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Tourism planning – lessons from our regional neighbours

Tourism is currently the fastest growing economic sector in the world. It is flourishing in Australia and the surrounding region as a result of several factors including the rise in preference for spending on experiences over buying goods, greater connectivity within and across borders, and a burgeoning Asian middle class. This rapid growth is placing enormous pressure on delivering sustainable tourism projects and building capacity locally and nationally.

Can the planning system keep up? Should there be strategic development approaches, or is it a case of build it as they come? How are local communities responding? What can Australian planners learn from regional neighbours to prepare responsibly for tourism growth? Are there planning instruments in Australia that work well and can be exported?

While tourism generates substantial economic gain and jobs growth, the social and environmental impacts can be significant. There is a balancing act between impact mitigation through defining carrying capacity of a place, planning policy and land use controls, and promoting development through infrastructure improvements and targeted investment.

Drawing from work in planning for destinations (specifically in Boracay, Siargao, Ilocos and Palawan in the Philippines and Sanya, China), as well as her own experiences as an avid traveller, Karima Palafox will present case studies on planning strategies and varied responses to rapid tourism growth. In some examples, interventions were done to respond to potential decline in visitor arrivals.

Karima will discuss the impact of Tourism Enterprise Zones, the advantages of master planning with a focus on travel and tourism, and how to successfully engage the community to build capacity and protect local character.