POPSs are not open to the public. Nonetheless, scholars and citizens have frequently questioned the effects of POPS. The common criticisms are: the restriction of social interaction, the exclusion of "undesirable" groups and the partiality for private benefits (Kayden, 2000; Mitchell, 2003). The most common critique is of their accessibility to the public. For instance, studies regarding the POPS mostly focus on user experience at the individual POPS sites. 2006). Moreover, in 2014, Taiwanese citizens held "Occupation of POPS Movement" owing to protest the authoritarian ban on entering privately owned public spaces.

Therefore, in this paper, we extend our series discussion of the actual contributions of POPSs in Taipei City. Since 2015, a three-phase study structured by three planning and design spatial level, city level, district level, and street block level has conducted. At the city level phase, we focused on understanding the spatial function of POPSs in the urban planning contexts to further confirm the planning goals and purposes of POPS from urban open space system perspective. A total of 483 POPS sites from 1983 to 2013

was our selected research target sites. In the second (district level) phase, we discussed the relationship between site planning, the pedestrians flow and accessibility of POPSs. Finally, in the third phase, from user's benefit perspective, we focus on how can POPSs contribute to connecting people's social life.

Literature Review

1. The Planning Regulatory Background of POPS

The intention for legalizing the establishment of POPS was good, but many have questioned the role of POPSs in the whole open space system in a city due to the lack of instructions in the statutory plans such as master plan and detail plan. Figure 1 illustrates the related regulations for open space system in urban planning and POPSs in Taipei city. It is clear that the location and function of POPSs was not carefully considered and clearly defined at master and detail plan level. A POPS is only an additional patchwork in the open space system. Also, according to the zoning plan and land use control regulation, there is no instruction regarding where and how to allocate POPS. Thus, there is no evaluation tool available for measuring the possible effect and contribution of each POPS.

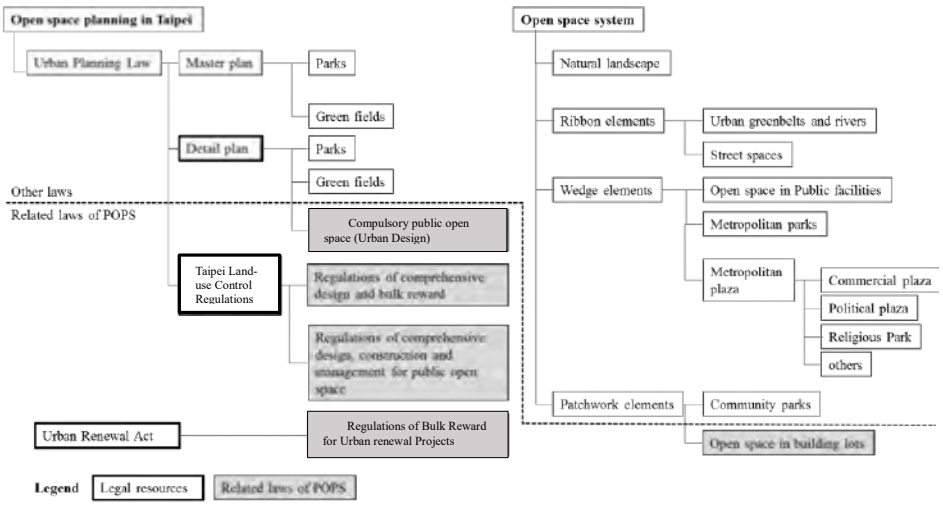

Figure 1. The relationship of POPS, regulations and open space system

As a result, in 1997, POPSs became a concerning issue regarding to the location and poor managements. After that, regulations on Taipei Land Use Control were amended to cancel the bulk reward, extra floor area rewards for new residential building construction projects. Until 2014, doubts and concerns of POPS arose again and many reported illegal usage or poor management of existing POPSs in order to avoid public

usage. On the other hand, over the past decade, the developed ratio of public open space in the statutory plan has only increased 7.9% from 43.0% to 50.9%. By 2014, there are still half of open space proposed in detail plan failed to develop. That is to say, the planned open space system has difficulty to be realized and also each district ended up with very low average open space. For instance, the green resources per capita of the five districts, Wanhua, Zhongzheng, Songshan, Da'an, and Datong, are lower than 10 m2. These districts are mostly located in the eastern part of the city. They are all old developed quarters with poor public facilities in quality and quantity as well as lower social economic status. For such deprived areas, it is most impossible to provide public open space due to fully developed built environment. Hence, although current policies encourage urban renewal projects to provide POPS in exchange of bulk rewards, the actual amount and quality of POPS provided is still questionable.

