A critical review of the Responsible Tourism issues in Galle Fort, Sri Lanka using the triple bottom line approach.

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Introduction

As economic development in Sri Lanka began to take place in the 1990's Galle Fort was identified by the Sri Lankan government as one of the country's key cultural and heritage tourism destinations. Located on the southern coast of Sri Lanka, just 115km south of the country's capital Colombo, Galle Fort is considered one of the best examples of a living fortified city built by Europeans in South and South East Asia. It only takes a walk through the streets to realize that it has a colourful & complex history dominated by over four hundred years of European rule (Portuguese 1505 - 1639, Dutch 1640 – 1795 & British 1796 - 1954).

Galle Fort has a population of 2318[1] of which 50% are Muslim, 45% are Sinhalese and 5% others. It covers an area of 38 hectares of which the entire old city is completely enclosed by the ramparts. It is surrounded[2] by the modern day city of Galle[3], the Indian Ocean and the natural harbour of Galle which was once a very important port in the centre of the trade route between China and Arabia.

In 1969 Galle Fort was declared an archeological reserve by the U.N. and in 1988 UNESCO declared it as a World Heritage Site[4]. The site comes under the portfolio of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and National Heritage. In 1994 realising the importance of the preservation of the Fort as a living city, numerous stakeholders established the Galle Heritage Foundation[5] (GHF) which is made up of 6 members appointed by the Minister of Cultural Affairs and 6 members appointed from the ex-officio members from the Board of Directors (namely government bodies). The objective of the GHF was to have one unified body to take responsibility and action on behalf of all stake holders. Since 2004 various issues have arisen pertaining to ineffective governance prohibiting the GHF from delivering its objectives and thus questioning its overall effectiveness as a managing body of Galle Fort.

In the mid 1990's gentrification of Galle Fort commenced. The most recent survey[6] showed that of the 326 houses in the fort approximately 60 were foreign owned and of these only 4 were permanent residents of the fort. The majority of these foreigners purchased properties in 2003 when the UNP government signed a peace agreement with the LTTE[7] and at the same time they encouraged foreign investment by abolishing the 100% foreign land tax. At this time prospects for tourism were extremely promising so they converted their houses into luxury villas or boutique hotels. In addition local businesses have cashed in on the higher profile of Galle Fort and have set up shops and cafes tailored to tourists.

Since 1988 funding for Galle Fort has been minimal from Sri Lanka's tourism authorities. The majority of tourism promotion and activity has been funded by private enterprise, predominantly hotels.

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[1] Sri Lanka Census 2001
[2] There is a 400 metre buffer zone all the way around Galle Fort.
[3] Sri Lanka's 2nd largest city after Colombo
[4] Sri Lanka has a total of seven UNESCO world heritage sites.
[5] Agreed under Act No. 7 1994
[6] 2003 Survey conducted by the ISURU Galle Fort Old Home Owners Association
[7] LTTE = Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam - Sri Lanka's freedom fighters / terrorists.

Funding for conservation had also been scarce until the 2004 tsunami hit, damaging certain areas of the ramparts and inside the Fort, after which significant[8] funding was provided by the Netherlands government.

There is extremely limited research available on tourism in Galle Fort indicating visitor numbers and their specifics. A study conducted by BUDD[9] in 2003 identified that most tourists were day tourists spending approximately 1 to 4 hours in the Fort and that on the weekends there were hundreds of domestic tourists (approximately 50% local and 50% national) who visited the Fort crowding the beaches and the ramparts. It also observed that very few tourists stay overnight. Those that do stay are predominantly international tourists staying in the up market boutique hotels or younger tourists staying in guest houses at the budget end. Domestic tourists are heavy users of the actual ramparts and beach areas of the fort where as International tourists tend to spend more time wandering the streets of Galle Fort shopping and dining as well as walking along the ramparts. To be able to get an indication of the potential number of visitors Galle Fort could expect reference to total visitor numbers for all of Sri Lanka. In 2008 the total number of international visitors to Sri Lanka was 438,475[10]. In addition, to break this down into the potential number of overnight tourists versus day visitor's reference needs to be made to the number of functioning hotels and guests houses that exist in the fort. A recent survey[11] has not been completed however it would not be at all difficult to carry out given the overall size of Galle Fort.

