

**V N A T**  
VIETNAM NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF TOURISM

**F U N D E S O**  
FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# Capacitating for tourism development in Vietnam: Training course

M o d u l e

## **TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

by

**Antonio Machado**

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BY

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## **1. Introduction**

This module deals with sustainable tourism as a part of a major training programme on tourism development organised by the AECL and the VNAT. Sustainable tourism is not a new concept in Vietnam. In October 1997 and supported by the IUCN Vietnam, VNAT and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, commenced a “Capacity building for sustainable tourism initiatives project”. Later a “Workshop on development of a National Ecotourism Strategy for Vietnam was held in September 1999. Several publications on responsible travel and ecotourism have been printed, and basic literature has been translated to the Vietnamese language<sup>1</sup>. At present, materials on ecotourism for tourism agents are planned within the framework of the Vietnam Biodiversity Awareness Programme 2001-2002.

A National Strategy for Tourism was submitted to the Vietnamese Government in 1999 and a WTO (World Tourism Organisation) proposal is being considered for a “Revised Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in Vietnam”. The VNAT has drafted a Law on Tourism for submission to the National Assembly.

The aim of the present module of the training course is to dip into the theoretical aspects of tourism and its different modalities; to consider what each stakeholder can do for a more sustainable activity, to present ecotourism as a reasonable bet, and to show the experience gained in many years of boosting tourism development in the Canary Islands, Spain. Negative experiences provide good lessons. A special attention is given to tourism development and management in protected areas, as this can be an interesting activity field in Vietnam. Finally, a video “Wild, wild Canary” made by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (2000) will expose the pros and cons of tourism in this archipelago.

The present training programme supports and complements the previous and parallel initiatives oriented towards a sustainable development of tourism in Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond the green horizon: principles for sustainable tourism (WWF UK /Tourism Concern); Ecotourism: a guide for planners and managers I & II (The Ecotourism Society), and Tourism, ecotourism and protected areas (IUCN).

## 2. Tourism and the concept of sustainability

The concept of sustainability applied to development is a relative recent one. Problems with the environment raised by the development of the consumer society were already recognised (see «*The waste makers*» by Packard 1960 or «*The Limits to growth*» by Meadows & Meadows, 1972). However, only after the Brundtland Report ((WCED, 1987) modern man –particularly economists and politicians– took full conscience that the environment can also cause problems to development and social well-being. Sustainable development emerged as a new paradigm for global, national, regional and local policy, as stated by the Agenda 21 of the UN World Conference (Rio Summit, 1992).

The message is simple: Development should not seek only economic growth. To hold in time, it has to be underpinned by ecological-, social- and, obviously, economic sustainability. It has three dimensions, like a stool with three legs. If one fails, the whole will collapse on the long run.

According to the United Nations Commission for the Environment and Development (UNCED, 1987) “Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs”. If an activity is sustainable, theoretically it can continue forever.

It is easy to say, but much harder to implement. In fact, many people think that sustainable development is an utopia, an impossible dream. Everything is interconnected by ecology. There is no sense to run a sustainable activity if it is integrated in a non sustainable major framework. What matters really is the sustainability of the human species in the whole planet. And, according to the last WWF Living Planet Report (Loh, 2000), the biocapacity of the earth was already exceeded in 1975. In other words, humanity is at present living by “eating” part of the natural capital, and not from its rents as it should be. Humanity is no more ecologically sustainable at the planet scale.

Assuming that this is true, why then to focus on sustainable development? Needless to say: things can get worse. The logic is not to focus on sustainable development as a tangible goal, but rather to concentrate in making all activities more sustainable, and as much so as possible. Concentrating in sustainability as a principle of action, the whole situation will be improving smoothly. This is the wise way.

Very recently, August 2002, Johannesburg hosted the “World Summit on Sustainable Development” with delegates of more than 100 heads of government and more than 1000 media representatives. The message of Rio has been renovated. No country, from the first or third world keeps unaware of the need of promoting a more sustainable way of development. We have been convinced. Now, the challenge ahead, is to implement it.

« When he inaugurated the World Summit on the morning of Monday August 26, the President of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki – who is also the chairman of the summit – declared that “islets of wealth surrounded by a sea of poverty are unbearable”. And all the more so as, “for the first time in the history of mankind, the world has the capability, the knowledge and the resources to eliminate poverty”, he insisted. An opinion which seems to be widely shared, by government delegations as well as by non-governmental organizations. While Mr. Furtado Marcelo, representative of Greenpeace International, declared to the press that it was not possible to “wait another decade”, and that “the money and political will of developed countries have been cruelly lacking to promote sustainable development since Rio”, Mr. Klaus Topfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Program for Environment, stated also that “time has come to translate our political commitment into acts”. Here is at least a first consensus».

*World Summit, Johannesburg, Press release, August 26, 2002*

## 2.1. Introduction to systemic thinking

Whether it may sound curious, system theory and thermodynamics may help us to understand complex processes such as development or, in our particular case, tourism development. Systemic thinking will enlighten our view of hierarchical situations, control points, and the role of external and pace of inputs in the stability of any system.

Systems are defined by a set of elements that are interrelated amongst them, and they are so more than with others external to the system (there are no fully closed systems). In the scheme attached, concentrate only on the box framed in black labelled “system”, and see the figures (elements) and arrows (relations) inside. By the way; when some of these elements are living things, we speak of ecosystems, which are a very particular case of systems. When the position of elements is determined (fixed) and the relations among them as well, we speak of “machines”, with a predictable functioning. Machines are also a very particular case of systems. It is a big mistake to think that ecosystems behave like a machine; with no freedom. Tourism, seen a system, is also a rather flexible and freely system, not a mechanical and restricted system.

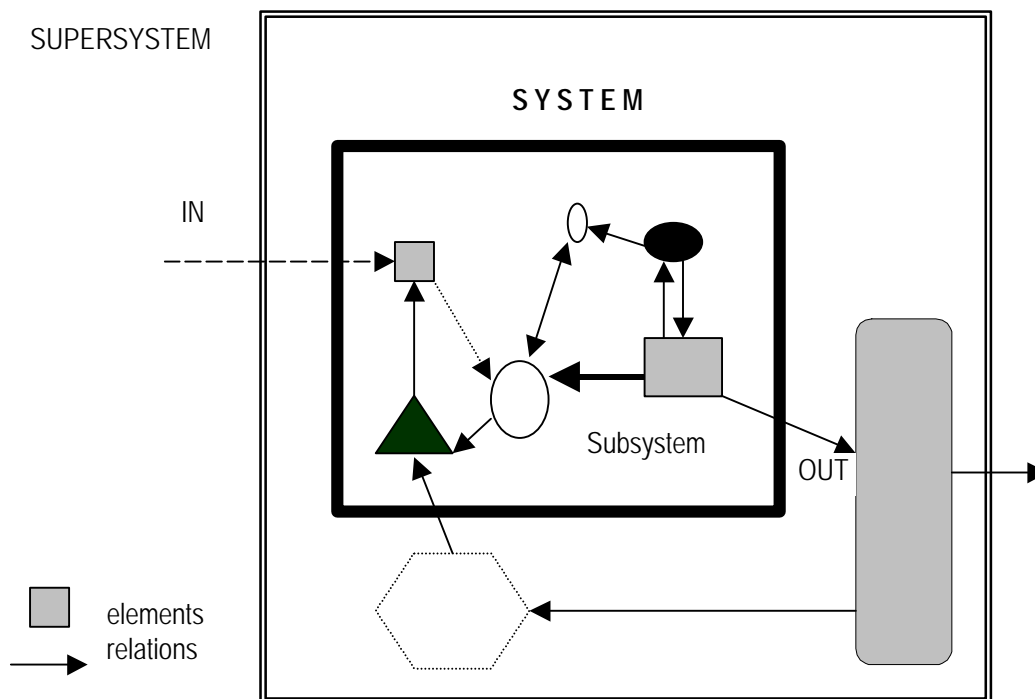


Figure 1. Basic concepts of system theory

Systems have no predefined scale. It is up to us to fix a particular scale. Our system, for instance, can be considered an element of a bigger system (double frame box); and this as an element of a larger one, and so on. It is a hierarchical structure. A system is included in a supersystem and is built up of subsystems.

But, in practical work, it is important to fix a level for a specific system: we call it “the system”. Questions are placed accordingly to each hierarchical level. It is a common mistake to try to find answers on the wrong level.

- Supersystem level = why does it exist (the reason or purpose of the system)
- System level = what is it (we define the system)
- Subsystem level = how does it work (the functioning of the system)

Systems behave in a specific manner according to the type of relations and elements involved (speed, connectivity). Ecosystems, for example, are complex systems that evolve in time, but changes in them may be smooth or abrupt according to the level of energy input.

From Physics thermodynamics and Ecology we know that if the energy input in a system increases, the functioning will speed up, but complexity (i.e. diversity) will decline. The more energy and disruption we introduce in a system, the more it will accelerate and become more simple. As a rule of thumb, think:

- “Hot systems”: High energetic systems are more speedy, become simpler, can maintain less information and are more fragile (vulnerable to changes imposed by outside factors). They are usually short living, changing and/or with a high turnover. Example: our digestive system (stomach cells renew every 5 days).
- “Cold systems”: Complex and less energetic systems have more information and are more stable (homeostatic, bigger resilience, etc.). They tend to hold longer in time. Example: our nervous system (neurons in the brain last one’s life).

Moreover, “cold” systems tend to accumulate information which is a property of systems which favours a more efficient material – energy exchange. When “cold” and “hot” systems are coupled, it is the “cold” system with more information which controls the hot system (i.e.i. brain – stomach).

These principles are valid for any system: biological, ecological, linguistic, economic or tourism. However, they have to be applied with prudence when analysing complex man-defined systems --like countries— or extracting political consequences out of them. In man generated economic systems –like tourism–, the input of money has equivalent effects to energy input in natural ecosystems.

To remember: the amount and rate of inputs of energy/money and matter are crucial in maintaining a system in shape; thus, keeping it sustainable.

## **2.2. The tourism system: elements, fluxes and control points**

The tourism system is a rather complex one as are typically market systems in modern globalised society. In figure 2 a scheme of a mature tourism system is represented. There are two clearly differentiated subsystems: the host country (supply) and the outside demand. Relations between their elements are shown by arrows.

The tourism industry comprises some key elements (actors and scenario):

**Tourists.** There are many operational definitions. A reasonable one is a person who travels out of home (his normal residential or working/ studying place) for leisure and who stays away for one or more nights. When you travel for enjoyment spending money instead of for professional reasons and making money, you are a tourist.

**Attractions.** Attractions are a physical or cultural feature of a particular place that a tourist feel meets an aspect of their curiosity or leisure needs. Attractions are the main motivators for tourist trips (but not exclusively) and are the core of the tourist product. In our scheme, attractions are at the bottom, “Natural and Cultural Resources” of the host country subsystem. A region must have an attraction or attractions to be a tourist destination. Without attractions there would be no need for other tourism services.

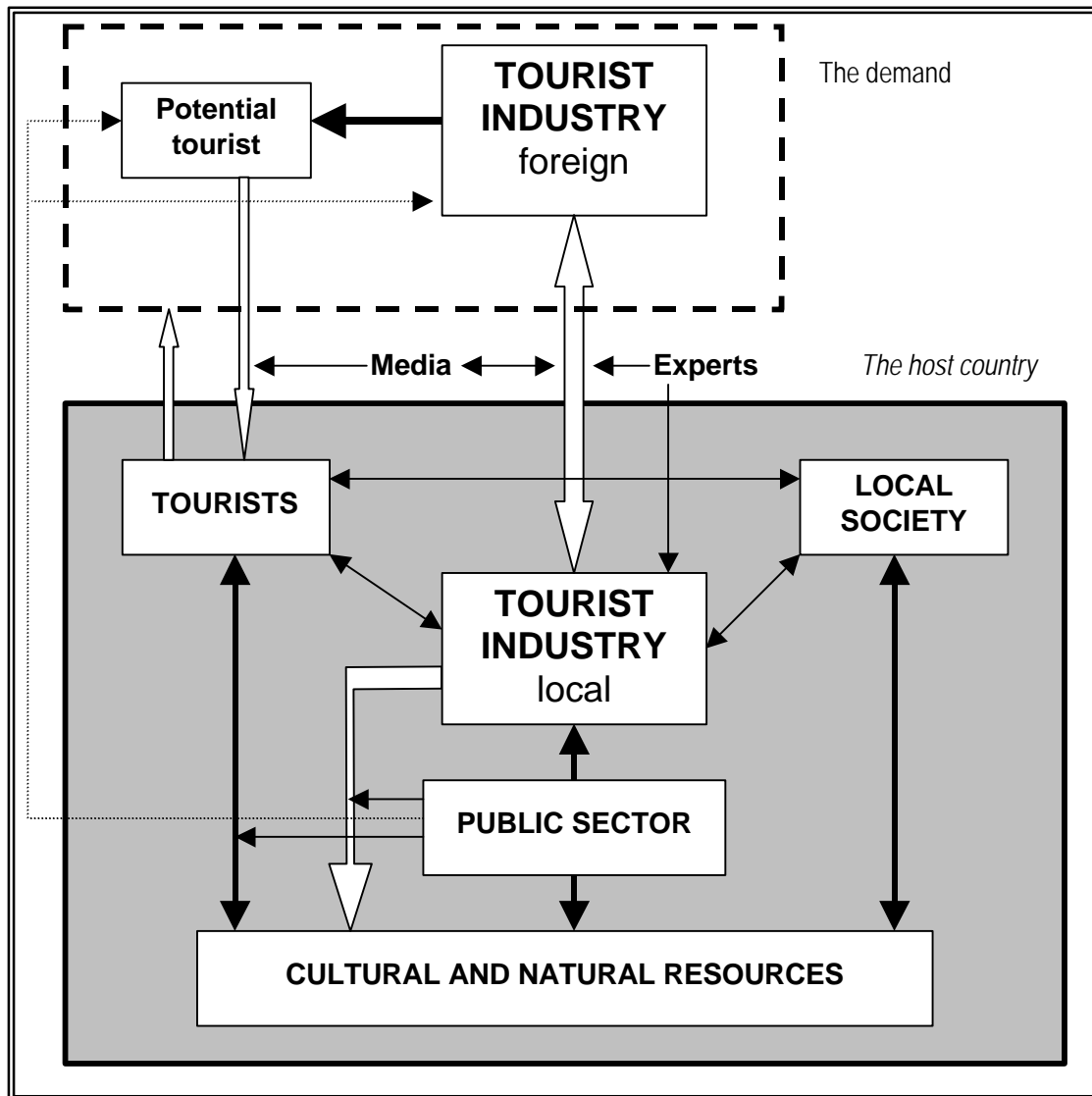


Figure 2. Scheme of a mature tourism system  
(dotted arrow = promotions)

**Tourist industry.** I first include in this concept those companies and traders that directly make money out of the tourists.