We argue that although POPS has long been ignored by the statutory plan system, the ever existence of POPS is no doubt a trade-off between private floor areas and public right of POPS usage. To keep POPS open for public use is to practice public justice. It is also land owners' obligation to keep it open for public. In addition, the locations of POPSs were chosen on the basis of the laws without considering the entire planning scope.

2. Related research of POPS

Research on POPS traditionally tends to focus on different aspects of the issue: the legal approach discusses it in relation to floor area ratio incentive policies, and often cites New York City as a model of this system; from the perspective of Economics, the emphasis is on the shift of urban spaces from the public realm to private ownership; the Urban Design approach analyses the spatial arrangement of POPSs, and their relation to the built environment (Kayden, 2000; Webster, 2007; Wei, Z. C., 1994). In Taiwan, however, research on privately owned public spaces tends to be less complex, only discussing urban design aspect, quality of the urban environment, and user behaviour when evaluating the „publicness" of such places, and pays less attention to issues of supervision and property rights (Tung, Y. Y., 1999; Chiang, W. C.,1993). Besides, research is mainly based on observation of individual cases, hence lacking in objective, quantitative indicators derived from a large sample, which arouses doubts of subjectivity, and makes it impossible not only to get a full view of POPS, but also to use the results as a basis of evaluating the publicness of POPS in general. Furthermore, since user preferences and behaviour differ significantly in Taiwan and in other parts of the World, therefore it is not possible to use international indicators to evaluate the

degree of public access to POPS in Taiwan (Wei, Z. C., 1994).

3. Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit)

Person–environment fit (P–E fit) is defined as the degree to which individual and environmental characteristics match (Dawis, 1992; French, Caplan, & Harrison, 1982; Kristof-Brown, Guay, 2011). It is considered to be similar with 'the theory of supplementary fit'. Based on compatibility that derives from similarity, a person fits into some environmental context because he/she supplements, embellishes, or possesses characteristics that are similar to other individuals in the environment (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011) It is also believe that urban dwellers could develop various P-E fit patterns according to their surrounding environmental settings. Thus, as Jane Jacobs emphasizing on appropriate design elements such as openness and inclusiveness in the public realm can create good place for people to meet, we argue that it is crucial to examine the P-E fit level of current POPSs to see what spatial pattern works and what don't.

METHODOLOGY

1. **Phase One: Evaluation of the spatial distribution pattern of POPSs and relationship between other public-owned open spaces**

Many local research have examined the possible effect of the individual POPS on its local users and discovered problems in terms of limited usage and poor management of POPS in case study. On-site observation or questionnaires are most frequent methods adopted. However, only very few have debated about the relevance of entire POPS system with open space network. Spatial analysis was rarely adopted at city scale in discussing POPS issues. (Yoon & Srinivasan,2015)

This study is conducted at both urban and local scale to discuss the relationship between existing POPSs and the public open space system. Thus, we selected 6 administrative districts in Taipei as our research sites based on the amount of existing POPSs, similarity of spatial contexts and average open space per capita. (Figure 2) There are 315 public open spaces and 228 POPSs available in the selected research area. The average size of each POPS is 1314.25 m2.

At city scale, this study discuss the suitability of POPS location in terms of overview on open space system in Taipei city by using bivariate local Moran's I analysis. We adopted and revised the method by Yoon & Srinivasan (2015) and study the

relationship between the lack of public open space and the provision of POPS in each district. We would like to confirm and identify the types of the possible misallocation of the POPS in 6 districts in Taipei City. The result of Spatial Correlation analysis and bivariate local Moran's I analysis can identify the compatibility of open space system and allocation of POPS in each district. Four types of compatible combination are categorized. (Figure 3) In the phase two, at local scale, we further selected two types out of four in the previous stage to conduct field investigations on the spatial layout of each POPS in order to observe the level of openness and usage characteristics of POPS in different district according to the compatible types of public open space and POPS. Wanhua District, with lack provision of both public open space and POPS, and Songshan District, with both abundant public open space and POPS were selected as research sites in the second phase.