Galle Fort has a number of issues and as a result its' world heritage status has been jeopardised. In May 2008 UNESCO sent a reactive monitoring mission to Galle Fort to assess the state of its conservation after major concerns were expressed regarding the recent building of the international cricket stadium as well as plans to develop Galle Harbour. The report concluded that Galle Fort was considered threatened but not yet in 'danger'[12]. Many of the challenges raised in the report & discussed below have been identified in previous missions and reports yet have not been actioned. Being able to action all recommendations and plans is the greatest challenge that exists for Galle Fort today.

As Sri Lanka sees the end in sight of its 37 year conflict those stakeholders who have invested in Galle Fort are waiting patiently for heritage and cultural tourism to prosper. With this in sight[13] and in the absence of a tourism master plan it is essential to critically review the triple bottom line responsible tourism issues of Galle Fort in order for it to remain as one of the best preserved living fortifications in Asia.

The positive & negative impacts of tourism on Galle Fort
Traditionally only the economic impacts of tourism in destinations have been assessed however with the responsible tourism movement around the world gaining momentum and with the growing focus on the triple bottom line (TBL) agenda it is essential that socio-economic and environmental impacts must also be assessed.

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[8] Approximately US$3 million to be spent over 3 years – '07 – '09
[9] The Building and Urban Design for Development Master Course at the DPU, University of London
[10] Sri Lanka Tourist Board, Annual Statistical Report 2008
[11] Recent meaning 2008 or 2009
[12] Galle Fort World Heritage, Reactive Monitoring Mission (2008) Nicole Bolomey, Programme Specialist Cultural, UNESCO Delhi office
[13] As at 30th April 2009 The Sri Lankan Government had estimated that the 37 year conflict would be ending within the next 10 days.

As Ringer (1998) has argued "*tourism is a cultural process as much as it is a form of economic development, and the destination of the tourist and the inhabited landscape of local culture are now inseparable to a great degree.*"

In identifying the major[14] impacts of tourism on Galle Fort it is important to make reference to the 2002 Cape Town Declaration guiding principles for economic, social and environmental responsibility. The 2002 Cape Town Declaration is an important reference document as it is the first document in which the WTO (World Tourism Authority) supported and placed emphasis on putting the residents first before visitors. It high lighted the importance of maximizing positive impacts and minimizing negative ones.

In using these guiding principles there are three key triple bottom line questions that we need to consider.
1. Is the economic benefit from tourism increasing and who is it benefiting?
2. What is the impact on the quality of life of the people living in the destination?
3. Is tourism damaging the cultural or natural environment? Is it sustainable tourism?

Economic impacts of tourism on Galle Fort
There are a range of positive economic impacts that tourism has had on Galle Fort. The first is that **new business opportunities** have emerged for small businesses to be developed that compliment tourism. For example: locally produced furniture, antiques, food suppliers, jewellery, locals arts and crafts, clothing and cloth as well as international partnerships between foreigners and local businesses to export their products. The second is that **local incomes have increased** for shop keepers, guest house owners, transport providers, cafes & restaurants, banks and other small businesses within the Fort as well as local producers and businesses beyond the walls of the Fort. The third one is that there are **greater employment opportunities** for the local community in tourism related businesses such as hotels, guest houses, shops, tour companies, villa management businesses etc. The final one is that the increase in foreign investment has **raised the profile of Galle Fort within Sri Lanka and internationally and thus investor opportunities** – this is a double edged sword as foreign ownership can bring displacement.