- Tour operators (mostly international companies, but also retail travel)
- Transport operators (airlines, etc.)
- Hospitality sector (accommodation, restaurants, etc.)
- Detail operators (museum visits, whale watching, rent-a-car, etc.)

In a second step, one would include those companies and traders that make money out of the previous group. Such actors indirectly linked to the tourist industry may be of utmost importance and have a strong influence in the whole system. For instance, developers build the hotels and other service facilities that are usually sold and then managed by someone else as a tourism operation. Their business perspectives are different and they become often a somewhat hidden but crucial component of the tourist industry.

The grade of economic dependence of a specific service industry from tourism may vary. In many cases, tourists are not the main customers, but local or business people<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, many hoteliers and restaurants do not regard themselves as part of the tourist industry for the purposes of devising their business strategy.

**The local society.** The host community participates in the tourist system in many ways: by providing manpower and/or capital, by supporting many of the attractions or being an attraction itself, and as recipients of the positive and negative socio-economic impacts of tourism. Their involvement in the planning and regulation of tourism is commonly low or happens only at a small scale. However, the aim of increasing its participation in decision making processes is a general accepted component of sustainable tourism.

**The media.** The media play an important role in influencing consumer behaviour and are a vital component in the dynamics of the tourist system. Nonetheless, not only marketing processes rely heavily on media, but competitive strategies, education programmes and even policy decisions are influenced by them. For the good or the bad, media are known to distort the free market law of supply and demand.

**The experts.** Academics, co-operants and other experts (consultants) are permanent or occasional elements in the tourist system, with a qualitative influence. However, most consultants are from developed countries, although much of their work takes place in developing countries. Local people may think that the concern of foreigners about tourism in their countries is just about enhancing the quality of the holiday experience for tourists of the northern hemisphere. Obviously, there may be cases where this cynical approach is true, but fair international cooperation in tourism is a growing field of international assistance. Foreign experts are usually good helping in understanding the problems, but solutions normally come from the local experts.

**The public sector.** The Public sector has a role in promoting, regulating and planning tourism. This role may vary enormously in approaches and achievements. There is in Europe, at least, scepticism about central state planning. Public sector bodies do not own or control many of the key relations of the tourism systems. Trans-national corporations have a growing power, and an area of influence extended beyond the geographical boundaries of any government. Speed of public action or reaction and speed of tourism development (booms, etc.) do rarely match each other and dysfunction is the normal result. For all these reasons, the partnership approach (public-private) is gaining popularity in recent years.

\* \*

#### The game of powers

Different parts of the tourist system have different interests. Each one will strive for its interest in a power struggle. As a result, the system will organise itself with some actors playing a major role than others; like animals in a jungle. Few people would have an overview of all the factors and there is no global referee or "king" ruling over the whole system. However, it is important to realise that the tourist industry is present on both subsystems (supply and demand) and in many cases there are strong links between the local and foreign sectors (the same investors or companies, holdings, etc.). Money is very powerful and economic benefits concentrate in the tourist industry. Thus, there is a tendency of the latter to concentrate power and, in general, the public sector is only

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Pacific Asia Travel Association, the tourism income derived from international tourism linked to sightseeing is only 3,3% in Hong Kong and 21,4% in the Philippines.

a minor player with little real control over most of the tourism product. Exceptions are normally at small scale or when the tourism development process is tackled from the very beginning by the public sector with a strong political commitment and support.

### 2.3. The emergence of environmental awareness in tourism

As the negative impacts of mass tourism on the environment became evident from the 1960s onwards, the public sector reacted by trying to ameliorate the worst excesses of tourism in the short term. Visitor management and carrying capacity were novel concepts in the 70's and were later supported by the emerging green movement. There is no question that the marketplace is becoming "greener" or more environmentally sensitive, both in terms of awareness and in its desire to contribute through its effort a more sensitive approach to numerous activities and purchases (Wight 1993). The greening of tourism initiated in the late 80's but it was all about reducing the environmental impacts of tourism. It was really a reactive approach focusing just on environmentally friendly ways of tourism<sup>3</sup>.

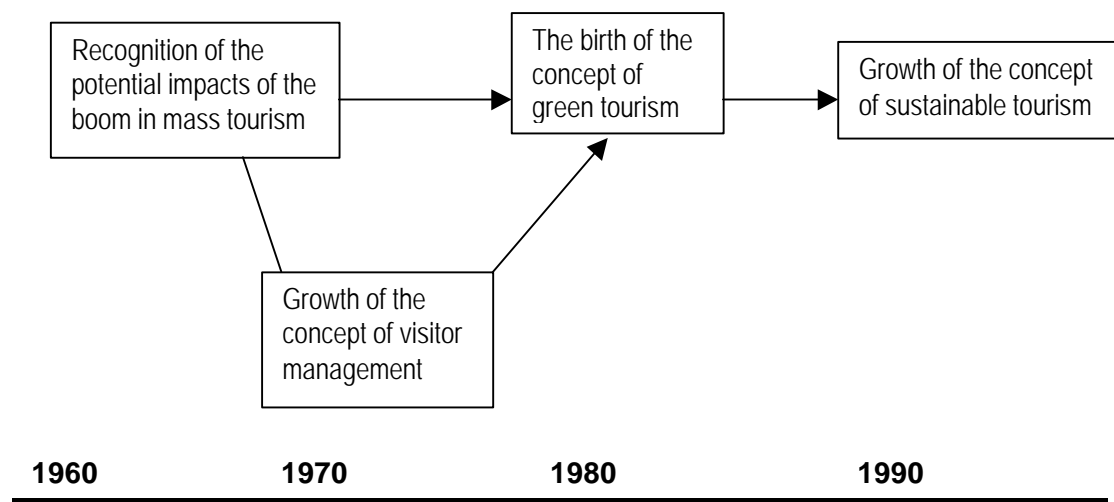


Fig. 3. The chronological development of the concept of sustainable tourism (after Swarbrooke, 1998)

Early in the 90's, academics and practitioners began to consider the implications of the Brundtland report in their own industry. The concept of sustainability was transferred to tourism. Besides environmentally friendly development, it encompasses an approach to tourism which recognises the importance of the host community, the way staff are treated and the desire to maximise the economic benefits of tourism for the host community. In other words, sustainable tourism is not just about protecting the environment: it is also concerned with long-term economic viability and social justice. Sustainable tourism cannot be separated from the wider debate about sustainable development in general and is, by definition, pro-active.

At present, there are very few examples of successful sustainable tourism initiatives and the social debate is still open with sensitive ethical and political implications as referred in the introduction of this chapter. In the academic field, sustainable tourism is advancing due to several key books<sup>4</sup> and the advocacy activity of many NOG,s. In

<sup>3</sup> See "Green Paper on Tourism", published by the European Union in 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Wood, K. and House, S. 1991. *The Good Tourist*. Mandarin, London.-- Elkington, J. and Hailes, J. 1992. *Holidays that don't cost the Earth*. Victor Gollancz, London.--Bramwell, B. et al. (eds), 1996. *Sustainable tourism management. Principles and practices*. CAB International,



most developed countries, sustainable development is in the political discourse, but with scarce effects in the implementation agenda. Progress towards more sustainable forms of tourism have depend far more on the activities of the industry and the attitudes of tourists, than on the actions of public sector bodies. However, I believe that in developing countries there is a chance to make it different.

#### **2.4. Tourism modalities in the context of sustainability**

Tourism can be practiced in many different ways and places, giving raise to a rich terminology. Some of them have developed to be real market sectors or tourism brands. The list that follows is not complete, but sufficient to give an idea of the manifold scenarios. Most of the terms are self-explanatory.

##### According to the place

- Mountain tourism
- Island tourism
- Beach /coastal
- Nature tourism
- Rural tourism
- Urban tourism

##### According to the tourist motivation

- Three "S" tourism (sun, sea and sand)
- Cultural tourism
- Scientific & congress tourism
- Sex tourism
- Agro tourism
- Nature tourism (incl. birdwatching, etc.)
- Sport /activity tourism (incl. adventure tourism)

##### According to how it is practiced

- Mass tourism
- Exclusive tourism
- Luxury tourism
- "Bubble" tourism
- Ecotourism
- Sustainable tourism

**Bubble tourism** (all-inclusive or self-contained) refers to some destinations –normally luxury resorts—that are placed in a region with minimum contact with the local society or economy. Manpower and supplies are brought from abroad. Tourist live “encapsulated” in the tourist area where they find all they need. The land is a mere passive support of the activity, like a chessboard.

**Ecotourism** is a growing market since the buzzword entered the scenario in the 1990s. It is an idealized form of nature-based tourism encompassing education of the tourist, maximizing benefits to the local community (with increasing participation), and encouraging dedication to the pursuit of sustainability. In other words, ecotourism incorporates both a strong commitment to nature and a sense of social responsibility. It can be considered as a form of sustainable tourism based on nature and/or ethnic resources. There is abundant literature on ecotourism and many examples of good experiences. (s. Lindberg & Hawkings, 1993).

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Wallingford. --.Swarbrooke, J., 1999. *Sustainable tourism management*. Cabi International, London.

**Sustainable tourism** has been defined in several ways and there is no widely accepted definition (see box). There are also a set of concepts which more or less closely approach the idea of sustainability: alternative tourism, responsible tourism, soft tourism, minimum impact tourism, environmentally friendly tourism, etc.

Definitions of sustainable tourism

*Forms of tourism which meet the needs of tourist, the tourism industry, and host communities today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

*Tourism which is economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community*

It appears that certain types of tourism are viewed as being inherently more sustainable than others. For instance, coastal tourism or 3-S tourism as known in most countries has demonstrated to be non-sustainable. The case, however, is that almost all types of tourism can grow to a mass scale, including cultural or natural tourism and therefore becoming non sustainable (i.e. overcrowded safaris in Kenya). On the other hand, most modalities of tourism can be softened and made more sustainable by introducing qualitative or quantitative changes (see section 3).

TABLE I. TYPES OF TOURISM ACCORDING TO THEIR COMPATIBILITY WITH THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

<i>Highly compatible</i>	<i>Most incompatible</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecotourism</li> <li>• Cultural tourism which involves visitors learning about the history and culture of an area</li> <li>• Urban attractions which provide new uses for derelict sites</li> <li>• Small-scale rural agro-tourism</li> <li>• Conservation holidays where tourist do conservation work during their vacations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mass market coastal tourism</li> <li>• Activity holidays which have a negative impact on the physical environment (skiing, off-road vehicles, etc.)</li> <li>• Sex tourism which leads to the spread of infection such as HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases</li> <li>• Hunting and fishing holidays in places where the activity is poorly regulated.</li> <li>• Visiting very fragile environments such as rain forests and the Antarctic</li> </ul>

(Source: Swarbrooke, 1998)

A final word of caution. The term “ecotourism” has been co-opted as an advertising gimmick by a range of operators and seems to have a confused image with many consumers. The same can be said, mutatis mutandis, about the term “sustainability” and their use by irresponsible politicians.

**2.5. Tourist motivation.**

The tourist industry is dominated by marketing, and research has largely focused on estimating demand. While tourism does involve selling normal commodities, the core product that people are ultimately seeking is an experience, consisting in activities

rather than things. Fortunately, the number of surveys about why people choose the holiday experiences they do is growing in number. The motivation of a tourist is not unique, but a mix of several factors which may vary greatly, and are largely influenced by the media (marketing, promotion campaigns, cinema, etc.).

TABLE II. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF A HOLIDAY DESTINATION

TOURISTS IN SPAIN		JAPANESE OVERSEAS TRIPS	
beautiful landscape	51%	enjoy nature	72%
unspoilt nature	43%	see famous tourist attractions	56%
water quality	27%	taste local food	48%
air quality	22%	enjoy shopping	43%
old customs	16%	rest and relax	38%
architecture	13%	experience a different culture	36%
		visit museums	31%
		stay in famous hotels	22%

(Source: Braithwaite, 2001)

Non-environmental factors, like security (incl. health risks) or economic costs are always important decision elements, less influenced by fashion. Tourist prefer travelling in stable countries. Tourism in Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Peru, Rwanda, and Nepal has decreased during periods of instability.

It would be necessary to dip more in the psychological network that underpins decisions taken by tourists. To go out of our working place (evasion) is a strong and basic reason. Wilderness is not really valued by itself, but the experiences it produces: feelings of awe, experiences of beauty. The seeking for something "authentic", is fostering the demand for untouched or non-common destinations. The increase of third-world destinations is probably linked to this attitude and not fully understood by the tourist industry. Tourist arrivals in the Asia/Pacific region have grown at double the world average rate (15%, compared with 7,3%) in the 1950-1991 period. The expectation for the twenty-first century are even higher.

One has to accept that sustainability of activities is not a motivation for tourist itself, at most, a bonus or added value. However, in some countries the environmental consciousness is growing fast. A survey in 1996 reflected that only in Australia, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom there is a majority of people saying that economics should give way to environment when there is a serious conflict.