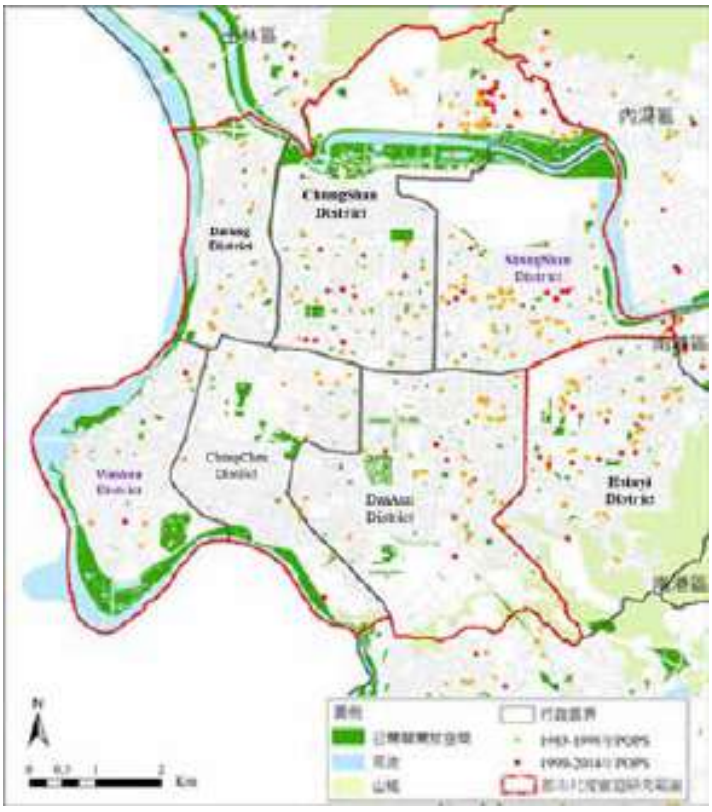

Figure 2 The Selected Research Districts and distributions of public open spaces and POPS

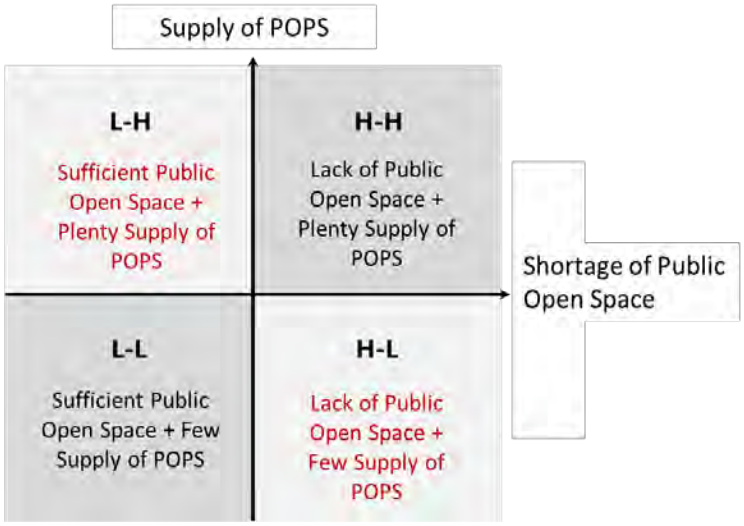

Figure 3 City-level Open Space System bivariate LISA analysis results

2. Phase Two: The Pedestrian flow and site plan of POPSs

Among the existing 483 POPS sites in Taipei City, we further use urban and local scales to discuss the publicness and accessibility of existing POPSs. In urban scale, we evaluate the accessibility and connectivity of the location of POPSs by using the Space Syntax Analysis in order to explore whether the POPS can enhance the pedestrian flows. In addition, at community context, on-site investigations of the design and usage of POPSs through Visibility Graph Analysis method in Shinyi District and Zhongshan District were conducted. (Figure 4) AutoCAD and Depthmap software were applied. (Figure 5) The main point of investigation is to document the actual quality of POPSs from user perspectives.

