

# The Context of Ecotourism Policy and Planning

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Ecotourism is exploding around the world yet little is known about its possible and/or projected impacts and implications. A number of general books have been written recently on the subject of ecotourism (e.g. Fennell, 1999; Weaver, 2002; Page and Dowling, 2002). All have included some contributions to our collective understanding of the policies and strategies associated with ecotourism development. Conversely, there have been a number of general contributions made on tourism policy and planning issues (e.g. Gunn, 1994; Hall *et al.*, 1997; Hall, 2000). These books have included some principles and practices relevant to ecotourism. However, to the editors' knowledge no specific book exists which investigates and interrogates the specific topic of ecotourism policy and planning. Hence our desire to fill this niche with this edited volume of specially requested contributions from around the world.

## Tourism

Tourism may be loosely defined as travel outside one's normal home and workplace, the activities undertaken during the stay and the facilities created to cater for tourist needs (Mathieson and Wall, 1982: 1). Mathieson and Wall argued that tourism can also be described as a system with an originating area (the market or demand element) and a destination area (the attraction or supply side) with a travel component linking the two. Overlying this approach are the characteristics of tourists and destinations as well as a consequential component (impacts).

Tourism can also be viewed as a global activity providing service sector employment, revenue and general economic impacts. On a large scale this is generally referred to as 'mass' tourism. However, over recent years a number of types of tourism have arisen as an alternative to mass tourism, which collectively are referred to as 'alternative' tourism. This has been broadly defined as forms of tourism that set out to be consistent with natural, social and community values and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interactions and shared experiences (Wearing and Neil, 1999: 3). Alternative tourism fosters sustainability through the process of selective marketing in order to attract environmentally conscious tourists who show respect for the natural and cultural components of tourism destinations and are conservation minded and culturally sensitive in their use of them. Such an alternative approach of appropriate tourism, which embraces strategies considered preferable to mass tourism, have been fostered for over two decades (Britton, 1980).

Alternative tourism, and indeed a whole range of nature tourism options such as farmhouse tourism and kibbutz guesthouses, offer ideal vehicles for sustainable development. Romeril (1989a) suggested that they can represent a new order of tourism development to parallel the hoped for new economic order. Alternative tourism has also been referred to in whole or in part as 'defensive' tourism (Krippendorf, 1982, 1987), 'green' tourism (Jones, 1987), 'nature-oriented' tourism (Durst and Ingram, 1988), 'conscious' or 'soft' tourism (Mäder, 1988) and ecotourism (Boeger, 1991).

Cox (1985: 6) suggests that the positive features of alternative tourism typically include:

1. Development within each locality of a special sense of place, reflected in architectural character and development style, sensitive to its unique heritage and environment.
2. Preservation, protection and enhancement of the quality of resources, which are the basis of tourism.
3. Fostering development of additional visitor attractions with roots in their own locale and developed in ways which complement local attributes.
4. Development of visitor services which enhance the local heritage and environment.
5. Endorsement of growth when and where it improves things, not where it is destructive, or exceeds the carrying capacity of the natural environment or the limits of the social environment, beyond which the quality of community life is adversely affected.

As a form of alternative tourism, ecotourism adopts many of the characteristics inherent in the above description, especially in regard to carrying capacities, preservation and local development. It differs

from other forms of alternative tourism, however, on the basis of the primary focus of participants (natural history), the settings in which these activities take place (primarily natural areas, although other areas may play a part in ecotourism) and the focus on education (environmental). To Buckley (1994), ecotourism occurs along four main dimensions, including a nature base, support for conservation, sustainable management and environmental education. These may be perceived as the root characteristics of the concept. Other definitions have been much more elaborate, focusing on a number of related themes. For example, Weaver (2002: 15) writes that:

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that fosters learning experiences and appreciation of the natural environment, or some component thereof, within its associated cultural context. It has the appearance (in concert with best practice) of being environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable, preferably in a way that enhances the natural and cultural resource base of the destination and promotes the viability of the operation.

In fact, over 80 different definitions of ecotourism have been examined in the tourism literature (see Fennell, 2001a). Consequently, it is important to keep in mind that, with such a wealth of definitions in circulation, no one stands out as a definitive example, with few prospects of ever achieving consensus as a result of a diversity of setting and situational dynamics.