## 2.6. *Tourist carrying capacity*

The concept of carrying capacity is a must in the sustainable tourism debate (v. Baretje 1997). It was borrowed from agriculture to help understand how much people (tourists, visitors) a piece of land can support without collapsing. It is an easy concept when speaking of cows in a meadow: the maximum number of animals is limited by the renewal regime of the grass. But humans are complex animals with a thinking brain and one should distinguish several types of carrying capacity.

- **Physical.** The number of tourists a place can physically accommodate (i.e. stadium capacity). In theory, you can place 4 person standing on a square meter (a bit uncomfortable, indeed)
- **Ecological.** The number of tourists that are supported by the resources of a place without causing damage to the environment. Some authors consider only the last condition-- not causing environmental damage-- admitting external inputs.

- **Psychological.** The number of tourists that a place can hold before psychical stress arises (among tourist or with the local population). Cows do not have this problem.

We are speaking of tourist carrying capacity, but it is obvious that the real carrying capacity depends on all people present, tourists and locals. When referring to a place, this can be a recreation facility, a village, a valley, an island or a region at any scale.

In addition to the three basic types of carrying capacity, some authors (e.g. Page & Dowling 2001; Swarbrooke 1998) extend the concept to other fields:

- **Economic.** The number of tourists that can be welcomed before the local community starts to suffer economic problems, e.g. increased housing values and land prices.
- **Social.** The number of tourists beyond which social disruption or irrevocable cultural damage will occur.

Furthermore, the capacity to accommodate tourists in a destination depends on the infrastructure available. In this case, it is better to speak of **reception capacity** better than of infrastructure carrying capacity. Reception capacity is easy to measure in terms of accommodation units or “beds” (every single tourist needs to overnight) and it is commonly used to size the capacity of destinations.

Ecological and psychological carrying capacities are good and useful concepts but difficult to put into practice. Criticism abounds. Damage does not occur sudden, but is gradual. Psychological stress is very subjective and related to cultural idiosyncrasies. Ecological studies normally require long term follow-ups. Every locality has its peculiarities and it is unlikely that the carrying capacity will be the same in any two places. Moreover, the carrying capacity of a given place can be modified by visitor management schemes or introducing adequate technologies. It is not absolute.

Nonetheless, in some cases and conditions ecological or psychological carrying capacity can be estimated by trial and error (with a monitoring program) or be inferred from comparing equivalent scenarios. Environmental impact studies have also helped to size carrying capacities in specific projects, but these are costly and not free from criticism.

In section 5.4 I will present an empirical formula used to define carrying capacity in island environments (Canaries and Baleares).

### 3. How to make tourism more sustainable

By now, we should have an idea of the concept of sustainable tourism and the general principles backing it. It should be ecologically possible, socially acceptable and economically rentable. To better understand how this ideas apply in reality it is worth looking at some of the problems that reduce sustainability, and to compare between what is considered sustainable and what is not. Thereafter follows a brief relation of some actions that the different actors can promote to make the tourism system more sustainable.

#### 3.1. *The pros and cons of tourism*

Tourism in itself cannot be either idolised or condemned. There are pros and cons. The negative side of tourism arises basically from the way it is developed in space and time. There are many places around the world where tourism has run out of control and generated a lot of problems and very few benefits for the local community. The literature dealing with these calamities is enormous. Good reviews are to be found in Mieczkowski (1995) and Liddle (1997). Many people think that tourism, fostered by the tourist industry, will irrevocably end in a mess if there is no public control.

*«Tourism has now reached that inevitable point where it begins to destroy the beauty it is in search of»*

*Sunday Telegraph, 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1977*

Many substances are not bad by themselves. It is the dose we take that generate the problems. A glass of wine during dinner is digested without causing problems and is good and tasty drink for our body. But six glasses of wine in half an our would have terrible consequences on our physiological and neuronal system. Alcohol cannot be destroyed by the liver at such a rate. It is a question of dose. The same idea can be applied to tourism in many situations. The dose (quantity over time) at which money or tourists enter a given system can exceed its resilience and it will provoke misbalances and overgrowth of some parts at the expense of others.

The negative or positive impacts we are listing here are not necessarily obliged. They will depend on the dose of tourism, as commented above, on the regulating and controlling capacity of the public sector in the host country, and on the self-control of the tourist industry.

#### 3.2. *The environmental impact*

Positive impacts of tourism on the environment are normally linked to conservation policy issues. It can provide a motivation for the Administration to establish protected areas and wildlife refuges because of their value as a tourism resource. This is particular important in developing countries. In rural environments, agro-tourism can keep farms viable by providing a vital extra income, thus preventing the desertification of agrarian landscapes. Tourists that are conscious of biodiversity and nature values, can also promote environmental awareness in the local population. Urban tourism can provide new uses for derelict buildings in towns and cities, through the development of new visitor facilities.

In the majority of cases, the negative impacts of tourism on the natural environment surmount the positive ones. Nonetheless, to be honest one has to judge the overall results with the balance of social and economic impacts. Otherwise, tourism would be a non-desirable activity.

Table III shows a summary of the main potential negative impacts of tourism on the natural environment. There is a need, indeed, for regulatory legislation and a system of land-use planning and building control to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the environment. Conversely, it is also convenient to stimulate the creation of positive outcomes.

TABLE III POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF TOURISM ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

<i>Impact aspect</i>	<i>Potential consequence</i>
Water and air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water pollution through discharges of sewage, spillages of oil/petrol</li> <li>• Eutrophication and algal blooms</li> <li>• Air pollution from airplanes and vehicle emissions, combustions of fuels for heating and lighting.</li> </ul>
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compaction of solid causing increased surface run-off</li> <li>• Damage to geological features (braking, scratching, etc.)</li> <li>• New uncontrolled paths created when crowding happens</li> </ul>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat destruction (terrestrial or marine) through clearance or planning to accommodate tourist facilities</li> <li>• Disruption of breeding habitat; disturbance of wildlife</li> <li>• Trampling and damage to vegetation by feet and vehicles</li> <li>• Alteration of vegetation and floral composition through the gathering of wood, plants and seeds.</li> <li>• Killing of animals in order to supply goods for the souvenir trade</li> <li>• Introduction of exotic species (see below)</li> </ul>
Natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over-hunting or over-fishing of species (see below)</li> <li>• Depletion of ground and surface water supplies</li> <li>• Depletion of fossil fuels to generate energy for tourist activity</li> <li>• Depletion of mineral resources for building materials</li> <li>• Change in risk of occurrence of wildfires</li> <li>• Change in hydrological patterns</li> <li>• Competing for land with other productive land uses (agriculture; fisheries, etc.)</li> </ul>
Perceptual environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise pollution from tourist transportation and activities</li> <li>• Litter plus abandoned rubble generated during construction</li> <li>• Visual impact of advertisements (many in foreign language)</li> <li>• Visual impact of disrupting facilities or buildings</li> </ul>

(partially based on Hunter and Green 1996)

Exotic species are species that do not belong to the local fauna or flora. They may be voluntary or inadvertently introduced by tourist (e.g., seeds attached to boots) or with the goods and other provisions that are imported from other regions. Some of these exotics may be invasive and have a strong impact on the local fauna and flora (specially predators or pests). With the increasing modern communication the problem of exotic invasive species is spreading and posing serious problems to the preservation of biodiversity worldwide. The impact is more severe in fragile ecosystems or in island ecosystems where the local endemics are in permanent threat because of potential exotics. The majority of bird species known to have become extinct in historical times are islands endemics. Tourist should be briefed about this issue.

Fishing, hunting or collecting specimens as a souvenir, may be directly done by the tourist. Normally, overexploitation of local fauna and vegetation is due to the local people from the purpose of feeding or providing souvenirs for tourist. Hunting safaris or fishing vacations are still a healthy market in some destinations, but declining in the overall scenario. Non-consumptive use of fauna is revealing to be far more profitable and sustainable. Scuba-diving, bird watching or photo-safaris are getting more and more popular.



### **3.3. The social impact**

It is surprising that the social impact of tourism has been receiving less attention than the environmental impact. Only recently, ethical aspects of development are starting to be in the debate.

Different cultures meet; that of the guests (several, in many cases) and that of the host society. The balance of positive and negative impacts on the host society depends on factors related to the local society itself: for instance, the strength and cohesion of its culture, the level of its economic and social development in relation to the tourist, and, of course, on the nature of tourism in the resort. Major problems occur normally in destinations in developing countries being visited by tourists from developed countries and where the public sector gives free rein to the tourist industry.

If not tempered, host-guest relations tend to evolve from initial open hospitality, through a gentle segregation to end --in the worst situations-- in rejection and xenophobia. It is not an easy matter to handle. Local people are exposed to the tourist life styles and that has an impact on the expectations and life style of local people. This «demonstration effect» (Mathieson and Wall, 1982) can be advantageous if it encourages local people to adapt or work for things they lack. But it usually detrimental when the idiosyncrasy of the locals is changed by the replacement of their values with alien or globalisation standards. Social alienation and erosion of traditional culture is the expected result.

Very often, the commodities developed for tourists remain painstakingly beyond reach for the host, thus, generating discontent. Moreover, if the pressure of tourism is strong and tourist facilities spread over the region, locals may find few places (i.e. beaches) where to stay or relax “as before”. Tourists are starting to be seen by one sector of the local people as invaders of their land. The other sector values more the economical benefits and labour opportunities that tourism provides, even silencing an internal sense of “prostitution”. The host society jumps into a sort of schizophrenia with unpleasant internal tensions.

Swarbrooke (1977) has summarized some of the main impacts of tourism in societies and cultures in two columns (positive and negative); see table IV. It is a rather subjective issue but he claims to reflect the conventional wisdom in the sustainable tourism literature.

TABLE IV. THE MAIN POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM O HOST CULTURES AND SOCIETIES

	Largely beneficial	Largely negative
<b>Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improvement in the quality of museum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>construction of buildings using non-traditional architectural styles.</li> <li>theft of artefacts by tourists</li> <li>ensorship of heritage stories so as not to upset tourist</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>greater interest in conserving traditional languages if they are seen as an attraction for tourist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduction of foreign words into vocabulary</li> <li>pressure on local languages if tourists are unable or unwilling to converse with staff in these languages</li> </ul>
<b>Religion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>growth in respect for the host community’s religion from tourist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>loss of spirituality at religious sites that become dominated by tourists</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional arts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development of new markets for traditional crafts and art forms</li> <li>renaissance of traditional art forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pressure to replace traditional crafts with other products which tourists demand</li> <li>trivialization /modification of traditional art forms to meet desires of tourists</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional lifestyles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased awareness of lifestyles elsewhere in the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>danger of transition from self-sufficiency to dependency</li> <li>growing influence of foreign media</li> <li>new eating habits, e.g. fast food</li> </ul>
<b>Values and behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopt positive aspects of tourist values and behaviour such as in the case of the treatment of animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>growth in crime</li> <li>loss of dignity as forced to behave in a servile manner towards tourists</li> <li>reduce level of personal morality</li> </ul>
<b>Host population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in-migration of dynamic people to live and/or work in the community</li> <li>reduce depopulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>domination of the community by immigrants from outside the community</li> </ul>

(Source, Swarbrooke 1998)



### **3.4. The economic impact**

Tourism is the major industry and foreign currency earner in many developing countries. Thus, tourism is widely seen as an important option for economic recovery, but not only in developing countries.

The European Union increasingly views tourism as a better option than agriculture subsidy for adjusting for prosperity between regions. The EU's regional policy is increasingly focused on the role of tourism in socioeconomic development and the need to encourage responsible use of local resources for tourism. Economically disadvantaged rural areas are encouraged to develop ecotourism activities. Approximately 40% of the total budget (\$1755 million, EU contribution) for the EU initiative called Leader II will be made available to develop rural tourism. Many Leader projects combine rural tourism activities with the protection of indigenous species and marketing based on protected areas (Braithwaite, 2001).

Tourism brings both economic benefits and economic costs, but one has to take account of the fact that the costs and benefits are different for different people. A recent UN report on tourism in least-developed countries notes that, on average, 55 percent of tourism expenditures remain outside the host countries. In terms of sustainability, one has to emphasize the benefits for the host community. Otherwise, we are placing the host community at the service of tourism, and not tourism at the service of the host community (this happens frequently). The end balance will depend also on the time frame used for the evaluation. Short term benefits may well turn in higher costs in a few years (normally "charged" to the public sector in terms of infrastructure).

Much has been written about the shortcomings of our econometric methods to incorporate values of the common, such as those of natural resources (air, water, wildlife, etc.). The new field of ecological economics is trying to find solutions, but they are still pending. Important is to keep in mind that figures of tourist economic revenues been talked about are basically misleading. The so-called "externalities" have not been accounted for, and if they would have been integrated, a very different balance and scenario would result.

The impact of tourism varies much according to the "dose" of money entering the system (see section 3.1), and the strength of the local economy and public sector, particularly, that of the fiscal and tax collecting mechanisms.

Positive economic impacts of tourism:

- Job creation; if for local people and for long-term, the more, the better.
- Injection of income into the local economy through the multiplier effect
- Helping keep local businesses viable
- Regeneration and restructuring of the economies of towns and cities where other industrial activities are in decline
- Stimulates endogenous and industrial investment

Negative economic impacts of tourism:

- Many jobs are low paid and/ or seasonal (often, in illegal conditions)
- The need of the public sector to invest in expensive infrastructure
- Over-heating of local economies (e.g. fostering real-state speculation)
- Good opportunities to launder black-money
- Favours /facilitates corruption
- Increase in prices in cost of living in general (housing, water, etc.).
- Over-dependence on tourism which makes the host economy vulnerable to changes in the tourist market.

### 3.5. Sustainable versus non-sustainable tourism

In the context of the impacts above discussed and to further fix the concept of sustainable tourism, it is worth confronting those aspects that several authors (i.e. Krippendorf 1982, Lane 1990, Hunter and Green 1994, Godfrey 1996, Swarbrooke 1998) consider to be sustainable against those which are not.