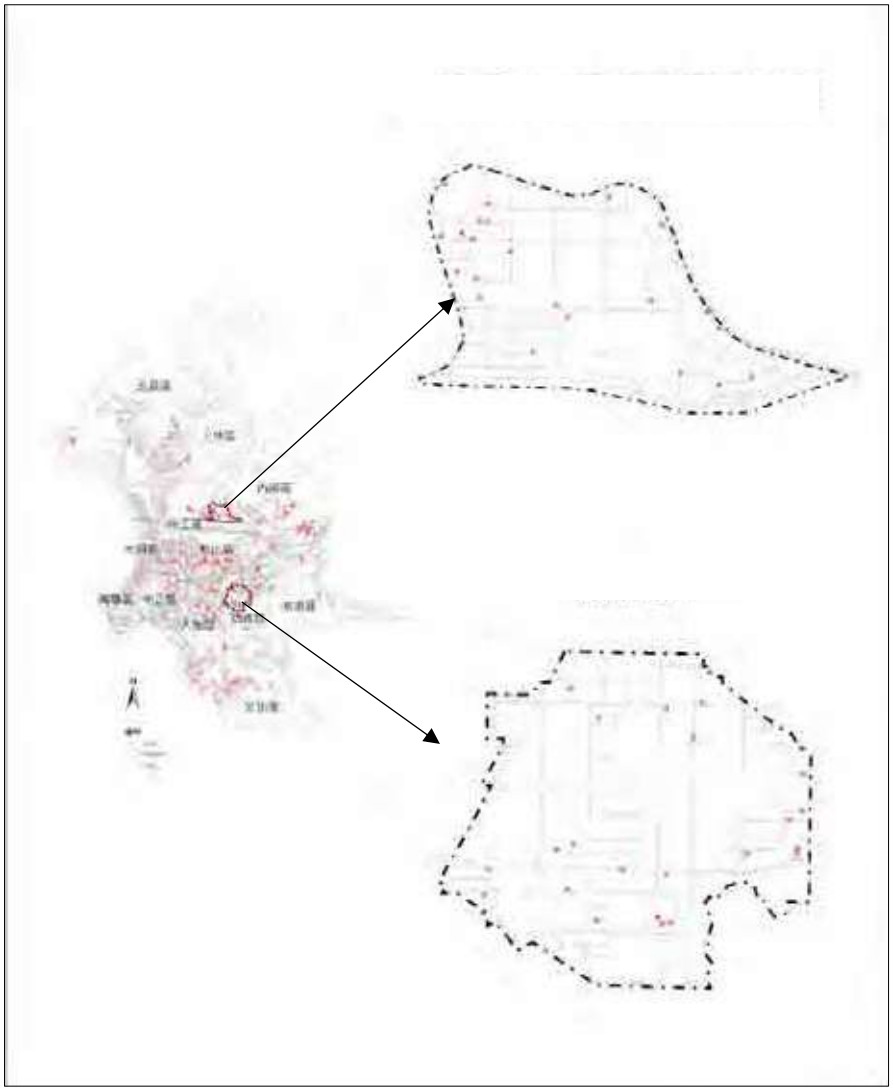

Figure 4. Site selection for Space Syntax Analysis

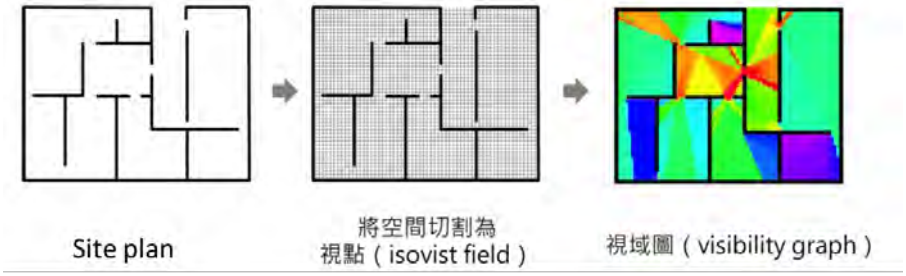

Figure 5. Visibility Graph Analysis

3. Phase Three: P-E fit evaluation

Owing to the lack of user-experience study feedback to the design guidelines of the POPS, as a result, design concepts applied in POPSs in Taipei City are mostly from developers' perspectives instead of users' perspectives. By applying the P-E fit theory

and environmental psychology, we argue that it is necessary to obtain the actual information of P-E fit level of POPSs in Taipei City. Through user's questionnaire and focus-group interview of local residents, we could identify the users' purposes and activities occurred in the selected POPS sites. Also what kind of design elements of the POPS facilitate the social connections among users and what failed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The relationship between POPSs and other public-owned open spaces