## **Sustainability**

The advent of mass tourism in the second half of the 20th century was paralleled by the rise of the environmental movement globally. With the increase in tourists visiting natural areas it was clear that at some stage the environmental movement would meet tourism development and object to the increased adverse impacts caused by mass tourists. This occurred in the 1980s and became a major focus for disenchanted environmentalists, who were rallying against the environmental destruction caused by rapid growth.

In an effort to solve the situation the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published a report entitled *Our Common Future*, generally referred to as 'The Brundtland Report' after its chairperson, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway (WCED, 1987). The report examined the world's critical environmental and developmental problems and concluded that only through the sustainable use of environmental resources will long-term economic growth be achieved. Hence, the term 'sustainable development' was coined and in a relatively short space of time it became the new driving

force of global development. Five basic principles of sustainability are proffered by the report (Bramwell and Lane, 1993). They are:

1. The idea of holistic planning and strategy making.
2. The importance of preserving essential ecological processes.
3. The need to protect both human heritage and biodiversity.
4. The need to develop in a manner that fosters long-term productivity sustainable for future generations.
5. The goal of achieving a better balance of equity among nations.

Overall, the concept of sustainable development is that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Jordan, 1995: 166).

## Tourism and Sustainability

The link between tourism and sustainability was fostered by a number of advocates in the 1980s (e.g. Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Farrell and McLellan, 1987). They suggested that the environment and tourism should be integrated in order to maintain environmental integrity and successful tourism development. They also advanced the notion that a symbiosis between tourism and the physical environment is the second strand of a dual braid of concern, the first being the contextual integration of both physical and social systems (Farrell and McLellan, 1987). They further argued that:

the true physical environment is not the ecosystem, the central core of ecology. This is an environment (better still an analogue model) perceived by those occupying a subset of the scientific paradigm, and their viewpoint is not exactly the same as the abiotic vision of landscape perceived by the earth scientist or the more balanced landscape or region, the core of the geographer's study.

(Farrell and McLellan, 1987: 12)

Their reasoned appeal for a more holistic view was advanced with the need for the integration of community concern and involvement in tourism development as contended by Murphy (1983, 1985). According to Gunn (1987: 245) this integrative approach is one in which the 'resource assets are so intimately intertwined with tourism that anything erosive to them is detrimental to tourism'. Conversely, support of environmental causes, by and large, is support of tourism. It is this view which has begun to shape tourism generally, and ecotourism specifically, in recent decades.

The underlying concept of sustainable tourism development is the equating of tourism development with ecological and social responsibility. Its aim is to meet the needs of present tourists and host regions

while protecting and enhancing environmental, social and economic values for the future. Sustainable tourism development is envisaged as leading to the management of all resources in such a way that it can fulfil economic, social and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. According to GLOBE 90 (1990: 2), the goals of sustainable tourism are:

1. To develop greater awareness and understanding of the significant contributions that tourism can make to the environment and the economy.
2. To promote equity in development.
3. To improve the quality of life of the host community.
4. To provide a high quality of experience for the visitor.
5. To maintain the quality of the environment on which the foregoing objectives depend.

Achieving the fifth goal of environmental conservation includes providing for intergenerational equity in resource conservation (Witt and Gammon, 1991). It also includes avoiding all actions that are environmentally irreversible, undertaking mitigation or rehabilitation actions where the environment is degraded, promoting appropriate environmental uses and activities, and cooperating in establishing and attaining environmentally acceptable tourism.

However, it has been argued that, although 'the concept of ecotourism is still often used synonymously with that of sustainable tourism, in reality, ecotourism fits within the larger concept of sustainable tourism' (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1998: 8). And herein lies a conundrum. We would argue that ecotourism is a niche form of tourism which fosters sustainable development principles. That is, the former is a 'type' of tourism to which the latter is an approach, or it is a 'process' which drives tourism. Thus ecotourism encompasses sustainability principles and in fact should be regarded as the exemplar of the sustainability approach within tourism generally.

## **Policy and Planning Issues**

Policies are the plan of action adopted or pursued by governments or businesses and so on whereas strategies represent the steps to achieve them. According to Hall *et al.* (1997: 25) the focus of government activity is public policy; thus it reflects 'a consequence of the political environment, its values and ideologies, the distribution of power, institutional frameworks and of decision-making processes'. Policies are made at a range of levels, from the micro (site scale), through to the medium (regional, state or provincial) and macro (national, supra-

national and global) scales. In addition there are numerous groups which influence policies. These groups can include pressure groups, such as tourism industry associations, conservation groups, community groups, community leaders and significant individuals (e.g. local government councillors and groups spokespeople), government employees and representatives (e.g. employees of tourism departments and regional boards as well as members of parliament), academics and consultants (Hall *et al.*, 1997).