TABLE V. SUSTAINABLE VERSUS NON-SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

More sustainable	Less sustainable
<u>General concepts</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow development</li> <li>• Controlled development</li> <li>• Appropriate scale</li> <li>• Long term aimed</li> <li>• Qualitative approach</li> <li>• Seeks optimizing</li> <li>• Local controlled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid development</li> <li>• Uncontrolled development</li> <li>• Inappropriate scale</li> <li>• Short term aimed</li> <li>• Quantitative approach</li> <li>• Seeks maximizing</li> <li>• Remote controlled</li> </ul>
<u>Development strategies</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning first, then develop</li> <li>• Concept-led schemes</li> <li>• Holistic approach</li> <li>• Whole region concerned</li> <li>• Pressure and benefits diffused</li> <li>• Year around, balanced</li> <li>• Local developers</li> <li>• Locals employed</li> <li>• Vernacular architecture</li> <li>• Targeted promotion /marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No planning, improvisation</li> <li>• Project-led schemes</li> <li>• Sector approach</li> <li>• Concentration on “honey-pots”</li> <li>• Idem concentrated</li> <li>• Seasonal, with high peaks</li> <li>• Outside developers</li> <li>• Imported labour</li> <li>• “Tourist cliché” architecture</li> <li>• Random promotions /marketing</li> </ul>
<u>Resources</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimize use of water /energy</li> <li>• Promotes recycling</li> <li>• Minimizes waste</li> <li>• Food produced locally</li> <li>• Legal money</li> <li>• Qualified manpower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water /energy wasted</li> <li>• Non-recycling</li> <li>• No care of waste production</li> <li>• Food imported</li> <li>• “Black” money (undeclared)</li> <li>• Unqualified manpower</li> </ul>
<u>Tourists</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low number</li> <li>• With ad-hoc information</li> <li>• Learning local language</li> <li>• Deciding, demanding</li> <li>• Tactful and sensitive</li> <li>• No sex-market involvement</li> <li>• Quiet /discrete</li> <li>• Repeats visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High number (mass groups)</li> <li>• No special awareness</li> <li>• No learning of local language</li> <li>• Passive, dragged, conformist</li> <li>• Intensive, not considerate</li> <li>• Seeking paid sex (sex tourism)</li> <li>• Nosy /outrageous</li> <li>• Unlikely to repeat</li> </ul>

Examples of good practice are being compiled by several authors. There are not many and most of them are related to ecotourism (e.g. Lindberg & Hawkins, 1993), which, according to its philosophy, is closer to sustainability than other types of tourism. One

can learn and take ideas from good examples, although solutions may well be bound to very specific situations.

#### A bad example

Small-scale tourism development in Malaysia grew around picturesque fishing villages near beaches or on offshore islands. Initially, tourists were informal visitors, drifters or hippies spending long periods in the villages. Between the 1970s and the 1990s these small-scale resorts developed dramatically. Accommodation in many settlements grew up to 2000% in 20 years. On one island alone, accommodation increased by 500% over just 2 years. Development was unplanned and generating conflict over limited resources such as grazing land and water, and conflicting with rights of way. The depletion of marine habitats was severe. In 1984, more than half of the corals at Pulau Tioman were found to be damaged by boat anchors. The bacteria *E. coli* content in the coastal water exceeded the prescribed standard by 92 times. Construction of new accommodation units, including the process of site clearing and back filling was carried out on such a scale that resulted in the killing of many of the mature trees on the sites.

Hamzah, 1997

On the other hand, bad examples can also teach us by showing what should be avoided. Common factors arise, being speed of development probably the clearest symptom. However, speed is a result of the interaction of many other factors involved: political will or tolerance; global investment scenario; crisis in other sectors, etcetera. In any case, and if we recall the thermodynamic of systems explained in section 2.1, it is obvious that money plays a fundamental role in accelerating or cooling down the whole system. Money is needed for development, but is also the main cause of "misdevelopment". Money is not easy to handle and control, and Big money is even more complicated.

Corruption deserves a special attention. Corruption means whatever we do by or using bribery or fraudulent activity. It is an ethical based calamity that is spread over many human activities with more or less intensity, and with more or less repercussions. The case is that tourism has shown to be an activity particularly prone to generate corruption. I am not thinking in the few big scandals of corruption that are announced by the media to all and sundry, but on the almost daily minor corruptions that happen in myriads of transactions and activities, provoking unjust situation, lack of efficiency of most of the regulating measures, and, all in all, more acceleration in the system. Corruption, wherever it happens, is the woodworm of sustainability.

### **3.6. Actions by different stakeholders**

According to many authors (v. Swarbrooke, 1998) progress towards more sustainable forms of tourism will depend far more on the activities of the industry and the attitudes of tourists, than on the actions of public sector bodies. However, it is reasonable to think that development of tourism will not be optimal if it is left in the hands of private sector entrepreneurs, for they are primarily motivated by the profit and loss accounts. Protection of the environment may be first priority for a Ministry of the Environment, but will be seen by the tourist industry as only one of a range of important issues for tourism, but not of high priority. The same can be applied to local welfare. Whilst this is true, on the other hand, if tourism development is dominated by the public sector, then it is unlikely to be developed at an optimal rate from the economic point of view. One should not confuse a leading function with domination.

## The public sector

The key in sustainable tourism development is to give priority to planning for the public good rather than allowing private gain to be the main motivator of development. The public sector is the only one that can lead this endeavour.

Normal actions of the public sectors in relation to tourism are: specific legislation for tourism, land use planning, control of urban development, environmental impact assessment and development of infrastructures. If underpinned by sustainable development principles, all these actions are positive. However, more specific actions focusing on sustainable tourism initiatives can be undertaken.

- Combating corruption in the tourism business. Corruption is prevented by strong ethics, good official salaries, a free press and close control with strong penalties.
- Providing grants, interest-free loans and other fiscal incentives for sustainable tourist projects or sectors (e.g., rural tourism, ecotourism)
- Levying taxes on less sustainable activities (e.g., individual private cars to make tourist trips). Tourist normally do not pay the true full cost of their holidays, particularly in relation to the pollution they generate.
- Introducing special tourist taxes (for instance, a fix eco-tax) linked directly to investment in making tourism more sustainable. The purpose of the tax should be explained to the tourist.
- Promoting ad-hoc public transport. Not an easy task. Tourist enjoy the flexibility and freedom which using their own or rented car offers.
- Launching institutional campaigns for the education of the tourist.
- Fixing minimum wages or maximum working hours for the tourist sector.
- Setting or promoting environmental standards for tourist facilities. These include eco-audits<sup>5</sup>, labelling, etcetera.
- De-marketing. This consists in discouraging rather than attracting tourist to destinations that are over-visited. "Please, go somewhere else" (Ashworth 1992). There are many actions that would cool down the flow of tourists: reducing the number of brochures and advertisements, cancelling promotion trips, increasing taxes, informing about congestion in the resorts, raising prices, etcetera.

## The tourist industry

Too many hopes have been placed in the tourist industry as the main catalyst agent of sustainable development. Long term views and plans are uncommon in small business. Only the big enterprises and transnational corporations tend to plan quite in advance for gaining competitive advantages. And a good environmental image, is one of them.

The main bulk of the tourist industry is more reactive than proactive. It will renew or adopt more sustainable forms of operating only if forced by the regulations or pushed by demanding customers. Nonetheless and to be fair, much of the positive change in many activities in several countries are to be credited to the initiatives of big tour operators. They have fixed environmental standards and given their clients (hotels, travel companies, etc.) some time to adapt. Otherwise, they would take their clients to

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<sup>5</sup> The European Council Regulation (EC no. 836/93) establishes the «Eco-Management and Audit Scheme» (EMAS) allowing voluntary participation by companies in the industrial sector in a Community eco-management and audit scheme.

other resorts. Despite many initiatives are just mere cosmetic, results are growing smoothly. The only sad part of these approaches is that, whilst speaking of sustainability (see textbox), tour-operators concentrate mainly on the environmental side and not --or anecdotally-- on the social side. Environment is part of their end selling-product (marketing strategy); local welfare, not.

#### **The Tour Operator's Initiative (TOI) for Sustainable Tourism Development**

We are Tour Operators concerned about the impact of our tours and activities. We recognise our responsibility to develop and operate in a manner that makes a positive contribution to the natural, social and cultural environment. We also recognise and accept our responsibility to operate in ways that reduce environmental impacts, benefit host communities, safeguard the future livelihood of local people, and ensure the protection of destinations for future generations.

To fulfil this responsibility, we have joined together to work in close partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO/OMT).

In doing so, we commit in this initiative to:

- protect the natural environment and cultural heritage;
- cooperate with local communities and people, ensure they benefit from the visits of our customers and encourage our customers to respect the local way of life; conserve plants and animals, protected areas and landscapes; respect the integrity of local cultures and their social institutions;
- comply with local, national and international laws and regulations;
- oppose and actively discourage illegal, abusive or exploitative forms of tourism;
- work closely with business partners, local authorities, regional and national governments and other organizations to achieve sustainable development of tourism;
- provide information on our activities to develop and encourage the sustainable development and management of tourism; communicate our progress in implementing this commitment.

We also acknowledge that we cannot achieve our goal of sustainable tourism development without the help of all stakeholders, including our customers, and we hope that, together, we can create a better tourism experience for all.

Voluntary industry action in sustainable initiatives will be stimulated as the emerging results of the pioneering colleagues<sup>6</sup> demonstrate the competitive advantages. Usual measures that are promoted are:

- Adopting environmental management systems
- Reducing energy and water consumption
- Reducing waste and allowing the recycling of waste
- Informing suppliers and subcontractors of their own environmental requirements, and prioritising the use of environmentally-friendly products and services.
- Giving preference to local labour

<sup>6</sup> Well-known pioneer initiatives are, notably: the International Hotels Environmental Initiative, the environmental programme of the tour operator TUI and the activities of British Airways, such as the sponsorship of the «Tourism for Tomorrow Awards», and the donation of free travel to those involved in conservation projects.

- Staff permanent training in environmental management
- Using local /traditional styles
- Using local flora for gardening and reducing pesticides
- Consuming local products
- Giving ecotips and advice in brochures for customers
- Lobbying at the host government to improve environment quality
- Sponsoring research into impacts and management of tourism

### The host community

Developing a sense of responsibility for the core tourist product from all sectors in the system, may well prove to be the best investment in sustainable tourism. To gain awareness in the host community is of particular relevance. Nationals of the destination country are the only legitimated people to demand whatsoever from the public sector. Non governmental organisations may play an important role in advocating for and spreading the concept of sustainable tourism. Local NGO's should profit from collaborating with international institutions or NGO's active in this field.

#### International institutions active in sustainable tourism

Conservation International. 25001 M Street, NW, Suite 2000, Washington DC, United States. A general conservation oriented organisation with an innovative ecotourism program. Web page: [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org)

Foundation of Sustainable Development (Fundeso). Gran Vía 16, 4º izqda. 28013 Madrid, Spain. It promotes sustainable development in developing countries, based in the recognition of dignity, self-development and self-sufficiency of the communities involved. Web page: [www.fundeso.org](http://www.fundeso.org)

Green Globe 21. c/o WTTC, 20 Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7TT, UK. It is a worldwide environmental management and awareness programme launched by the WTTC in 1992. The prime objective is to provide low-cost, practical means for all travel and tourism companies to improve cultural and environmental practice. Web page: [www.greenglobe.org](http://www.greenglobe.org)

Responsible Tourism Network (RTN). Community Aid Abroad One World Tours, PO Box 34, Rundle Mall, Adelaide 5000, Australia. Web page: [www.caa.org.au/travel](http://www.caa.org.au/travel)

The Ecotourism Society. PO. Box, North Bennington, Vermont 05257-0755, United States. Web page: [www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org).

Tourism Concern. Stapleton House, 227-281 Holloway Rd., London N78HN, UK. It is a pressure group which works for responsible tourism, particularly in community tourism to ensure local people benefit from ecotourism and other forms of tourism. Web page: [www.oneworld.org/tourconcern](http://www.oneworld.org/tourconcern)

World Tourism Organisation (WTO). Capitán Haya 42, E-28020 Madrid, Spain. Intergovernmental organisation for tourism. Its mission is to develop tourism as a significant means of encouraging international peace and understanding, economic development and international trade. Web page: [www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org)

World Travel and Tourist Council (WTTC). 1-2 Queen Victoria Terrace, Souveraing Court, London E1W 3HA, UK. It is a global coalition of more than 90 chief executive officers from all sectors of the travel and tourism industry. One of its primary goals is to promote environmentally compatible developments (Agenda 21). Web page: [www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org)

A community that is aware of the problems related with tourism, has better opportunities to effectively fight cultural erosion and loss of idiosyncrasy. Without falling into chauvinism or exacerbated nationalism, it can accept tourism with dignity. Service does not mean servility. Standard tourist clichés (most from the Caribbean) and alienating products can be openly criticised. In other word, they can “resist”.

It is a widely extended principle of sustainable tourism, that tourism can only be sustainable if the local community is involved in tourism planning and management<sup>7</sup>. Whilst this may be true, it is far from being easy to achieve. Perhaps at small scales, a community based tourism can be developed with success. On a wider scenario, a community rarely speaks with one voice. Very often self-appointed groups or spokespeople take a prominence that is not democratically supported. Moreover, in the struggle of power at major scale, local communities rarely equal the capacities of the tourist industry (particularly of trans-national corporations). I agree with the saying “small is beautiful”, but big is powerful. For the sake of sustainable tourism, local communities should not be naïve.

### **Tourists**

In the debate of sustainable tourism, it is often forgotten or undervalued that tourist have also their rights. They honestly pay for having an experience. However, tourist are not very interested at present in the concept of sustainable tourism, beyond the natural concern over the quality of the environment in their own holiday resort. They tend to behave hedonistically and irresponsibly. Their rights should be balanced with responsibilities (extracted from Swarbrooke 1989, partially modified).