It is our argument that a good POPS should be able to compensate to the shortage of public-owned open space provision by the planning tools at city or district level. Hence, master plan or land use zoning plan should instruct the location choice criteria for POPS to instruct POPS happening at the preferable location that benefit the whole open space system. However, the result of bivariate LISA indicates that the current distribution pattern of POPSs has no correlation with the citywide open space system. The High-Low (H-L)area, which means the area lacks of both public open space and POPS, gathered in Wanhua district. However, the developed ratio of land use of open spaces is 99.5%, indicating difficulties to provide sufficient public open space by the city government. That is to say, the demand of open space in the Wanhua district is still high but we can only expect POPSs to meet the demand. On the other hand, the Low-High (L-H) area, which means that such area has sufficient public open space and more than enough POPSs, mostly locate in Songshan district. The spillover effect of oversupply open space can be also considered as a waste of resources. Therefore, whether POPS in Songshan district achieve the intended purpose, which is to improve open space environment, have to be verified by local scale analysis.

At local scale, the main point of field investigation is to obtain the spatial form and user behavior information in L-H and H-L areas to further initiate the dialog between quantity and quality of open spaces. Wanhua district belongs to H-L area, and it has a long development history and most land has already built up. Because it lacks of public facilities and public open space, the real estate price is lower than other district. There are only a number of POPS located in the Wanhua district mostly exited for more than 20 years. The design of such POPS 20 years ago were lack of openness and connections to public areas. Clearly, with limited available land to acquire as public open space, it is even more important to promote POPS in Wanhua district. As one of the priority areas for urban regeneration, land use plan of urban renewal project should

address the need for POPS and provide more incentives, i.e. bulk rewards, for private developers to provide POPS. Also, urban design code should require the design contexts of POPS to ensure the openness and publicity of the POPS.

On the other hand, most residents in the L-H area enjoy good open space environment in both quality and quantity. It has sufficient POPSs as well as public-owned open spaces. It might raise another concerns such as over-supply of open spaces and inequality of planning gain. For instance, most of the POPS located too close to other public open space and it will cause user competition and result in under-use of both good quality open space.

2. The Pedestrian flow and site plan of POPSs

According to the fundamental purposes of providing POPS, the location choice of open/public space can have significant impact on connectivity of the overall pedestrian network. In other words, the location and spatial configuration patterns of POPS in each development site can be a facilitator for the overall enhancement of pedestrian environment.

From the comprehensive survey of POPS conducted in our research, different design approach and spatial configuration patterns would affect actual usages of POPS. For instance, the plaza type POPS is more attractive for local people, but the utilization rate also related to its design for the level of pedestrian friendly. Furthermore, we compare the POPS developed by different developer, government and private, and realize that POPS developed by private developers usually has poor openness than the one provided by public developers.