The terms policy and planning are intimately related (Hall, 2000). Plans embrace the strategies with which policies are implemented. Planning is predicting and therefore requires some estimated perception of the future. Although it is reliant on observation and deduction from research conclusions it also relies heavily on values (Rose, 1984). Planning should provide a resource for informed decision making. Hall (2000) suggests that planning is a part of an overall planning–decision–action process.

Unplanned, uncontrolled tourism growth can destroy the very resource on which it is built (Pearce, 1989). Tourism planning is a process based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution to human welfare and environmental quality (Getz, 1987). Getz identifies four broad approaches to tourism planning. They are boosterism, economic, physical/spatial and community oriented. In this approach tourism planning is regarded as an integrated activity which incorporates economic, social and environmental components, spatial (accessibility) concerns and temporal (evolutionary stage) implications. In addition it recognizes the basic components of demand (markets) and supply (destinations) linked by transport and communications. To these four approaches a fifth has been added: ‘sustainable tourism planning’ (Hall, 1995).

Since the introduction of the *World Conservation Strategy* (IUCN, 1980) with its emphasis on ‘ecodevelopment’ there has been a strong move towards recognizing the interdependencies that exist among environmental and economic issues. This led to the Brundtland Commission’s ‘sustainable development’ concept which equates development with environmental and social responsibility. This approach was advanced by Travis (1980) who suggested that taking actions which ensure the long-term maintenance of tourist resources (natural or human-made) is good economics, as it can mean long-term economic returns from their use. This was endorsed by Romeril in his study of tourism and the environment symbiosis when he concluded that ‘tourism’s strong dependence on quality natural resources makes such a goal (of sustainable development) not just a desired ideal but an economic necessity’ (Romeril, 1985: 217). While it was being argued that it made good economic sense to look after the environment, it was also advocated that ‘the environment should no longer be viewed pri-

marily in negative terms as a constraint, but as a resource and an exciting opportunity for compatible human use' (Pigram 1986: 2).

The call for the application of the sustainable development approach to tourism has been reflected in its suggested incorporation into planning procedures. Among the first advocates were Mathieson and Wall (1982) who had compiled their treatise on tourism's economic, physical and social impacts. They stated 'planning for tourist development is a complex process which should involve a consideration of diverse economic, environmental and social structures' Mathieson and Wall (1982: 178). The same conclusion was drawn by Murphy (1985) in his advocacy of a community approach to tourism planning. He concluded that tourism planning needs to be restructured so that environmental and social factors may be placed alongside economic considerations. Getz (1986) approached the situation from his investigation of tourism planning models and indicated that reference to theoretical models will remind tourism planners not to act in isolation from other social, economic and environmental planning.

During the late 1980s the sustainable development approach to tourism planning was advanced by a number of authors (Inskeep, 1987, 1988; Gunn, 1987, 1988; Pearce, 1989; Romeril, 1989a,b). Inskeep (1988) suggested that tourism planning cannot be carried out in isolation but must be integrated into the total resource analysis and development of the area with possible land and water conflicts resolved at any early stage. He noted that recently prepared tourism plans gave much emphasis to socio-economic and environmental factors and to the concept of controlled development.

Pearce (1989) indicated that the recognition of tourism's composite nature and multiplicity of players involved in its development are critical in planning for tourism. This was endorsed by Romeril (1989a) who stated that a strong emphasis of many strategies is their integrated nature where tourism is one of a number of sector and land-use options. In deciding national and regional policies, a matrix of all sectors of activity are assessed and evaluated: positive and negative economic effects, positive and negative social effects, positive and negative environmental effects, and so on. Thus tourism and environmental resource factors are not taken in isolation, nor at the remote end of a decision-making process.

## **Goals**

The goals of tourism plans will inevitably determine their role for environmental protection or conservation. Murphy (1983) argued that most tourism goals and planning were oriented towards business interests and economic growth. This was echoed 3 years later by Getz

(1986) who asserted that a review of tourism models suggested that tourism planning is predominantly project and development oriented.