#### Tourist rights

- To be safe and secure from crime, terrorism and disease.
- Not to be discriminated against on the grounds of nationality, race, sex or disability.
- Not to be exploited by local businesses and individuals.
- To fair marketing of product through honest travel brochures and advertisements.
- To a safe and clean physical environment.
- To free and unrestricted movement providing that they cause no damage.
- To meet local people freely.
- To a courteous and competent service.

#### Tourist responsibilities

- Obeying local laws and regulations.
- Not taking part in activities which, in spite of not being illegal, are nevertheless widely condemned by society.
- Not deliberately offending local religious beliefs or cultural norms of behaviour.
- Not deliberately harming the local physical environment, animals and vegetation.
- To minimize the use of scarce local resources.
- Not to discard litter.
- To minimize noise (specially by night).

Efforts to educate potential tourists are plentiful, and general environmental awareness campaigns or even formal education, is not uncommon in developed countries. Of

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<sup>7</sup> Much has been written on how to involve the local community in tourism planning (e.g. Sweeting et al. 1999 ), but very often the guidelines and techniques proposed are too sophisticated for the practical reality.

course, there is an important thriving force in sustainable tourism if it finally crystallizes in an attitudinal change. As Dr Michael Iwand, Corporate Environmental Director of TUI-AG<sup>8</sup>, stated: “Environmental awareness is only a very vague indicator of a new lifestyle. The critical factor is ecological behaviour, the purchase-decision made at point-of-sale. That is the only thing that counts. We live in a turbo mass consumption society in which everyone is a customer—and the customer is king.”

A popular and effective way to reduce tourist impact is to provide them with brochures and codes of conduct. These are designed by tourism organisations very often in cooperation with local governments. The booklet «*Treading softly. A guide to eco-friendly travel in Vietnam*» is recent and an excellent example of this approach. Tour operators and travel companies are the best way to spread them out.

### Thomson Holiday Code

While here on holiday, you can help protect the environment and conserve natural resources by following our holiday code:

- **DON'T LITTER.** Discarded litter can be an eyesore, so please put yours in a bin.
- **SAVE WATER.** Please use sparingly and turn off taps after use.
- **SAVE ENERGY.** Always switch off lights and electrical or gas appliances when not in use.
- **FIRE KILLS.** So don't light picnic fires and please ensure cigarettes are properly extinguished.
- **QUIET PLEASE.** Loud noise can be annoying, so please keep it down.
- **PROTECT WILDLIFE.** Many animals are protected by law. Please don't buy souvenirs made of turtle shell, ivory, reptile skins, fur or exotic feathers.

Follow the Thomson Holiday Code:  
Take nothing away. Leave nothing behind.  
And, naturally, have a great time.

### A different marketing approach

Planning for tourism occurs in a number of forms: development, infrastructure, promotion and marketing. Marketing is the processes by which suppliers and destinations market products and services. There is a module in this Course dealing specifically with marketing and there is no issue in further developing this topic. Just two concrete remarks in relation with aiming more sustainable tourism:

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<sup>8</sup> TUI-AG is one of the world leading tour operators. In 2001 they moved around 22 million tourists from 15 European countries.



Awarding eco-labels is a recent technique that is being employed to support sustainable development in marketing tourism. The objective is to encourage those responsible for tourism to increase their environmental commitment and to provide the tourist with help in choosing destinations, hotels, etc. Eco-labels can be awarded for accommodation, sports, restaurants, beaches, recreational institutions and other commodities. There are three essential requirements for the labels to be successful:

- Informative criteria of high environmental standards. Optimally, all criteria should be quantifiable in order to allow objective measurement, follow up, and fair play.
- Transparent award structures. The entity awarding the eco-label should be totally independent from the recipient.
- High level of recognition amongst supplier and consumer. The credibility of the entity promoting the eco-label should be out of discussion. In many countries the governmental tourist departments are playing this role.

Official promotions. Governmental agencies involved in the outside tourist promotion of their country do normally spread information reflecting the goodness of the destination. They sell the bride randomly instead of placing efforts in searching for the ideal groom. Marketing agro-tourism, ecotourism or any other specialized tourism options should focus accurately on its market niche, adopting stratified approaches. It is important to avoid attracting non desirable tourists that would distort the planned offer.

\* \*

Host countries should jealously guard their uniqueness and authenticity. This two attributes are their main selling points that differentiates them from other destinations. In developing countries, there is still the chance to plan in this direction, but risks to fail are enormous. At present, economic development is linked to globalisation, which implies potential massive access of goods and people, and a lot of standardisation. This ugly side of globalisation is not easy to combat, but not impossible. Emerging destinations like Vietnam should keep this in mind and according to Swarbrooke (1998) recommendation, better take a global view of the market rather than a parochial one. In other words, one should reverse the well-known marketing cliché and “Think local, act global!”

## 4. Ecotourism, a reasonable bet

### 4.1. What exactly is ecotourism?

The term was initially coined for a sort of exclusive nature outdoor tourism. Thereafter, the label of eco-tourism was co-opted virtually by any group remotely connected with the nature or cultural travel. At present, ecotourism, is shifting from a definition of small-scale nature tourism, to a set of principles applicable to any nature related tourism. Despite it still focusing on nature, more weight is given to the approach and behaviour of the tourist and tourist industry visited. Ecotourism is moving closer to general sustainability principles.

by John Caldwell



The Ecotourism Society defines it simply as “responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people”. The abundance of different or slightly different definitions does not help much to clarify the idea, but it seems to be still a boiling issue amongst academics (v. Jafari 2000, Weaver 2001, Page and Dowling 2001). I personally like the approach of the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council (1991) when suggesting that ecotourism should embrace the following characteristics:

1. It must promote positive environmental ethics.
2. It does not degrade the resource.
3. It concentrates on intrinsic rather than extrinsic values. Facilities never become attractions in their own right.
4. It is ecocentric rather than anthropocentric in orientation
5. It must benefit the wildlife and the environment (socially, economically, scientifically, managerially or politically).
6. It is a first-hand experience with the natural environment.
7. It includes a component of education and/or appreciation.
8. It has a high cognitive and affective experiential dimension.

#### **4.2. The growing and controversial market of ecotourism**

Ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing segments within the more than \$425 billion world-wide tourism industry of present days. According to Francesco Grangialli, secretary general of the World Tourism Organization, it may “double, even triple” that of the rest of the industry. Lew (1998) reported that in the past few years average annual growth rates have been steady at 10-25 percent. It is not casual that the United Nations declared 2002 the «International Year of Ecotourism».

This all reflects a fundamental change in behaviour of tourists: Increased awareness for the environments, increased travel experience, higher consciousness of quality and more selected choice of destinations. The affluence of a segment of the industrialised world's tourists to have nature-based, authentic experiences in a unspoiled destinations, has been supported by cheaper and quicker long-distance travel facilities, particularly since the appearance of the Boing 747.

Critics of ecotourism believe that nature tourists are elitists, young and on low incomes, and therefore spend little and contribute little to the local economy. This criticism is not generally supported by data (v. WWF 1994). Conversely, ecotourism has been identified as a concrete opportunity for developing countries to tackle poverty, and achieve self-sufficiency without losing autonomy. Countries rich in wild lands and biodiversity yet disadvantaged by rural depression and a lack of export earnings are good examples: Kenya earns some \$500 million a year in tourism revenues. Costa Rica generated \$336 million in 1991 and registered 25% percent growth in income over the previous three years. Equivalent figures can be reported for other eco-tourism destinations like Bhutan, Myanmar, Cuba (starting), Belize, or specific pockets promoted such as Galapagos, Antarctica or the mountain gorillas in Rwanda. In the latter case (Parc National des Volcans), gorilla tourism was so profitable that it was used to help fund conservation activities for a number of protected areas. In 1989, expenses were less than \$200,.000, while fee income was \$1 million (Lindberg and Huber, 1993)

The WTO has predicted in 1998, that developing countries would continue to gain from the tourism expansion and that international travellers would remain “interested in visiting and maintaining environmentally sound destinations” (Page & Dowling 2002). However, it is not all a bed of roses.

Whilst the U.N was endorsing the International Year of Ecotourism, anti-globalization protesters and several NGOs were launching their own campaign called the “International Year of Stopping Ecotourism”. The Tourism Investigation and Monitoring Team in Bangkok denounces that ecotourism “has led to more environmental destruction, and harm to communities in destinations”. Please, do not take the plague of tourist to the last remnants of nature. The special double issue on «The future of Travel» published by Newsweek magazine (July 22/29 2002), included an article by Adam Piore headed: “*Trouble in Paradise. A modest concept pushed by idealist is now the fastest-growing sector of the tourism industry. Can the Earth survive ecotourism?*”

The concern expressed is serious. Nonetheless, countries with relatively low base volumes of tourism (many in Southeast Asia) have a unique opportunity to plan and develop ecotourism as a key contributor to economic growth and conservation, based on acceptable levels of tourism and impacts for each area. (Sweeting et al. 1999). That's the challenge. If they fail to do so, they run the risk of allowing rapid tourism expansion to degrade their natural resources without creating a long-term source of economic wealth.

In addition, one needs to be conscious of other concerns related to tourism generally and ecotourism specifically. It is well acknowledged that not all places have tourism potential and not all communities want to embrace tourism development (Page & Dowling, 2002). Therefore, some research should be carried out before assuming that ecotourism will indeed provide economic, social and environmental benefits for a business, community or given region. Wherever necessary, ecotourism should be explained to the community supposedly being benefited. It is rather annoying that someone else decides unilaterally to arrange your life for the better, or wants to make you happy by force.

### **4.3. Ecotourism and conservation**

More than any other modality of tourism, ecotourism depends on the protection and conservation of intact nature and landscapes (and cultural resources within). Conservation of nature is a good policy if integrated and balanced with other development policies. It is a relatively modern phenomenon that has been most in evidence in developed countries where the pace of economic and social change has led to great changes in the environment. This has stimulated attempts to preserve all remnants of nature or old buildings from the past, not only because of their functional value, but also out of a sense of nostalgia. It is clear that tourism and conservation may benefit from each other, because:

- The destruction of the environment caused by large-scale tourism has often stimulated demands for conservation.
- The recognition that the environment is a major attraction of tourism has given an economic motivation for conservation.
- Many conservation projects are wholly or partly funded by income from tourism.

#### **A word of caution**

Overemphasizing the goals of conservation may be counterproductive or generate injustice. In many cases, mostly in developing countries, the conservation of animals or the landscape has been placed above the welfare of humans, particularly, those who lack political power. There is a tendency to believe that everything old is worthy and should be preserved. This can provoke a “dilution” of the conservation effort and resources as we try to conserve everything. The obsession with conserving old buildings, for instance, has the danger that new building styles will not be valued or even built. If imaginative modern architecture is not encouraged to develop, what will people in the future choose to conserve as symbols of our age?... In other words, conservation would become unsustainable.

*«In the spirit of sustainability, we perhaps need to be more selective and careful to ensure that our conservation activity today does not impose unwanted burdens to future generations»*

J. Swarbrooke, 1998

One cannot save nature at the expense of the local people. As custodians of the land, and being those most likely to lose from conservation, locals should be given a fair share. Sound politics and fair economics argue for making local people partners and beneficiaries in conservation, as opposed to implacable enemies of it (Western 1993). Ecotourism is a valid and prudent option of paying for nature conservation.

## Protected areas

Protected areas and ecotourism seem to be condemned to a mutual understanding. Nature, the magnet for ecotourism, is to be found in protected areas in better conditions than elsewhere (this is starting to become a universal trend in all countries). Protected areas have –or should have— an authority that is responsible for conservation performance and visitor use management. If well organised, ecotourists will find their dreamed experience, guided and supervised by professionals. This is ideal.

In other situations --especially in developing countries--, where, underbudgeting and understaffing of the protected areas are chronic problems, adequate mechanism to pump tourism dollars into the park system can revert the situation. Even more; promoting ecotourism in natural areas that have no official protection may foster effective action form local populations to conserve their natural surroundings and resources out of self-interest, and not because of external constrains. (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1993). Ecotourism should by no means be limited to protected areas.

### A good example

Costa Rica's national parks, wildlife refuges and biological reserves cover over 630,000 ha, or more than 25 percent of the country. Much of the land was purchased and operated by government during the 1970s, but there was an economic crisis in the 1980s, and a reduction of international donations in the 1990s. Costa Rica chose to raise national park entrance fees. In addition, a two-tiered fee system was developed so foreigners paid more than residents. Despite the increased charges, Costa Rica's parks remain a popular international tourist destination. The country had 1.03 million international arrivals in 1999, and –if the 1996 figures are a guide-- 66 percent of those tourist visited a protected area. Annual tourism receipts in Costa Rica now total over \$1 billion, and it is the national park system which forms the foundation for its successful ecotourism industry.

Source: Honey , 1999

Another word of caution. Protected areas follow their own conservation philosophy. Whilst recreation and contact of man with nature is a goal in many of the categories (e.g. National parks, protected landscapes, etcetera), it is not in others (e.g. Strict reserves). In any case, visitor use satisfaction is always subordinated to their first priority: conservation. Parks with increasing numbers in visitors (tourist or locals) inevitably suffer the “syndrome of success”. K.L. Tinley (1971), explains it well: “Under the guise of conservation, tourist recreation resort facilities, in the form of buildings and catering, are taking the greater part of our energy, budget and abilities away from the main task for which we have been given responsibility. If we do not withdraw from this bias we will easily and subtly become predominantly Tourist Departments.”

The World Commission on Protected Areas<sup>9</sup> is well aware of the avalanche of ecotourism aiming protected areas and posing new challenges to park managers. A valuable reaction to it has been the recent publication of guidelines for planning and management of sustainable tourism in protected areas (Eagles et al. 2002). Also volume 12 of the *Parks* magazine is devoted to “Tourism and protected areas”. It is clear, that the “protected area family” (private, voluntary or public) has an advantageous position to tackle ecotourism with professionalism.