All too often we are made aware of the positive economic impacts of tourism however we must look at both sides of the coin (Mathieson and Wall 1999). The first economic cost is **land price inflation[15]** – as more and more foreigners purchase land and houses in the Fort, the values of land have increased significantly thus encouraging families to sell and leave the community or making it almost impossible for locals to afford to purchase property. The second is that **employment in tourism is seasonal**. Historically Sri Lanka has been marketed as a destination with its peak season from mid December through to end March. Further as the civil conflict in the north of Sri Lanka intensified the numbers of international tourist arrivals reduced by 29.12% from 2004 to 2008 and the peak season window reduced from a 14 week period to a 6 to 8 week period. This raises the question of whether day excursionists and domestic tourists maybe an appropriate market for Galle Fort.

Socio *Economic impacts of tourism on Galle Fort*
The key positive socio economic impact tourism has on Galle Fort is that it has resulted in **conservation and preservation of Galle Fort**. Investment from foreigners & the Netherlands Government has resulted in over 120 buildings being restored, the repair of the fortification walls,

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[14] This is not an exhaustive list. Just the major impacts.
[15] In 1992 the average price for a home in Galle Fort was US$20,000 – US$25,000 by 2000 this had escalated to between US$125,000 to US$200,000[15] and by 2004 prices had almost doubled to US$250,000 to US$400,000.

restoration of some public buildings, the creation of a new maritime museum and restoration and re-use of the ancient drainage and sewerage system.

On the one hand foreign investment has had a positive impact however on the other it is deemed as **gentrification of Galle Fort** with numerous local newspaper articles and some local lobby groups voicing their opinion. As property prices have increased families have been incentivized to sell their properties and the young can rarely afford to purchase homes within the Fort. Atkinson (2002) says that evidence on gentrification shows it to have been largely harmful, predominantly through household displacement and community conflict.

The **authenticity and integrity of built and living culture in Galle Fort** is keenly debated amongst many stakeholders. These protagonists include local residents, UNESCO, Department of Archeology, local lobby groups, journalists with an interest in conservation, certain members of the Galle Heritage Foundation etc. There is no one agreed upon set of guidelines for the renovation of properties. Authenticity is mistaken in the nostalgia for the Dutch Period and the Fort's multi faceted history[16] is sometimes ignored. In addition in early 2008 there was the controversial and illegal construction of a grand stand in the International Test Cricket ground in the buffer zone of Galle Fort impacting not only the physical integrity but also displacing the youth who once played in this area.

Environmental impacts of tourism on Galle Fort
Beyond the renovation of buildings the positive environmental impacts of tourism on Galle Fort are limited. As the awareness of Galle Fort as a heritage destination has increased many local organizations such as hotels, shops and festivals as well as many local residents have organized beach and street clean ups around Galle Fort and some have funded bins for the Fort. This has assisted in educating the local community as well as raising awareness of the environmental impacts the Fort endures.

There are two key negative environmental impacts of tourism on Galle Fort. The first is **solid waste,** in particular waste generation and waste collection. Excess rubbish created from domestic day visitors on the weekends has increased significantly polluting the streets and beaches. As the number of hotels increases so does the waste. There is a lack of awareness amongst domestic visitors of the effects of littering. There are too few rubbish bins and waste collection methods are ad hoc and inefficient.

The second negative impact is the **overuse of infrastructure**: cars, school and tour buses and delivery trucks are placing pressure on the roads and destroying the ancient drainage system as well as creating noise and air pollution.

Addressing the key priorities
The challenge is increasing the positive impacts and reducing the negative impacts identified in the TBL analysis to ensure Galle Fort becomes a better place for people to live in and visit (Cape Town Declaration, 2002). In addressing the priorities it is essential to ask one self 'Are the priorities identified for the community or for the tourism industry?' It is the community which needs to be engaged.

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[16] Periods of the Moors, Persians, Portuguese, Arabs etc.

The first of two priorities to be addressed is the general state of conservation of Galle Fort particularly its' **authenticity and physical integrity**. Cultural & heritage tourism assets are ideally suited to be developed as tourism demand generators (Copley and Robson 1996; Blackwell 1997). Hence without the preservation of Galle Fort there will be no tourist destination.