However, the goals of tourism planning are changing. The major goal of one approach, the Products' Analysis Sequence for Outdoor Leisure Planning (PASOLP), is to integrate tourism planning into a region or country's wider political, economic, social and environmental context (Baud Bovy, 1982). A comprehensive list of 13 aims of planning tourism development includes several oriented to the environment. These are: to minimize erosion of the very resources on which tourism is founded and to protect those which are unique; and to ensure that as far as practicable the image presented by the destination is matched by the extent of environmental protection and facilities provided (Lawson and Baud Bovy, 1977).

The planning goals of both McIntosh (1977) and Gunn (1979) have always included environmental aspects but have changed over time to incorporate social aspects. For example, the original goals of McIntosh (1977) encompassed tourism development within a community framework. They include the following:

1. To provide a framework for raising the living standard of local people through the economic benefits of tourism.
2. To develop an infrastructure and provide recreation facilities for both visitors and residents.
3. To ensure that the types of development within visitor centres and resorts are appropriate to the purposes of these areas.
4. To develop a programme that is consistent with the cultural, social and economic philosophy of the government and people of the host area.

In a later edition of McIntosh's (1977) book, McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) added a fifth goal, 'optimizing visitor satisfaction', which becomes the plan's zenith point and is Gunn's (1979) first tourism planning goal. The goals of Gunn (1979) originally included user satisfaction, increased rewards to ownership and development, and the protection of environmental resource assets. Murphy (1983: 182) later noted that 'while Gunn's first two goals were distinctly business oriented his final goal recognizes the symbiotic relationship between a successful tourism industry and a protected environment' – the early stirrings of a renewable resource philosophy. Gunn (1988) later added a fourth goal of 'local adaptation' in which tourism is integrated into the total social and economic life of a community. No doubt the inclusion of this goal is in part a reflection of the advocacy of tourism as a community industry by Murphy (1983, 1985).

The major goal of Mill and Morrison's (1985) model is to preserve and enhance unique destination attractions in order to maintain



tourism as a long-term economic activity. To achieve this primary goal they list five subsidiary aims:

1. To identify alternative approaches to tourism marketing and development.
2. To adapt to the unexpected in economic and other external situations.
3. To maintain uniqueness of product.
4. To create the desirable in destination marketing and organization.
5. To avoid the undesirable such as negative economic, social or environmental impacts.

In summary, the goals of area development tourism planning models have shifted away from an emphasis on economic considerations to include community concerns (Gunn, 1988; McIntosh and Goeldner, 1990) and environmental aspects; for example, protection of resources (Gunn, 1988) and reduction of adverse impacts (Mill and Morrison, 1985).

## **Levels**

Tourism planning can occur at a variety of levels including intranational, involving two or more countries from the same region (Pearce 1989), national, regional, local and site scale (WTO, 1980). National tourism planning incorporates economic, social and environmental aspects and details policies, strategies and phases commensurate with overall national planning goals. A physical structure plan includes identification of the major tourist attractions, designation of tourist regions, transport access to and within a country, as well as touring patterns. National plans also recommend development, design and facility standards and the institutional elements to effectively implement and operate tourism. Such plans are usually based on projections of demand and represent 5 or 10 year policies which are subject to periodic review.

The regional level of planning identifies appropriate regional policies and strategies, the major tourist access points, the internal transport network, primary and secondary tourist attraction features, specific resort and other tourism sites, types of urban tourism development needed, and regional tour patterns (Inskeep, 1988). It also usually incorporates economic, social and environmental factors. Social factors include the need for public participation in the preparation of a regional tourism plan. These factors form part of the community approach advocated by Murphy (1985). Environmental concerns at the regional level include the need for adequate zoning to encourage the concentration or dispersal of tourist activity. Areas of concentration should be those with highly resistant environments or should have

been hardened to protect the environment. Dispersal allows for the distribution of small-scale developments throughout the region in order to reduce environmental pressures in any particular spot.

An environmentally oriented regional tourism policy includes the use of tourism to promote conservation; strategic market segmentation of conservation conscious tourists; and industry growth at a pace commensurate with the needs of adequate planning, implementation and monitoring of changes (Inskeep, 1987: 122). Of all the levels of tourism planning it is the regional level which appears to offer the best opportunity for achieving both tourism and environmental protection goals.

## **Ecotourism Policy and Planning**

As the global tourism industry continues a trend of sustained growth, moving more people and generating more domestic and foreign revenues, it often does so at the expense of the social and ecological integrity of destination regions. As a consequence of this growth, tourism policy makers, particularly government, have been forced to consider a variety of new approaches (e.g. information, regulation, accreditation) to ensure that the environment, local people, tourists and business remain unaffected by the negative impacts of the industry. Despite the mounting concern over such impacts, little has been accomplished, especially by government, to actively stimulate policy development (Lickorish, 1991) or to enforce weak policies that are currently in use.