<sup>9</sup> The WCPA is one of the six Commissions of the World Union for Conservation (IUCN)

#### 4.4. **Planning ecotourism**

Ecotourism, being an outdoor activity intimately related to nature and being developed usually in unspoilt or barely altered habitats, needs more careful planning and cautious approaches than any other tourist activity. The potential negative impacts to the environment and biodiversity have more relevance; and not only nature is fragile. Most commonly, nature is better preserved far away from big cities and developed areas, thus the local population linked to natural areas suffers usually from lower incomes and living standards. On the contrary, traditions and ethnical values are generally better preserved in these areas than elsewhere. The main lesson from the past decades of tourism experience is clear: Unplanned, uncontrolled tourism growth tends to destroy the very resource on which it is build.

Planning involves a systemic process of thinking what we want; how, where, when and by which means can it be achieved, but well in advance before starting to do things. It is the opposite of improvisation, but not a panacea; in some cases good improvisation may also deliver excellent results. However, the more time we invest in planning things, the higher will be the probability of achieving them. Whenever speaking of planning, I like to recall an anonymous graffiti written during the student riots of May 1968 in France:

IF YOU DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU WANT TO GO, YOU  
WILL PROBABLY END UP IN ANOTHER PLACE

Ecotourism can be planned at very different scales: national, regional, provincial or at a specific site or protected area. In this context. Page and Dowling (2002) reviewed and compiled conclusions on planning for tourism developments in natural environments where ecotourism is located. They following stand out:

- Traditional environmental and ecological planning methods offer ways of evaluating environmental attributes for protection and conservation within a tourism planning framework. Values of society should be incorporated to the process.
- Regional planning offers the best method for achieving environmental protection and tourism development strategies.
- The concept of carrying capacity has inherent difficulties with quantification. ROS Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) and Limits of acceptable change (LAC) approaches to environment-tourism use are better suited to discrete areas under the authority of one control such as national parks and reserves.

Sound ecotourism planning is a process which aims to anticipate, regulate and monitor change so as to contribute to the wider sustainability of the destination. Among the specialised literature on planning tourism (Boo 1990, Inskeep 1994, Page & Dowling 2002, Eagles et al. 2002, etc.) I have no hesitation to recommend the Ecotourism Society's guide for planners and managers (Lindberg & Hawkings 1993). In it are laid out some of the larger challenges with a series of prescriptions for how to tackle them. These include the tools for looking at demand, use and impact, income distribution, resource inventory, policy formulation, planning, management, training and local participation. For a basic general view of the planning process, see the next box.

#### OUTLINE OF AN ECOTOURISM PLANNING PROCESS

1. Study preparation, which includes an assessment of the type of planning required and the preparation of terms of reference.
2. Defining objectives, which should reflect the government's general ecotourism policy/strategy, and include development priorities, temporal considerations, heritage, marketing and annual growth.
3. Survey and analysis. This is an inventory of existing environmental attributes which are then evaluated in regard to their resource potential.
4. Synthesis. This step brings the preceding ones together in an attempt to place the study in context of the overall tourism development in the area. It includes an analysis of the opportunities and constraints to development as well as the examination of the other economic-related variables.
5. Policy and plan formulation, includes the preparation of relevant ecotourism policies which reflect the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the area. Such policies are then incorporated in an ecotourism plan or strategy.
6. Recommendations are made based on the resultant policies in regards to development nodes, attractions, facilities and transport links. It is at this time that recommendations are also made in relation to spatial and temporal aspects such as land-use zoning and the staging or phasing in of implementation.
7. Implementation and monitoring. This is an essential part of the ecotourism planning process but it is often the one that is least carried out. Without implementation the whole planning process becomes redundant so careful attention should be paid to ensuring that any ecotourism plan is actually put in practice.

Source: Ceballos-Lascouráin 1999 in Page & Dowling 2002

Detailed and systematic inventories of the ecotourist attractions --natural and ethnical-- at the appropriate scale should be elaborated. Ceballos-Lascouráin (1993) warns that these inventories are different from those of a scientific nature. They should reflect the attractiveness of the features listed and not merely constitute an unemotional and clinical description of their biological or cultural significance. In most countries, there are nature-based tourism experiences available and can be promoted into well organised ecotourism.

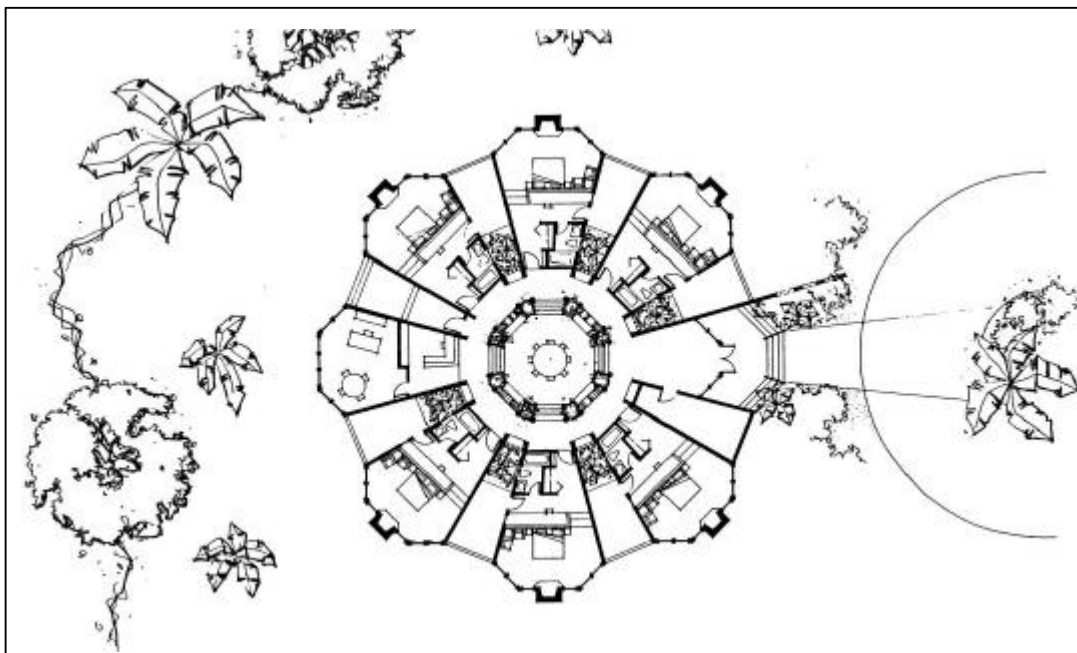
Community and other stakeholders (tour operators, concessionaires, etc.) involvement in the planning processes depends heavily on the working scale, tested techniques and willingness and capacity to participate. It may complicate the process, particularly when confronted positions need a consensus output for holding in time. There are administrative cultures or sectors where team work and consensus seeking approaches are not customary. However, it deserves the effort. For the big scale planning, National ecotourism councils --with the representatives from all sectors involved-- have recently been created in several countries with promising results.

#### **4.5. Special topics**

There are many aspects to be dealt with in relation with good practice in ecotourism management (marketing, fees, safety, transportation, research, eco-efficiency, monitoring, etcetera). In the references section there are many works that make good reading for those interested in this promising segment of tourism. The few topics here briefly commented are only those that I like to highlight in the context of the present Course.

### Limited reception

Adequate physical facilities in and near the natural areas are required for the effective development of ecotourism. It is generally accepted that culturally and environmentally sensitive structures enhance the ecotourist's experience. However, the size of these facilities should be determined by the carrying capacity of the area (whatever it's size), bearing in mind that reception capacity can be increased artificially and does not mean carrying capacity<sup>10</sup>. In natural areas the biological components determine usually the maximum capacity. When there is reasonable doubts, one should apply the principle of prudence: start low, and according to a close follow-up, increase step-wise. If an authority bears the power to control the key facilities of an area (access roads, parking, accommodation), it has an effective tool for prevent overgrowth of tourism.



*Fig. 3. The design of a facility should appear to grow from the nature of the site as integrated and spontaneous as a flower on the forest floor.  
Taken from D.L. Andersen in Lindberg & Hawkins 1993.*

### Visitor management

Protected areas often protect natural processes as well as features, so management there, is generally oriented towards managing human-induced change since it causes most disturbance. This approach can be extrapolated to non-protected areas, but where nature is also to be maintained at least for the self-interest of the tourism business. Even small levels of recreational use can lead to negative impacts, and all recreational use causes some impact. Managers must determine how much impact is acceptable or desirable and act accordingly. Flux of people can be modelled as a hydraulic system with control points, channels, passages, accumulation areas, etc. I personally find this approach very useful. The toolbox of measures available to the manager is plentiful and varies according to the type of environment and of tourists (zoning, clustering, quota, etc.) New measures are better if they are reversible (learn by doing). Of course, management results have to be **monitored** in order to allow for adjustment.

<sup>10</sup> The carrying capacity of an area is the maximum number of people who can use it without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environmental and without an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors (Mathieson and Wall, 1982)



## Information and interpretation

True ecotourists are information demanding as they are interested in the intrinsic values of the destination chosen. They want to know far more than the normal tourist. Very often, they have read more about the area and natural characteristics than the majority of the local people. Whilst information should be available, sufficient and honest, this extra interest of ecotourists provides an excellent opportunity to combine targeted information in order to prevent conflict with the resource. In the Red Sea, for example, careful briefing of divers decreased coral breakages.

Much has been written about the need to “educate” the tourist. However, the issue I would like to highlight here is a different concept: interpretation. It is a consolidated activity in the world of protected areas that ecotourism in general could well benefit from. It aims to increase the experience of visitors by motivation, not by instruction. It basically consists in translating the language of nature (or heritage); helping to visualise interrelations, and adding intellectual pleasure to a first hand experience in nature. It is obviously related with environmental education, but I prefer to term it environmental seduction.

Specific literature is available dealing with all aspects of interpretation: interpretive planning, interpretive designs, exhibits, trails, interpretive centres, media, training of interpreters, etcetera. Lewis (1980) and Sharpe (1976) are probably the best choices. Interpretation is very rarely treated in ecotourism literature. However, in my opinion good planned interpretive programmes and good interpreters could make the competitive difference in many ecotourist endeavours. It is a question of imagination. Not only nature and ethnic practices can be interpreted. For instance, the route to the area --if there is an agrarian landscape-- is subject to interpretation. People that experience active interpretation react always very positively.

## Training

One has to realise, that ecotourism is a rather specialised modality of tourism and it will only succeed when in hand of professionals, covering the many interests and skills associated with nature and cultural tourism. Thus, training is fundamental. International aid and bilateral cooperation is indeed focusing on training programmes in most of the emerging destinations.

Training should not only take place in classrooms, but on the field, exposing the trainee with real-case problems. Ideal groups are multidisciplinary. Planning, management and communication (!) skills are common components of such training programmes. Since many ecotourist sites are located in areas of difficult access and far from traditional services, training programmes could also extend to environmental sensitive design and the so-called “ecotechniques” such as solar energy for heating or providing electricity, capture and reutilization of rainwater, recycling of garbage, natural cross-ventilation and the use of native building materials and methods (cultural image).

## Marketing

Ecotourism is a buzzword which is not well understood and cannot be marketed as such. The prefix “eco” has been used too happily for all kinds of “green” sells (ecotours, ecotravels, ecocruises, ecosafaris, ecoadventures, etcetera). The ecotourist will recognise a true ecotourist offer if certified by accredited ecolabels (see section 3.6). Otherwise, he probably will turn to internet and search for detailed information to judge. An effort in providing accurate and honest information in internet is almost a must for the ecotourism industry today. Ecotourists may well react against any kind of exaggeration, or if, for example, an exotic species is placed on an advertising picture.

## 5. The experience of the Canary Islands

### 5.1. *The region, a fragile paradise*

The Canary Islands are one of the 17 Autonomous Communities of Spain, with their own Parliament and Government. The archipelago is composed by 7 islands and some islets (ca. 7,500 km<sup>2</sup>), being Tenerife the biggest island with 2,034 km<sup>2</sup> and an altitude of 3,716 m (Teide Peak, the highest in Spain). Situated in the Atlantic Ocean, only 110 km away from the western coast of Africa (facing the Sahara desert) the distance to mainland Spain is considerable, ca. 1,500 km.

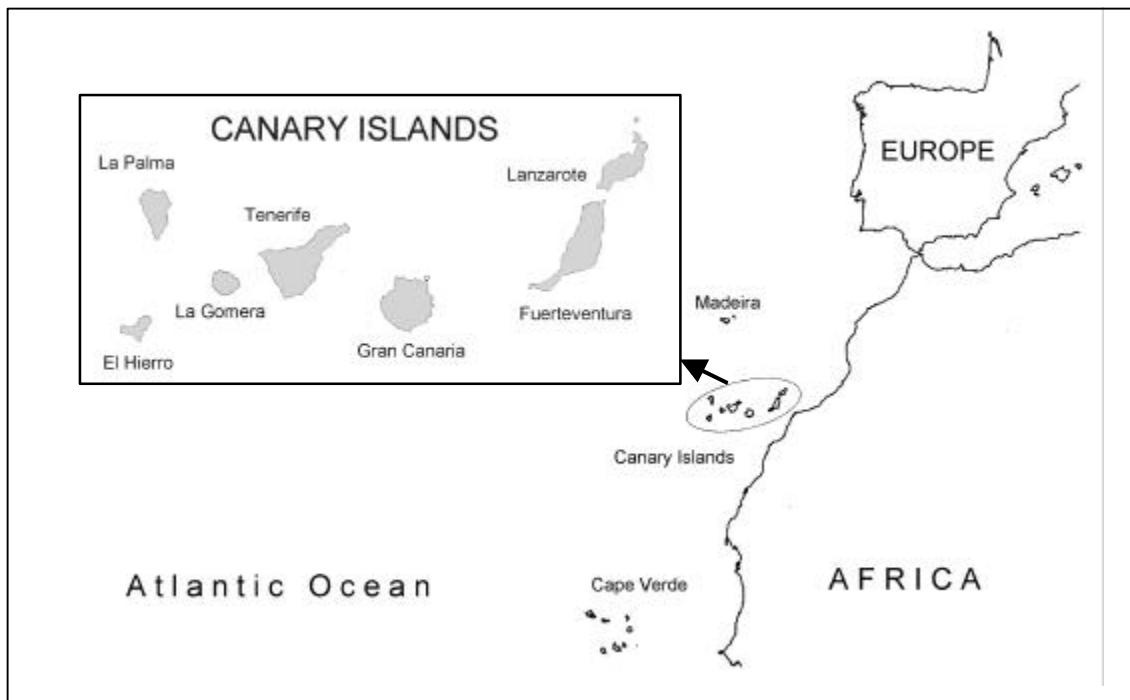


Fig. 4. Geographic situation of the Canary Islands

The population is high (aprox. 1,700,000 inhabitants), white and almost all catholic. The aborigines, of Berber origin, were swept by the European colonization during the XIV and XV centuries (arrival of Spaniards, Portuguese, French, etcetera).