The concept of authenticity in tourism has been shaped by the work of American anthropologist Dean MacCannell (1973, 1976). MacCannell proposed that the primary motivation for tourists lies in a quest for authenticity – a complex and highly debatable concept. There is a real risk that continued development in the absence of a master tourism plan will cannibalize Galle Fort's authenticity and physical integrity and not only jeopardize the existing tourism industry but also prevent it from being sustainable for generations to come.

Without this first step of an actionable and relevant sustainable master plan (which should have existed at inscription) that identifies clear and stringent guidelines to bring in line existing buildings as well as future development, Galle Fort will not be able to achieve the guiding principles of responsible tourism and make a firm commitment to the 2002 Cape Town Declaration. The recent UNESCO report by N. Bolomey (2008) highlights that urgent action is required from all stakeholders to prevent Galle Fort being placed on a List of World Heritage in Danger.

The second priority that needs to be addressed is the **sense of the Galle Fort community being lost** as a result of gentrification, displacement due to land price inflation, increased interaction with tourists and an artificial approach to urban conservation. The BUDD report 2003 pointed out that the residents of Galle Fort area are a very vulnerable 'entity' directly affected by future interventions and have little or no voice or power to influence or oppose the outcomes of possible future developments. The 'host community' are the custodians of Galle Fort yet all too often the host community in heritage destinations are not aware of actually what it means to live in a world heritage site and they increasingly disconnect from their heritage at the enticement of economic wealth & opportunity[17]. The ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Tourism (1999) promotes the involvement of the host community in all forms of planning and management of tourism. Yet before we assume that the host community should be involved in tourism we must ask if the residents really want tourism as appose to forcing tourism upon them without a true voice. The responsible tourism agenda is still evolving yet what we do know is that the residents must come first before the tourists or before the developers and investors and that without a secure host community in Galle Fort that takes ownership, feels a sense of pride and takes an active role in local management, tourism in the fort can not be sustainable.

Recommendations, stakeholders and strategies

> *Priority #1 – Authenticity & Integrity*

In order to address the negative impacts of authenticity and integrity it is imperative that a tourism master plan is developed and implemented. Without an over riding policy, tourism investment and development will continue in an adhoc and irresponsible way to the detriment of the physical environment of Galle Fort. The plethora of existing plans need to be crystalised and ineffective governance needs to be overcome by putting the master plan into the hands of a body with adequate authority, capacity and ownership to implement it.

Possibly the biggest challenge in developing responsible tourism is bringing together all the competing interests and ensuring that there is agreement on all issues which in turn will create sufficient acceptance. Consensus must come first. Working with stakeholders is an important part in

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[17] The ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Tourism (1999)

addressing priorities (Hall 1999). Previously there has been unwieldy large number[18] of divergent interests involved in Galle Fort which has led to limited and ineffective action. Obtaining consensus from such a diverse range of stakeholders all with competing interests leads to us asking a political question of who does Galle Fort belong to? Who has the right to develop, preserve, conserve or live in Galle Fort? In theory it is the Department of Archeology under the Ministry for Cultural Affairs yet should it be the tourism industry, should ownership be with the residents or should it remain at a National government level? These are no questions that can be answered immediately however what we do know is that it is important that those key stakeholders who should be involved in the planning and implementation process be listed and prioritized.

Before moving onto how to engage the stakeholders it is important to identify why each of these stakeholders should be engaged. Destinations are like commons and Galle Fort is no exception. It is a public access good that does not cost anything to enter[19] thus encouraging its use rather than its long term management. In addition it has no particular owner thus it is important that all stakeholders become a part of the solution and take ownership. A formal tourism plan should be developed and implemented using a multi stakeholder process. This is however much easier said than done as all too often master plans gather dust due to a lack of consensus and engagement with the right stakeholders.