Policy is especially relevant to the ecotourism industry, because of what this 'type' of tourism is said to value (ethical approaches to management, local people, the protection of natural heritage, and so on). An absence of sound policy and planning, coupled with the fact that ecotourism is the fastest growing sector of the world's largest industry (upwards of 20% of the world travel market as ecotourism (WTO, 1998)), demonstrates an impending need for better industry organization. Unfortunately, however, ecotourism policy has only recently come about, as a consequence of insufficient consensus on what constitutes appropriate ecotourism development. The nature of the industry (strong advocates representing parks, the environment, NGOs, government, industry and local people) is one that demands an effective balance between development and conservation, supply vs. demand, benefits vs. costs and people vs. the environment.

A study by Fennell (2001b) of over 60 regional tourism offices in North America found that most had not instituted ecotourism policies, despite the fact that there was overwhelming consensus on the value of policy to the industry. A significant factor constraining policy

development for the industry is the lack of agreement on how to define the concept and identify a process in which to classify ecotourism products. The central aim of this book is to critically examine ecotourism (definitions, products and policies) through a variety of case studies from around the world. This approach provides an objective overview of the extent of global ecotourism policy. It demonstrates the need for further refinement of existing policy, and for the creation of new, dynamic policies geared towards the evolution of a successful ecotourism industry at the start of the new millennium.

Although there are many environmental planning models as well as numerous tourism planning approaches, there are few ecotourism planning frameworks. Obviously the relationship between the two needs to be better understood. The few planning processes for ecotourism at the regional level that have already been proposed include the ecological approach of Van Riet and Cooks (1990) and the regional strategic tourism framework of Gunn (1988). Underlying these frameworks for the environment and tourism is the intrinsic belief that tourism developments must not only maintain the natural and cultural resources but also sustain them. To achieve this goal, strategic regional land-use planning should include such components as resource protection, agriculture, pastoral use, urban areas and mining to be established in a carefully planned and controlled manner which sets conditions on growth and maintains or enhances environmental quality. Outstanding natural features can continue to be significant tourist attractions only if they are conserved. If there is any doubt that the natural environment cannot be protected or enhanced then tourism development should not be allowed to proceed.

Ecotourism planning involves aspects of both environmental planning and tourism planning. Components of the former include environmental protection, resource conservation and environmental impact assessment while tourism planning provides aspects of area development and social assessment. The need for further research into ecotourism planning has been articulated for both the general planning framework arena (Farrell and McLellan, 1987) and the evaluation of impacts (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Other aspects which require further research include case studies on areas such as the tropics, arid lands and small islands (Inskeep, 1987) as well as the link between environmental and social aspects of tourism development (Murphy, 1985).

An analysis of the more than 1600 tourism plans inventoried by the WTO (1980) study found that: (i) approximately one-third were not implemented; (ii) few plans integrated tourism with broader socio-economic development objectives and those whose 'social aspects' have priority over direct profitability are even more exceptional; and (iii) few examples were found of plans that made firm and specific

provision for protecting the environment (quoted in Pearce, 1989: 276–277).

One aspect of tourism planning which is often fostered is the need for the integration of tourism in area development. However, as has been argued earlier in this introduction there are fewer approaches that advocate the need for the integration of tourism and environmental protection. Yet a real need exists for this to take place if the symbiotic link between the two is to be transferred from concept to reality. Inskip (1987: 128) asserts that tourism planning of natural attractions 'should be closely coordinated and integrated with park and conservation planning at the national, regional and local levels with respect to both geographic distribution and intensity of the tourism development'. Achieving environmental–tourism compatibility in natural areas is best undertaken at the regional level where it is suggested that tourism planning can provide one of the best opportunities for attaining environmental goals (UNDP and WTO, 1986). This has also been supported from regional land-use planning (Sijmons, 1990).

Despite their different goals, tourism planning and environmental planning also share a common spatial framework. Within a tourism destination zone, Gunn (1988) identifies attraction clusters, the service community and linkage corridors, whereas in the ABC approach to environmental planning, Smith *et al.* (1986) identify cultural activity nodes, hinterlands and corridors. A final similarity concerns the integration of social values in each of the two planning approaches. The role of people as part of the ecosystem is central to emerging ecological approaches just as the incorporation of social values forms part of recent tourism planning processes.