Nature on oceanic islands (formed by volcanism) evolves rather isolated and tends to develop different floras and fauna from those inhabiting the continents. The Canaries are a well known hotspot of biodiversity with a high concentration of endemic species, which means, that they are exclusive to the islands and do not live natural elsewhere in the world. Some 670 plant species are endemic<sup>11</sup> to the Canaries whilst the whole Great Britain has no more than 15. Such uniqueness of animals and plants comes saddled with a high degree of ecological fragility. Habitats are very often small and scarce and the impact of exotic species --predating, competing— is tremendous. Several species are already extinct and many are considered threatened.

The climate is one the key factors of the island development. In the lower zones, there is little variation in temperatures between the four seasons, ranging from 17 degrees centigrade in February, to 24.8 degrees centigrade in August. Agriculture is centred on

<sup>11</sup> The total number of terrestrial endemics is ca. 3.750 species, the majority insects. In the last decade, a new Canarian species has been described on average every 6 days.

subtropical fruits, mainly bananas, and flower exports, but it is tourism the most benefited industry. Beautiful and varied landscapes, the “island” ideal, safety and relative closeness to Europe, has favoured the Canaries to become one of the most popular destinies in the region. At present, the service sector represents 76,8% of the economy (GVA).

## 5.2. Tourist development

If something characterizes an oceanic island, it is the limitation of their natural resources of soil, water and energy. These are the factors that basically define the ecological carrying capacity of a region and consequently balance its ecology and economy. In the past, the islanders transformed the environment to their advantage but were always limited by the elements referred to above. In a certain way the system was auto-regulated, and when it reached its carrying capacity emigration occurred. This has been the natural method of maintaining ecological health on the Islands; something like a security valve that opens and closes as necessary, balancing man and nature, not overheating and collapsing. However, technological man does not easily give up and leave his land but rather searches for ways to import what is lacking and to artificially augment the carrying capacity of the island. The cost is known: external dependency, vulnerable economy, etc., but it has always been justified as bettering the quality of life of the local population.

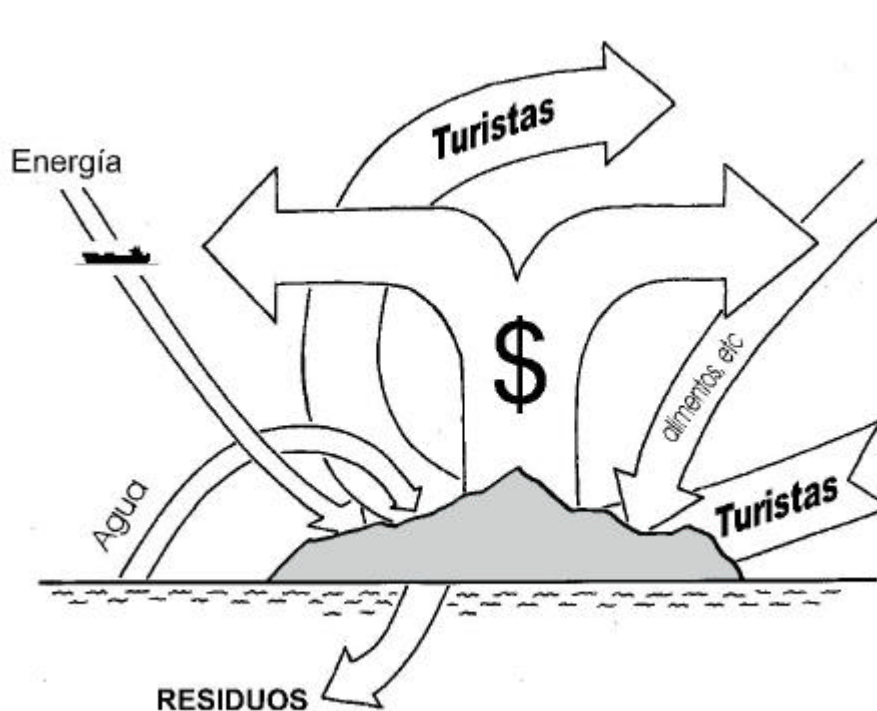


Fig 5. Model of present tourist dependent economy in the Canary Islands  
 Energía = energy, Turistas = tourists; Alimentos = food; Agua = water; Residuos = waste.  
 (Taken from Machado 2002)

Tourism in the Canary Islands started at the end of the XIX Century with a few Europeans visiting the islands mostly for health reasons. From 8,000 tourists in 1900 it only raised up to 15.000 in 1950. The real boom initiated in the decade of the 60s, boosting from 69,000 tourists in 1960 up to 2 million in 1975. In 1990 the figures were reaching 7,4 million and at present, they exceed **13 million**, and still growing...

### CANARY ISLANDS TOURISM IN GLOBAL FIGURES

The total number of tourists that arrived in 2001 to the Islands was 13,1 million; of which 10,137,202 were foreigners and the rest nationals (from mainland Spain). This figure indicates an increase of 1,6% in relation to the previous year. The average stay is 8 days.

Main source countries are the United Kingdom (40%), Germany (29%) and Scandinavia (13%). Foreign tourism shows a peak in February-March, while national (mainland) tourism in July-August. Tourist activity runs all over the year.

Motivation to visit the Canaries surveyed show: 92% climate, 42% beaches, 33% to know the place, 28% tranquillity, 22% quality of the environment, 12% nightlife, and less than 10%: shopping, sport and cultural activities.

Tourist profile: 84.5% is sun, sea and beach tourism; 6.5% rural and 3.4% cultural. No tourists come specifically to Tenerife for whale watching, hence it is accepted as an added option. In 2001 it moved 446,000 tourist with an income of \$ 12,7 million. True ecotourism is very scarce.

Accommodation capacity is ca. 400.000 beds, to be split roughly in 143.000 hotel beds, 246,000 in apartments and 1,800 in rural accommodations. Four and five stars hotels account for 69% of the offer and a share of 81% of overnights.

Average occupation levels in hotels vary between 70-75%; that of rural tourism, only 31%.

Satisfaction levels are high. 92% of tourist would like to repeat holidays in the Islands, and 96% are prone to recommend this destination. Only 43.5% of interviewed tourists complain of something: 6.1% about environmental quality, and just 2%, that there is too much tourism.

The amount of money spent by tourists was close to 10.9 billion dollars, a 3.5% more than in the previous year. Average daily expenditure is approximately 100 euro ( $\pm$  100 US\$), 63 being spent in origin, and 47 in the Canaries. How much of the benefit stays in the Islands, is not well known (no official data).

Sources: Melchior et Gil (in print) and official statistics from governmental departments.

<http://www.gobcan.es/turismo/dgoit/estadisticas/mestadis.html>

<http://www.ine.es/inebase/menu5.htm#27>

<http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/istac/estadisticas.html>

In general, the tourist is impressed by the exotic and yet demands security, in contradiction with the spirit of adventure that marks any trip. Adventure, yes, but secure. In this sense the Canaries fill the bill well. They offer great doses of exoticism (varied and different landscapes) within a scheme of civilization and European security. In the Islands there are no tse-tse flies, dangerous animals (no snakes, for example) nor strange diseases different from those encountered by the tourist in their own homes. The volcanoes have a special attraction but it is obvious that there are no eruptions or earthquakes foreseen. From the surveys, it is obvious that the majority of tourists are mass tourists, very happy to recommend the destination to their friends (96%). Only 2% complain from too much tourism. Fortunately, there are zones within the islands, and even whole islands where mass-tourism is not present.

The market used to produce packaged models of foreign exoticism (coconut trees, hammocks, etc.) with no ties of Canarian identity to suggest added value to a brand. These stupid approach is changing slowly. Nonetheless, the official logo of the Department of Tourism for marketing the Canaries, is still a flower of paradise (*Sterlitzia regina*) from South Africa.

### 5.3. *The ugly side of tourism*

The increase of real estate speculation initiated during the booms of the 60s and 70s, associated to the implantation of tourist infrastructures, seems to have been the cause of the tourism overdose. Definitely, the worst enemy of Canarian tourism has been the real estate speculation business which tourism triggered and that the Public Administration was not ready to control.

The territorial impact of the tourist infrastructure shows an altitudinal gradation, from the sea to the mountains. It can qualify with respect to the total surface of the islands, as limited spatially but locally intensive: the coastline being the most affected. In the past, the impact increased severely due to the isolation of sites rising spontaneously and the consequent construction of unplanned road and services. In addition, tourist facilities impact in their operative phase: water consumption, labour competition with other sectors, traffic congestion, overcrowding protected areas, wild jeep safaris, etcetera (v. Machado 1990). However, perhaps the most delicate and worrisome impact that excessive tourism generates is that of a sociological kind, which today cannot be fully envisioned.



*"Nowadays, most of our income is from tourism."*

The sale of mass tourism has not taken advantage of the diversity in the Canaries, but has configured its own environment, homogenizing everything and creating inexpressive structures, repetitive and apart from the idiosyncrasy of the land; the product is a standardized tourist habitat. The Islanders perceive this banalization of the countryside and have difficulty finding familiar areas with intimacy, free of foreigners. These are environmental demands of the local population. The Canarian likes to enjoy his free time amongst Islanders or people with similar values, and the cultural differences with the tourists (> 75% foreigners) are too great to ignore. The net result of this phenomenon is competition for leisure areas, and the tourist promoters have chosen the best sites, causing envy and mistrust.

Residential tourism has much greater sociological impact than ecological, because foreigners have chosen to live in the Islands or spend a long time in them; they defend

their piece of land and jealously care for the environment<sup>12</sup>, sometimes more than the islanders, and at times to the point of aggression.

On the other hand, the continued foreign participation in the buying/selling of land tracts and the proliferation of real estate signs in foreign languages (“For sale”, *Zu Verkauffen, Eintritt verboten!, Nicht parkieren ohne Genehmigung*, etc.) creates a bad atmosphere in the local villages and causes the feeling that the Islands are in foreign hands. And data does not exist to prove or disprove this suspicion.

Graffiti signs reflect perfectly the opposing sentiments that tourism has generated:

**WE DON'T WANT TOURISM, BUT WE NEED IT!  
CANARIAN, DON'T SELL YOUR LAND!**

Moreover, the speedy growth of the offer (construction, service, etc.) has attracted manpower from outside the Island, thus putting more pressure on the land. They arrive from mainland Spain, some from Central or East European countries, many are repatriate Canarians from Venezuela, and most recent, a growing avalanche of desperate people are dropping from Black Africa. The latter is a serious problem as the majority are illegal immigrants that risk their life crossing the sea gap in small and fragile boats. Many perish.

These are ingredients for an explosive cocktail, like xenophobia. The situation is getting worst in islands like Lanzarote or Fuerteventura where the local population is now becoming a minority.

#### **5.4. A non sustainable result**

The economic performance of tourism in the Canaries is not in dispute, but almost all indicators point to a situation of non sustainability. The Canary Islands have the highest average individual daily waste production from all Spain (above 2 kg per capita); 666 vehicles per 1000 inhabitants (50% more than Spain's average value), which means 176 vehicles per km of road. With the exception of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, in the East --which are large, flat and scarcely populated--, in the rest of the islands the available free land susceptible for human use is only 12%. The level of illegal tourist exploitations that are operating is rather high; in many cases 20% or even above 50% (in Fuerteventura 36.000 illegal beds against 35.000 legal ones). Four islands are already desalinating water from the ocean<sup>13</sup>. Corruption has not been measured, but the media are uncovering more and more cases. Yes, it may be ironic, but the Charter for Sustainable Tourism (see Annex 6.1) was adopted in a Congress celebrated in Lanzarote<sup>14</sup>, in 1995.

In 1990, I applied a simple empirical method to evaluate tourism pressure based on the ecological and sociological carrying capacity (Machado 1990). The “formula 2/20” means no more than 1 tourist per 2 local inhabitants at a time, or no more than 20 beds per square kilometre of island territory. One divides the local population by two, and multiplies the surface in square kilometres by 20. The lower value obtained is taken as the top limit of beds for the island in question.

<sup>12</sup> I friendly call this people “environmental refugees”. They flee from polluted and cold Central and Northern Europe, where environmental sensibility has been inflated by calamities such as Chernobyl, the Rhine disaster or the recent oil spill of the Prestige.

<sup>13</sup> Energy is dependent on imported oil. The wind-mill and solar energy has been officially promoted, but its total contribution in relation with the demand is very tiny.

<sup>14</sup> Many believe also that the declaration of Lanzarote as a Biosphere Reserve was an ecobluff.

