Placemaking in green infrastructure, implications for urban tourism branding.

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Urban tourism depends on the place specific qualities of destinations. In many cities, climate change poses a threat to these qualities, through increasing risk of excessive heat, draught and flooding. Cities need to adapt to reduce these risks. One way of doing this is to improve their green infrastructure with the help of ecosystem-based solutions. Urban forests, parks, rivers, and wetlands may help reduce the effects of climate change in cities. In the literature, relations between ecosystem services and tourism have in been recognized in rural contexts but seldom in urban.

Green infrastructure provides a variety of ecosystem services to the community; cultural ecosystem services such as recreation, and esthetical values take place in urban green infrastructure, benefitting both locals and visitors, and providing value in the form of improved experiences. Alan Lew (2017) discusses how placemaking processes are influenced by different types of tools. He differentiates between tangible (physical design in architecture, parks, and public art), mixed (practices in street life, food, and entertainment) and intangible tools (mental images in branding, social media, and history). Green infrastructure is a highly tangible, physically place-bound, aspect of placemaking. Adding to that, I argue that the development of green infrastructure not only has interesting implications for creating arenas for mixed placemaking, but also in forming green narratives in and of cities. The empirical findings behind this presentation are primarily built on document analyses and field studies in Northern Europe, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands.

It is suggested that the need for climate change adaptation in a city may be used as a means to improve its place specific qualities as a tourist destination. By developing green infrastructure in innovative and environmentally friendly ways, the quality of ecosystem services improves, including those relevant for both visitors and residents. Protecting and building green infrastructure, thereby enhancing a city´s visible qualities and its reputation as a sustainable destination, may also be valuable in branding the city.