

## **Sustainable Tourism – Addressing the Impact of Sustainable Tourism Processes on Vulnerable Eco-systems through Integrated Governance Structures**

Gordon Sillence

Vice President - Ecotrans European Network on Tourism and Sustainable Development

President - Instituto Portugues de Ecologia

The tourism industry, one of the great economic engines of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century globalisation thrust, has attracted a lot of attention for its potential to transform landscapes and lives on a global to local basis. Positive and negative manifestations of tourism development processes have a highly visual impact, reaching all sectors of society. A call for the integrated governance of the sector has been made in order that its development potential is harnessed for the good of the people and places shaped by the sector.

Sustainable tourism, with its sectorally crosscutting influence on agro-forestry, transport, energy and industry, is seen as a crucial component in the management of protected areas.

The talk was divided into 4 discussion frames:

### **1<sup>st</sup> Discussion Frame: General Principles of SD applied to Specific Sectoral Issues**

In this frame 12 principles of the Law of Sustainable Development were presented:

- The first rule of public environmental order establishes the obligatory nature of this control system aimed at the evident general good not only of the present generation but those to come: sustainable development must not be abandoned to market forces but must be a responsibility of the state.
- The second rule of sustainability requires all public policies to be harmonised and prohibits any further reduction or degradation of natural, cultural and social capital, because even what has been left after ruthless development may well not be enough for survival.
- The third rule demands respect of the carrying capacity both of human systems and of ecosystems, to prevent the construction of stillborn, hypertrophic human systems, which drag ecosystems down towards their destruction.
- The fourth rule demands correction of that error where this is still possible, i.e. the restoration of disturbed ecosystems so that the reduction of natural capital will be averted.
- The fifth rule enjoins the protection of bio-diversity in order to preserve the stability (equilibrium) of ecosystems.
- The sixth rule, that of common natural heritage, strives to secure for the sake of all the vital nucleus of natural capital, i.e. untamed nature where it exists and the ultimate reserve of life.
- The seventh rule demands restrained development in fragile ecosystems.
- The eighth rule, that of spatial planning, calls for the overall planning of balance between human systems and ecosystems, so as to control and maintain their stability and to improve the quality of the former.
- The ninth rule, that of cultural heritage, is interested in the stable continuation of human systems and the qualitative (spiritual) character of development.
- The tenth rule that of sustainable urban environment strives to reverse the advancing decay of modern cities, and to restore quality of life therein.
- The eleventh rule, that of the aesthetic value of nature, also serves qualitative development and the satisfaction of man's aesthetic needs, and

- The twelfth (and last) rule establishes a sound system of values and environmental awareness in people, as the real guarantee of the entire control system.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Discussion Frame: Tourism Supply Chain Model**

This frame presented a tourism sector footprint as the economic contribution of travel and tourism. According to the World Tourism Organisation, Europe is the most visited tourist region in the world. Since 1980 the tourism boom has seen international arrivals in European destinations double reaching their current level of 400 million out of a total of 692 million arrivals worldwide. The signs are that this phenomenal sector growth is set to continue - in a fiercely competitive global market: the volume of European tourism is expected to double again over the next 20 to 25 years. Among the 380 million EU citizens, some 530 million-tourist trips are made annually, excluding day trips, for which they travel an estimated total of nearly one trillion (1012) passenger-km. In the 15 Member states, all this movement of products and people is conducted by over two million businesses, mostly small and medium-sized enterprises, providing employment for 7.7 million people, a figure estimated to rise by approximately 15 % over the next ten years. Large corporate enterprises, particularly operating at an international level, manage a significant proportion of this volume of trade, and in 2001, the tourist industry delivered almost 5% of GDP in Europe, a figure which rises to over 12% when the wider tourism economy is taken into account.

During this framework, some tourism sector problems were demonstrated. The consequent social and environmental impacts of the tourism economic phenomena are now clearly visible in the shape of markedly transformed European regional economies and landscapes, in which the natural and cultural patrimony has undergone extensive alteration. The large sales volumes, low profit margins and rapid turnover that characterise the industry have contributed to a lack of responsibility on the part of all stakeholders with regard to broader socio-economic and environmental concerns. In a range of destinations - in particular some coastal zones in the Mediterranean, islands such as Mallorca, some Alpine mountain resorts and certain cities such as Venice - have all experienced the negative effects of unsustainable development. Furthermore, there is a growing tension between the development of European transport infrastructure and the mobility requirements of the industry. Similarly, tourism land-use requirements in relation to protected areas; local cultural identity and local resident needs have generated further tensions in the economic-environmental-social sustainability framework at a regional level.

Tourism is also mainly a seasonal business, linked both to the weather and the cultural and socio-economic rhythm of everyday life. From the point of view of enterprises, there is very often only a small window of opportunity to make profits, and this period is one of intense activity. High season operation caters for peak demand, and this can overcrowd a destination's carrying capacity. Off-season operation leaves over-capacity in both infrastructure and enterprises, mitigated by seasonal employment of the work force and seasonal product supply and demand patterns. This in turn leads to difficulties in attracting and maintaining the tourism work force, and difficulties for tourism sector employees themselves.

