**ATHE Award Nomination – VisitEngland ATHE Award for leadership in the visitor economy (research award)**

**Title:** ‘Enhancing ‘slow’ tourism in historic cities: an antidote to the ‘fast’.

**Nomination:** Anglia Ruskin University, Lord Ashcroft International Business School, Cambridge, UK

* Project lead recipient: Michael Duignan
* Project team members: Sally Everett, Lewis Walsh, Chris Wilbert, Nicola Cade, and Francesca Messina

**Synopsis for ATHE Annual Conference handbook**:

Since March 2014, the Lord Ashcroft International Business School tourism team at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge (UK) have been working closely with a network of European universities (including University of Bergamo (Italy); University of Girona (Spain)) to analyse the role of ‘slow tourism’ for the management and development of a new type of ‘sustainable’ tourism system for small to medium sized historic-university cities.

There are several reasons why the emphasis on ‘slow’ principles is critical in the context of these spaces. Firstly, all of the cities chosen are by-and-large overshadowed by a neighbouring ‘global’ city (e.g. Cambridge-London; Bergamo-Milan; Girona-Barcelona et cetera). In light of this, prior academic debate, alongside empirical evidence gathered in the context of Cambridge, suggest that these spaces can be subject to the ‘eight hour tourist’ problematic - the condition whereby visitors stay for short-time periods, mainly in inner-city areas, and engage in more institutionalised and less adventurous modes of consumption (e.g. consuming ‘popular’ attractions; opting for chains over independents et cetera). The project thus focuses on how those responsible for tourism management and development in the city can enhance spend and encourage longer stays, promote ‘localism’, cultural diversity, and the back-street quirks of these spaces, alongside educating visitors to engage in modes of ‘critical consumption’. A brief overview of the project’s objectives can be found below:

1. Consider ways historic cities can encourage tourists to stay longer, and spend more in the local and regional visitor economy
2. Assess the importance of food events and festivals for stimulating ‘slow tourism’
3. Critically evaluate how ‘slow tourism’ can develop stronger cultural identity for the respective cities
4. Amplify the idea of ‘slow tourism’ as a strategic focus for the development of regional and local tourism, and as a critical movement associated with idea of ‘critical consumption’.

Critically, such regional development and new ‘slower’ perspectives are set against a backdrop of corporatisation and standardisation of tourism experiences in light of inner city gentrification effects – which in turn – may be seen to be damaging the cultural identity of the historic city of Cambridge, UK. Arguments as to whether such standardised experiences may in turn de-incentivise future visitation of affected spaces under question, poses not just a serious socio-cultural question, but also an economic one too. In response to such considerations, the project has thus been at the forefront of these debates, championing the ‘slow’ agenda - strategically aligned against the priorities and policies of the council, whilst also considering the needs and role of local stakeholders (from festival directors to small businesses) to open up the conversation and start planning how Cambridge can embed ‘slower’ perspectives.

To fulfil the key objectives of the study, and to optimise the research output and impact of the research – a range of academic and public engagement activities with major local, regional, national and European stakeholders were conducted. Output’s 1 – 9 are identified below:

**Output 1** - *Sharing best practice ideas [for ‘slow tourism development’] throughout a European community of historic cities* - published book chapter (Sept, 2015) from Chris Wilbert and Michael Duignan on the opportunities and methodologies for implementing slow tourism in the context of Cambridge [Wilbert, C; Duignan, M (2015) Going s-Low in Cambridge: opportunities for sustainable tourism in a small global city, Bergamo University Press in EDS. Casti, E; Burini, F (2015) Centrality of Territories, Bergamo University Press]. Book constructed to share best practices to embedding slow tourism principles in to tourism strategies across all similar European Cities including University of Bergamo, University of Sofia, University of Girona et cetera.

**Output 2 -** *Presentation at two international conferences on slow tourism development [Bergamo, Italy, and Santander, Spain]* – Michael Duignan and Chris Wilbert respectively discussed opportunities and methodologies for developing ‘slow tourism’ in the context of Cambridge to share best practices across all contributing European cities.

**Output 3 -** *ERASMUS+ exchange to focus on slow tourism planning* - Anglia Ruskin University, Lord Ashcroft International Business School tourism team invited ERASMUS+ exchange with the University of Bergamo to analyse Cambridge’s tourism system and help to map local resources and attractions that embody ‘slow’ principles. The student was subsequently a key contributor to the book chapter highlighted above.

**Output 4 -** *Student engagement, academic development and employability* – through extensive engagement with key stakeholders throughout the region, our links with the council, public organisations and industry, the project invited undergraduate BSc Tourism Management students to get involved with the event planning and delivery of EAT Cambridge 2015 food and drink festival. Student engagement, help to develop a range of transferable skills, apply classroom theory, and to enhance career prospects.

**Output 5 -** *Engaging students in academic production of ideas* - currently writing of two academic publications, one for the Journal of Sustainable Tourism (JoST) – and – one for Tourism Management (TM), involving PhD student: Lewis Walsh, and 3rd year undergraduate student: Nicola-Cade in the analysis of data and constructing arguments against the literature for journal. The two key focuses for the journals are:

* The uses of events and festivals as a resistance against gentrification and corporatisation of Cambridge’s local economy (aimed to submit to JoST by mid, 2016)
* The economic and social impacts of events and festivals for slow tourism development (aimed to submit to TM by early-mid, 2016).

**Output 6 -** *Embedding critical perspectives of ‘slow’ in to TMI accredited module: ‘Current and Critical Issues in Tourism’* – 2nd year module focused on introducing tourism students to relevant and innovative ideas changing tourism practice. One of the special interest talks centred on the theory of ‘slow’ and its linkage with urban design and planning, alongside ‘slow tourism’ and subsequently discussed in the context of Portinari’s (1989) notion of ‘slow food’ born out of Italy in late 1980’s.

**Output 7 -** *Two annual reports to the festival directors and council tourism department* - assessing the economic value of the region’s biggest food and drink festival: ‘EAT Cambridge’ 2014 (completed), and 2015 (in final stages) – its importance for the economy, small business traders, and for fostering cultural identity.

**Output 8 -** *Coherent public engagement strategy and media presence to amplify the potential role of slow tourism for sustainable economic regional development*

* Sally Everett and Michael Duignan giving the opening talk at the EAT Cambridge 2015 festival (May, 2015) and subsequent Cambridge News coverage the following week.
* Michael Duignan talking on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire around the role of slow tourism in the local Cambridge economy (June, 2015) and subsequent Cambridge News coverage the following day.

**Output 9 –** *Closer connectivity between aforementioned academic outputs and public engagement, and tourism practice* – early 2016 brings the introduction of Cambridge’s new destination management organisation ‘Visit Cambridge and Beyond’, the debates and ideas put forward by the project provide a suitable platform to support some of the practical initiatives of this organisation.

For further details of the project, please do not hesitate to contact: [Michael.Duignan@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:Michael.Duignan@anglia.ac.uk), Lecturer in Tourism.