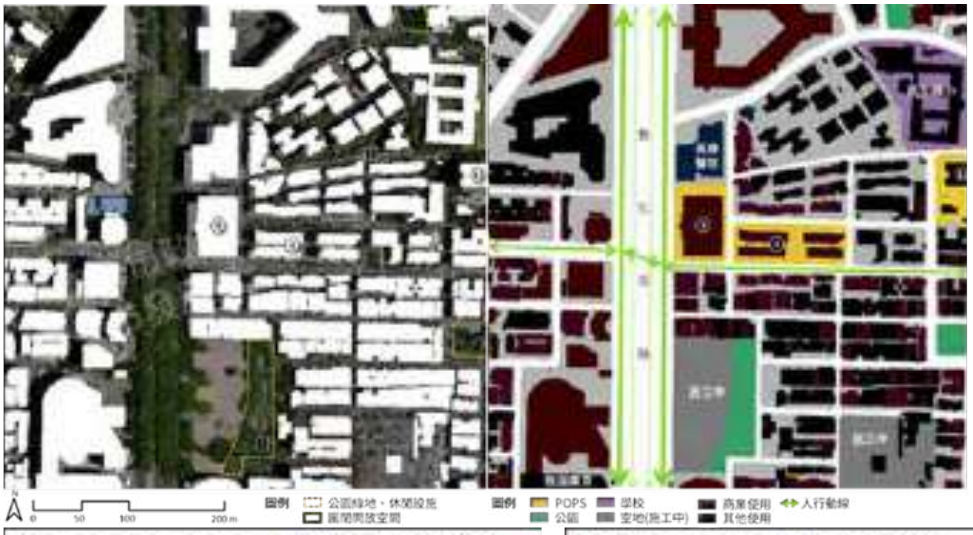

Figure 6.Shinyi District Case: Pedestrian flow and POPS

The Space Syntax Analysis conducted in two districts where POPSs mostly clustered further confirms that the existence of POPSs in both districts enhance the connectivity and pedestrian flow. For instance, in the Shinyi District, by adding all POPSs to the connectivity evaluation, the average connectivity value (Cn) increases from 4.422 to 4.674. Also, the average global integration value (Rn) increases from 0.709 to 0.803.(Figure 7.) It is to say, at the district level, when considering granted permission of POPSs, local planners should take the location and the potential contribution to the overall pedestrian connectivity into account.

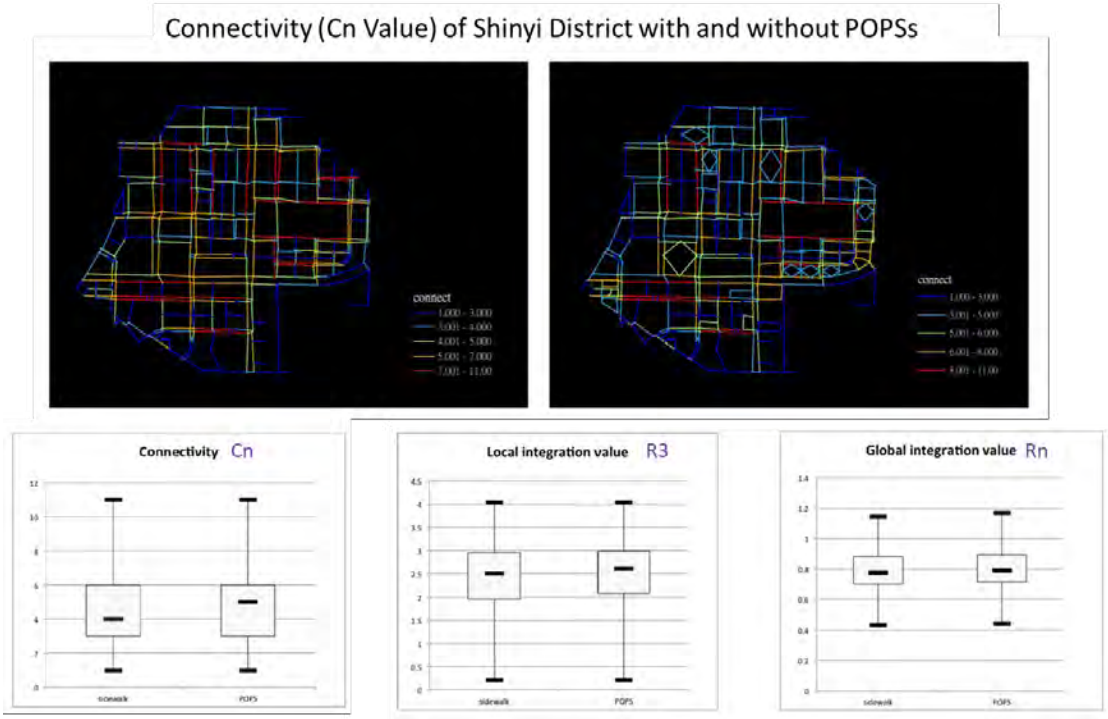

Figure 7. Space Syntax Analysis result of Shinyi District

3. The activities and the design of POPS

The other important expectations of POPS is to promote social interactions and activities at the single site level in terms of place-making. However, a place has to be visible first for people to have interactions in it. In the cases of Taipei city, we realize that although the regulations required the POPS to open to the public and property owners to design the place accessible for the public, most of them still intentionally 'design' to be less visible for users from outside. Eight spatial configuration types of POPS were selected to do the Visibility Graph Analysis in Shinyi District. Figure 8 illustrates the result of one case. The POPS in the following case was allocated at the

back-side of the main building and away from the main road. The visibility graph map indicates the POPS was not visible from the main road where most pedestrian would pass by without noticing the existence of such public space. As a result, very few activities occurred in the POPS and it is almost impossible to enhance the social interactions between POPS users.