In order to engage the stakeholders the following strategies should be implemented:

i) Set up a specific stakeholder task force that consists of both the enthusiastic and the influential stakeholders. This would be considered a Private-Public Partnership (PPP) and would be endorsed and supported by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. One of many very successful examples of PPP initiatives is Humayum's Tomb in Delhi - it was the first PPP funded restoration of a World Heritage Site in India. A PPP is the best basis for a form of integrated community based development where one needs to rely on the co-ordination and co-operation of public, private and NGO organizations for the creation of community groups for the governance of projects after inception. (Branding India - An Incredible Story. Kant, A. 2009). In addition contracting a third who has no previous history with stakeholders to work with the task force would assist in resolving any previous conflicts and ensure that the task force achieved its objectives.

ii) Build the capacity of all stakeholders in order to ensure that they can secure an effective voice in decision making and make a sensible contribution. The job of the specialist task force would be to ensure they give attention to all stakeholders.

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[18] Community residents, community based organisations and groups, the private sector involved in tourism (SME's), local government including the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), The Galle Heritage Foundation (GHF), the Central Cultural Fund, the Urban Development Authority, Galle Municipal Council, the Central Environment Agency and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority, independent organizations such as ICOMOS Sri Lanka, NGO's working in Galle Fort and Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO. Both national and regional government departments such as the Ministry for Cultural Affairs, the Department of Archeology, The Ministry for Urban Development, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, Coast Conservation Department, Sri Lanka Cricket Board and Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau. Tour operators in Sri Lanka and abroad and destination management companies.

[19] An entry charge would possibly create ownership.

iii) Ensure transparency and public awareness in order to gain the confidence of the host community and thus broaden public participation.

iv) Partnership agreements between tourism authorities and other local government departments should be developed to encourage greater understanding of how each entity views the asset, values it and seeks to use it (McKercher, du Cros 2002). Ultimately it is the local government who governs thus they need to be included at all levels of the development of a PPP. A more detailed discussion of the role and relationship with local government needs to be tabled.

> ### *Priority #2 – Loss of Galle Fort Community*

To overcome the sense of the Galle Fort community being lost it is recommended that a 'public community forum' is set up. The community forum will close the gap between those making decisions and those who are affected by decisions and not only tourism related but issues with a wider remit; it will enable the community to be actively involved in planning and decision making. There are already a range of community groups within the Fort however as tourism development progresses, there remains no public forum where the community are able to collectively speak out and identify the key issues. Before a community forum is set up it is essential that more thought is given to what the community needs are and what they might be organized around. E.g. should the community forum be based around a sporting team such as cricket or football or around a common interest or concern?

The Galle Fort public community forum should be made up of representatives from Sri Lankan households, foreign residents, community leaders, community based organizations and groups such as churches, temples, Galle Fort Library, the Isuru Welfare Association, schools and religious bodies. In addition it should include representatives from the private sector such as foreign and Sri Lankan owned hotels and tourism businesses and other business owners within Galle Fort e.g. banks and retails shops. Those members on the public forum must not only be able to represent the host community but also have the ability to communicate, consult and negotiate with other stakeholders.

Galle Fort community is a diverse society with each person able to contribute to the sustainability of the Fort in various ways. The key guiding principles set out in the 2002 Cape Town Declaration highlight the need for the local community to be involved in the development of tourism in order to maximize local economic benefits, create better places for the community to live in and to create better balanced relationships amongst all stakeholders. Without the involvement of the local community the long term sustainable development of their environment can not be achieved.

In order to engage the community the following strategies should be implemented:

i) Build the social capacity of the local communities to ensure that they can secure an effective voice in decision making.

ii) Develop a communication strategy that raises the awareness of the need for responsible tourism and encourages a sense of ownership, pride and commitment.

iii) Ensure transparency and public awareness in order to gain the confidence of the host community and thus broaden public participation.

iv) Develop Public Private Partnerships.

Conclusion

Managing tourism in Galle Fort is a highly political issue and without the agreed vision of a tourism plan and a strong sense of community ownership it will be difficult to reduce the negative impacts and increase the positive impacts of tourism. This agreed vision must reflect the triple bottom line guiding principles of the 2002 Cape Town Declaration and demonstrate a firm commitment towards developing more responsible forms of tourism. Krippendorf (1973) understood the idea that responsible tourism must be as "infectious" as possible, thus we must continue to raise awareness of the issues of tourism in Galle Fort and ensure all stakeholders play a role in development and implementation.

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