There are many more factors at play (nucleus density and concentration, topography of the island, rainfall, etc.), but the land and population factors are the most basic and integrate, in a way, the other many insular parameters. Evidently, the 2/20 formula could be another<sup>15</sup>. Its is completely empirical and based solely on personal experience, but it was considered useful to apply a concrete criteria to, at least, have a reference for comparison. The picture obtained was:

- **Red light.** Tenerife (120.000 beds) and Gran Canaria (164.000 beds) had already exceeded their environmental limits in 79.300 and 133.300 beds respectively. Fuerteventura (31.382 inhabitants) and Lanzarote (57.000 inhabitants), because of local population size, have exceeded in 6.800 and 30.100 beds, respectively. The obvious recommendation: no more beds. Grow in quality, not quantity. Reconversion of tourism.
- **Amber light.** El Hierro, La Gomera and La Palma had not reached their top limit (no mass tourism on those islands). The formula 2/20 establishes apparently ridiculous ceilings (3.600, 7.400 and 14.200 beds, respectively) when comparing with the other islands' development, but this is the safeguard of not falling in the same kind of problematic mass tourism. No "green light", just "amber" that means attention!, prepare to stop.

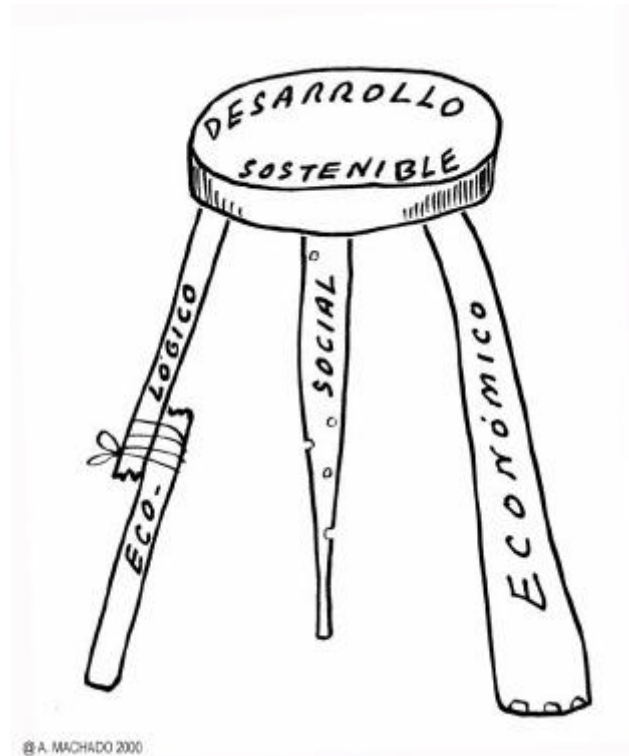


Fig. 6. A caricature of development in the Canary Islands

At the time the study was undertaken (with data from 1989), tourist numbers in the Canaries were close to 7 million a year, and the total number of beds, ca. 359.000 (legal and illegal). The overall tourist carrying capacity was exceeded 2.7 times. At present, registered beds are ca. 400.000, but potential accommodation give the staggering number of 1.109.700 (Baute & Souza 2001). That means, 8.5 times higher than theoretically sustainable.

<sup>15</sup> The ecological component has to be adapted to the type of territory. For example, in the Balears that are islands of continental origin (less fragile), the formula was transformed to 2/40 (Mayol & Machado, 1992)

### 5.5. Looking for a way out

Apart from the old four National Parks already established in the Canary Islands by the National Parliament, the tourism boom of the 1980s provoked an emphatic reaction of the Canarian Parliament. A network of protected areas was declared by law in 1987. At present it is composed by 145 areas (parks, reserves, natural monuments, etc.) resulting in an overall protection coverage of 40,4% of the whole Archipelago (the largest case in Spain). The protected areas have had not only a positive effect in stopping expansion of tourism; the major part of the Canarian biodiversity is now covered in the network, and many areas are significantly supporting the tourism activity via landscape and recreational use. A modern programme called Dinaval –2000 has allowed to estimate the year income value of the whole protected area network:: environmental services 59,2 million euros, productive use 3,5 million euros, and recreation use 266 million euros. This figure may be impressive. But Teide National Park, for instance, has 3 million visitors per year.

The figures of tourism commented in the previous section, clearly reveal that despite the fact that the problems were studied, known, exposed and debated since the early 1990s and even before, tourism was steadily growing. There are people who still celebrate every new record of tourist visits in his Island. “*Hacer el agosto*” means in Spanish, to make fortune (see comic from a local newspaper below). However, the sense of excess, nuisance and inconvenience in the Canarian society has also increased in the last decade.



Other positive reactions, although very late to happen, were the promulgation of a Law of Tourism in 1995, and the incorporation of tourist studies to the University, in 1998.

Rational land use planning has been considered the ideal formula to prevent territorial imbalances and maladjustments such as those that have occurred in the Canaries. Nevertheless, administrative inertia has been planning the territory following sector rather than global dynamics. Thus, in the past, the territory was planned for tourism rather than planning tourism itself within a general context. This approach has only changed very recently.



In 1998, Parliament gave concrete instruction to insert sustainable principles in public action. A new Land Use Law was produced in 2002 and a Special Act declared a “moratorium”, stopping all new planning and building of tourist accommodations until new strict guidelines and regulations are prepared (at present in debate).

Within this context, three islands, La Gomera, La Palma and El Hierro, should have a particular status as they have not embraced massive tourism. The latter two islands were recently declared as Biosphere Reserves, not really for being managed as such, but reflecting a clear bet of the population towards a different model of tourism.

The Canary Islands are facing a critical moment. In the next years it will be seen if public action can really stop and reorient the inertia of mass tourism development.

### **5.6. *The lesson***

Due to its territorial limitation and ecological fragility, the Canaries cannot be compared to just any territory. Development in the Canaries is like playing ball in a china shop. It is a question of Natural Science, not of chauvinism. The uniqueness of its biodiversity demands extreme precaution and, logically, a selective attitude with respect to the activities attempting to be established in the Islands.

A Spanish proverb says that you can't make tortilla without braking eggs. The thing is to break only those that are absolutely necessary. This strategy has not been followed in the Canaries and in the last three decades we have seen the influx of foreign capital of very diverse –and dubious—sources used to cultivate tourism in this Archipelago. Whilst there is no doubt that “prosperity arrived by plain “; tourism has far surpassed the quotas needed for the well being of the local population. Actually, there is immigration in the Canaries, something quite unusual in the history of the Islands.

The objectives have been inverted: «Canaries for the tourism industry» and not «tourism for the Canaries». The present overdose of tourism has generated many environmental and social problems as well as extreme external dependency. The Canary Islands are now “hooked” on tourism and it makes one dizzy just to think the fate of the islands if, for whatever reason, tourism should fail. Many workers and businessmen would simply leave the islands back to their homes, but the problems already generated, would stay. The final scenario: seven islands like squeezed lemons floating in the ocean.

The final lesson: do not let tourism grow free and speedy; control the territory (land use) and capital affluence.

## 6. Annexes

### 6.1. *The Charter for Sustainable Tourism*

We, the participants at the World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, meeting in Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, on 27-28 April 1995,

*Mindful* that tourism, as a worldwide phenomenon, touches the highest and deepest aspirations of all people and is also an important element of socioeconomic and political development in many countries.

*Recognizing* that tourism is ambivalent, since it can contribute positively to socioeconomic and cultural achievement, while at the same time it can contribute to the degradation of the environment and the loss of local identity, and should therefore be approached with a global methodology.

*Mindful* that the resources on which tourism is based are fragile and that there is a growing demand for improved environmental quality.

*Recognizing* that tourism affords the opportunity to travel and to know other cultures, and that the development of tourism can help promote closer ties and peace among peoples, creating a conscience that is respectful of the diversity of culture and life styles.

*Recalling* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations, and the various United Nations declarations and regional conventions on tourism, the environment, the conservation of cultural heritage and on sustainable development.

*Guided* by the principles set forth in the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development and the recommendations arising from Agenda 21.

*Recalling* previous declarations on tourism, such as the Manila Declaration on World Tourism, the Hague Declaration and the Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code.

*Recognizing* the need to develop a tourism that meets economic expectations and environmental requirements, and respects not only the social and physical structure of destinations, but also the local population.

*Considering* it a priority to protect and reinforce the human dignity of both local communities and tourists.

*Mindful* of the need to establish effective alliances among the principal actors in the field of tourism so as to fulfil the hope of a tourism that is more responsible towards our common heritage.

APPEAL to the international community and, in particular, URGE governments, other public authorities, decision makers and professionals in the field of tourism, public and private associations and institutions whose activities are related to tourism, and tourists themselves, to adopt the principles and objectives of the Declaration that follows:

1. Tourism development shall be based on criteria of sustainability, which means that it must be ecologically bearable in the long term, as well as economically viable, and ethically and socially equitable for local communities.

Sustainable development is a guided process which envisages global management of resources so as to ensure their viability, thus enabling our natural and cultural capita, including protected areas, to be preserved. As a powerful instrument of development, tourism can and should participate actively in the sustainable development strategy. A requirement of sound management of tourism is that the sustainability of the resources on which it depends must be guaranteed.

2. Tourism should contribute to sustainable development and be integrated with the natural, cultural and human environment; it must respect the fragile balances that characterize many tourist destinations, in particular small islands and environmentally sensitive areas. Tourism should ensure an acceptable evolution as regards its influence on natural resources, biodiversity and the capacity for assimilation of any impacts and residues produced.
3. Tourism must consider its effects on the cultural heritage and traditional elements, activities and dynamics of each local community. Recognition of these local factors and support for the identity, culture and interests of the local community must at all times play a central role in the formulation of tourism strategies, particularly in developing countries.
4. The active contribution of tourism to sustainable development necessarily presupposes the solidarity, mutual respect and participation of all the actors, both public and private, implicated in the process, and must be based on efficient cooperation mechanisms at all levels: local, national, regional and international.
5. The conservation, protection and appreciation of the worth of the natural and cultural heritage afford a privileged area for cooperation. This approach implies that all those responsible must take upon themselves a true challenge, that of cultural, technological and professional innovation, and must also undertake a major effort to create and implement integrated planning and management instruments.
6. Quality criteria both for the preservation of the tourist destination and for the capacity to satisfy tourists, determined jointly with local communities and informed by the principles of sustainable development, should represent priority objectives in the formulation of tourism strategies and projects.
7. To participate in sustainable development, tourism must be based on the diversity of opportunities offered by the local economy. It should be fully integrated in to and contribute positively to local economic development.
8. All options for tourism development must serve effectively to improve the quality of life of all people and must influence the socio-cultural enrichment of each destination.
9. Governments and the competent authorities, with the participation of NGOs and local communities, shall undertake actions aimed at integrating the planning of tourism as a contribution to sustainable development.
10. In recognition of economic and social cohesion among the peoples of the world as a fundamental principle of sustainable development, it is urgent that measures be promoted to permit a more equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of tourism. This implies a change of consumption patterns and the introduction of pricing methods which allow environmental costs to be internalised. Governments and multilateral organizations should prioritize and strengthen direct and indirect aid to tourism projects which contribute to improving the quality of

the environment. Within this context, it is necessary to explore thoroughly the application of internationally harmonised economic, legal and fiscal instruments to ensure the sustainable use of resources in tourism.

11. Environmentally and culturally vulnerable spaces, both now and in the future, shall be given special priority in the matter of technical cooperation and financial aid for sustainable tourism development. Similarly, special treatment should be given to zones that have been degraded by obsolete and high impact tourism models.
12. The promotion of alternative forms of tourism that are compatible with the principles of sustainable development, together with the encouragement of diversification represent a guarantee of stability in the medium and the long term. In this respect there is a need, for many small islands and environmentally sensitive areas in particular, to actively pursue and strengthen regional cooperation.
13. Governments, industry, authorities, and tourism-related NGOs should promote and participate in the creation of open networks for research, dissemination of information and transfer of appropriate knowledge on tourism and environmentally sustainable tourism technologies.
14. The establishment of a sustainable tourism policy necessarily requires the support and promotion of environmentally-compatible tourism management systems, feasibility studies for the transformation of the sector, as well as the implementation of demonstration projects and the development of international cooperation programmes.
15. The travel industry, together with bodies and NGOs whose activities are related to tourism, shall draw up specific frameworks for positive and preventive action to secure sustainable tourism development and establish programmes to support the implementation of such practices. They shall monitor achievements, report on results and exchange their experiences.
16. Particular attention should be paid to the role and the environmental repercussions of transport in tourism, and to the development of economic instruments designed to reduce the use of non-renewable energy and to encourage recycling and minimization of residues in resort.
17. The adoption and implementation of codes of conduct conducive to sustainability by the principal actors involved in tourism, particularly industry, are fundamental if tourism is to be sustainable. Such codes can be effective instruments for the development of responsible tourism activities.
18. All necessary measures should be implemented in order to inform and promote awareness among all parties involved in the tourism industry, at local, national, regional and international level, with regard to the contents and objectives of the Lanzarote Conference.

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## **6.2. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas**

The protected areas of Europe are an important destination for tourism. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas was developed over five years, initially using information from 10 pilot parks and input from an advisory group of 25 sustainable tourism experts and representatives of tourism operators. Its purpose is to promote sound management by establishing a model of good practice and identify and acknowledge areas that follow it. Under issues 3 to 12, there is a list of required actions against which adherence to the Charter can be checked. The Charter was developed by Parcs Regionaux de France with the support of the European Commission and the Europarc Federation.

### UNDERLYING AIMS

1. To recognise Europe's protected areas as a fundamental part of our heritage, which should be preserved for (and enjoyed by) current and future generations.
2. To develop and manage tourism in protected areas in a sustainable way, taking account of the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors.

### WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

3. To involve all those directly implicated by tourism in its development and management, in and around the protected area.

### PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY

4. To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the protected area

### ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES

5. To provide all visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit.
6. To encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area.
7. To communicate effectively to visitors about the area's special qualities.
8. To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues among all those involved in tourism.
9. To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents.
10. To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism.
11. To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy.
12. To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impact.

Web site: [www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.fr](http://www.parcs-naturels-regionaux.fr)

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