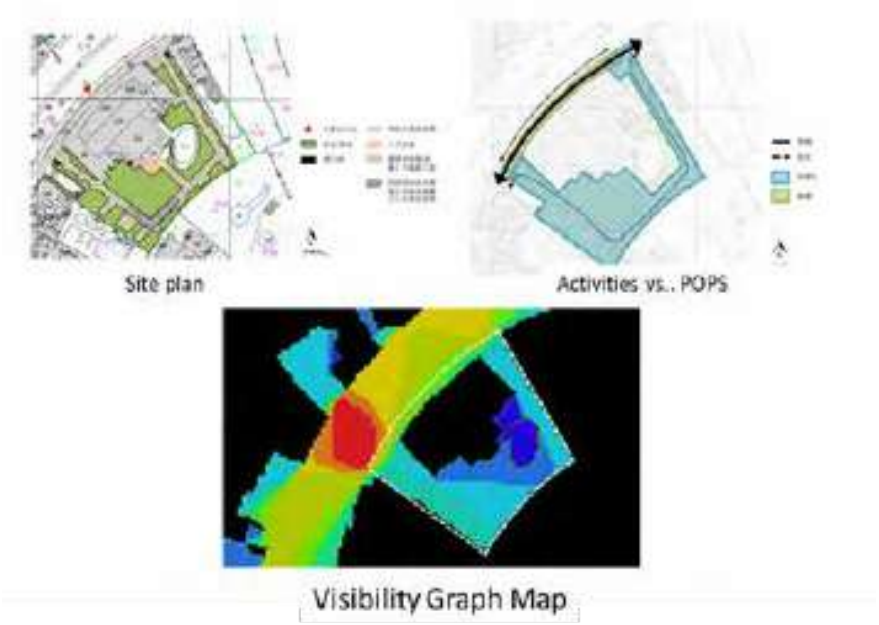

Figure 8. Visibility Graph Analysis

CONCLUSION

This paper presents the results of our 3-phase systematic research of the actual function of POPSs in different spatial level. First, we examined the relationship between existing POPSs and the public open space system in the Taipei City. Second, we evaluated whether the POPS can enhance the connectivity of public spaces and provide a better walkable path network for urban pedestrian at district level. Thirdly, we investigated the design and spatial configuration of POPS in each development projects to see if such space can enhance the social interactions.

The research results confirm that POPSs in Taipei fail to function in terms of fulfilling urban planning aim and enhancing public interests. At urban master plan level, there is no overall considerations of the possible collaboration between public-owned and privately-owned public space. According to the LISA analysis result, Wanhua district, the most deprived area, lacks both open space and POPS but Songshan district, the prosperous area in the city, has too many POPS and public open space at the same time. This raise a concerning issue of the fairness of public interests due to the

inequality of public space distributions. Hence, there is an urgent need for city-wide planning, design and locational guidance for POPS. From local scale investigation result, the plaza type POPS and POPS developed by government have better design quality than the other type and could stimulate more activities in it. Also, the location decision of the POPS in single building site should be further examined before the permission granted in order to ensure the visibility of such areas for all citizens. Finally, due to the housing price and real estate market will influence the developers' decision of providing POPSs, as a result, the distribution of POPSs don't match the demand of open space. Therefore, this study recommend that floor area incentive standard should be different according to the availability of existing open space. More incentives should be granted in the area which lacks of publicly-owned open space. The concept and purpose of open space system, both public-owned and privately-owned, should be included in detail plan as a guiding principles. In addition, in urban design review process, we should require proper location choice and design for future POPSs to facilitate the positive social interactions among users.

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