To counter these negative trends, several tourism-specific initiatives have already been undertaken. In order to manage the growth in size and complexity of the sector, it is useful to gain an overview of the main components of the tourism process, i.e.

- the tourism supply chain,
- destination development and,
- the public and private administration of both these factors.

Each component, of course, contains its own set of related challenges and objectives.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Discussion Frame: Destination Development in Coastal Areas**

This frame pointed out the necessity of systematic monitoring and evaluation. It also presented the monitoring improvements in regulation of the tourism industry, management of the system to monitor Agenda 21 implementation, as well as specific sustainability impact assessment procedures. Tourism Satellite Accounting (TSA) provides valuable information on the structure and performance of the tourism economy. This methodological tool analyses in detail all the aspects of demand for goods and services associated with the tourism sector. As such it builds up a realistic picture of the economic supply chain that provide the visitor experience. TSAs are still in developmental stage, and require further definition. In particular, European tourism would benefit from TSA development that could portray pictures of regional economies as well as national economies.

Therefore a full review of the system from the point of view of benchmarking and monitoring the tourism sector performance (in the light of the above reference documents) would be necessary to ensure that the EUROSTAT statistical system meets tourism stakeholder information requirements. Such a review would take into account:

- the organisation of statistical information according to economic, environmental, social and institutional dimensions
- the use of NUTS V to NUTS I data with aggregation and dis-aggregation possibilities to suit multi-level, multi stakeholder governance
- destination management statistics
- inter-sectoral analysis (tourism, transport, industry, energy and agriculture)
- institutional statistical data

Key focus areas of above-mentioned features should be thus as follows:

- Integrated Coastal Zone Management
- Integrated Quality Management
- Local Agenda 21
- Destination Management Monitoring and Reporting Systems

### **4<sup>th</sup> Discussion Frame: Integrated Governance Models**

This frame presented the Multi-level Public Administration Governance Model managed through tripartite contracts monitored by impact assessment, as well as the Multi-Stakeholder Governance Model of Sustainable Tourism Implementation.

The Western Algarve, Southern Portugal, forest fires were reported here as the case study. In the fires that affected Italy, France, Spain and Portugal this summer, an estimated total of 350.000 hectares of forested land was burned down in Portugal, including the main part of Europe's largest remaining natural pine forest in the north, and the richest biodiversity habitat of southern Portugal, where 40,000 hectares burnt in the four *Concelhos* of *Lagos*, *Portimao*, *Monchique* and *Silves*. In the NUTS V level *Fregusia of Marmeleite* alone, 14, 000 out of 16,000 hectares of forest and farmland burned.

The fires occurred through a combination of extreme weather, extensive planting of highly flammable pine and Eucalyptus monoculture, abandonment and mismanagement of farmland,

criminal intent and ignorance. The damage to the natural eco-systems, to their biodiversity and to cultural heritage of the area has been extensive, and possibly irreversible for the already threatened species such as the Iberian lynx.

The following entities are involved in the development of an integrated governance structure of the region:

- At the local level and regional level, all stakeholders involved in administrative programmes, organized in an Agenda 21 stakeholder representational grid entering into a collaborative and participative visioning and planning process.
- At the national level, government entities including the Ministry of Agriculture the *Concelho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentavel* (CNADS) and the sustainable tourism division of the Ministry of Economy are asked to participate with resources and expertise offered in an effective manner.
- At the European level, the European Commission is called upon to provide a coherent overview of the European dimension, covering member States most affected, namely Portugal, Italy, Spain and France. In particular it is being asked to support local level efforts in these areas in collaboration with national entities and local agents, by initiating a series of working groups in each region that act as information exchanges on best practice for restoration and reconstruction of these areas. These working sessions would aim to bring together inter-disciplinary specialists with public and private sector stakeholders, exchanging visions of what can be done and how to get the resources to do it. In particular the European Commission is asked to prepare a single information resource guide on:
  - What support the European Union offers to stakeholders in these regions,
  - How to implement the good governance (Better Regulation Package) principles in the local process (in particular how to ensure good governance and transparency of funding processes)
  - Capacity building measures for integrated territorial planning and implementation of sustainable development processes.
- The United Nations is called upon to ensure that its post World Summit Agenda 21 implementation programme in the ecosystems affected by the fires are given full resources to ensure the minimization of biodiversity loss and the ensure their rehabilitation. Particular intervention is called upon from UNEP, the CBD and the FAO to offer expertise and resources in collaboration with the European Union and National government in order to deliver implementation at the regional and local level.

As the summary of the talk, The Euro-Regional Research Model: European Landscapes - Ecological Sustainability through Integrated Monitoring Systems (EL-ESIMS) was presented. The Euro-regional research model represents how applied research is made relevant to policy funding decisions, and demonstrates how information and expertise can be methodically and cost effectively transferred across the EC.

Marcin F. Jedrzejczak