Ecotourism planning can be carried out at a range of levels. At the site scale the planning of ecoresorts, lodges and associated facilities includes locational analysis, financial feasibility, environmental assessment and site planning. This last factor incorporates environmentally sensitive architectural and engineering designs as well as landscaping (Gunn, 1987). Ecoethics, which encourage the environmentally sensitive design of tourist developments in natural areas, should be included for every ecotourism development (WATC and EPA, 1989). Ecolodges should emphasize a high degree of creative, positive interaction with natural features. In the planning, development and operation of an ecotourism facility, rapport and empathy with the site should be fostered and its ambience maintained and enhanced harmoniously (Page and Dowling, 2002).

National ecotourism planning incorporates economic, social and environmental aspects and details policies, strategies and phases commensurate with overall national tourism planning goals. An ecotourism plan includes identification of the major ecotourism attractions, designation of the ecotourism regions, transportation

access to and within a country, as well as ecotouring patterns. National plans also recommend development, design, and facility standards and the institutional elements to effectively implement and operate ecotourism. Such plans are usually based on projections of demand and represent 5 or 10 year policies that are subject to periodic review.

The regional level of ecotourism planning identifies appropriate regional policies and strategies, the major tourist access points, and the internal transportation network, primary and secondary ecotourism attraction features, specific ecoresorts and other ecotourism sites, and regional ecotour pattern. It also usually incorporates economic, social and environmental factors. Social factors include the need for public participation in the preparation of a regional ecotourism plan. Environmental concerns at the regional level include the need for adequate zoning to encourage the concentration or dispersal of ecotourist activity. Areas of concentration should be those with highly resistant environments or should have been hardened to protect the environment. Dispersal allows for the distribution of small-scale ecotourism developments throughout the region so as to reduce environmental pressures in any particular spot. Of all the levels of ecotourism planning it is the regional level that appears to offer the best opportunity for achieving both tourism and environmental protection goals.

## **Local Communities**

Probably the most prominent benefits of ecotourism policies and planning are to foster developments that provide benefits for local communities and their natural environments. These include new jobs, businesses and additional income; new markets for local products; improved infrastructure, community services and facilities; new skills and technologies; increased cultural and environmental awareness, conservation and protection; and improved land-use patterns.

Ecotourism at the community level should be developed within the context of sustainable, regional, national and even international tourism development. Sustainable development principles that can be applied to regional ecotourism development include (from Page and Dowling, 2002):

1. Ecological sustainability which ensures that development is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources.
2. Social and cultural sustainability which ensures that development increases people's control over their own lives, is compatible with the

culture and values of people affected by it, and maintains and strengthens community identity.

3. Economic sustainability which fosters development that is economically efficient and so that resources are managed so that they can support future generations.

Ecotourism can provide the opportunity to present a region's natural areas, promoting an identity that is unique. It can create new and exciting tourism experiences, promote excellence in tourism, present and protect natural areas, benefit local communities and encourage commercially successful and environmentally sound tourism operations (Page and Dowling, 2002). The vision for regional ecotourism development is for a vibrant and ecologically, commercially and socially sustainable ecotourism industry that leads the way in tourism development (Dowling and James, 1996).

The key to capitalizing on the potential benefits offered through ecotourism development is to maximize the opportunities and minimize the adverse impacts through environmentally appropriate policies and planning. If this is carried out then a sound base will have been established for ecotourism to develop and flourish in harmony with the natural environments and cultural settings on which it depends.

## Management Strategies

There are a wealth of strategies and actions for managing tourism in natural areas (Newsome *et al.*, 2002). Strategies are often viewed as representing the mechanisms and processes by which objectives are achieved; for example, through the reservation of an area as a national park. Once reservation has occurred, zoning generally follows. The management of ecotourism is generally carried out through either site management or visitor management. Site management actions rely on manipulating infrastructure, where visitors go and what they do. Some examples include campsite and trail design and management.

Visitor management concentrates on managing visitors by regulating numbers, group size and length of stay. It also provides information and education as well as the enforcement of regulations. Ecotourism management includes the incorporation of a number of voluntary strategies such as codes of conduct, accreditation and best practice. Strategies employed by government organizations are generally more regulatory in manner and include licensing and leases.

## **Outline of the Book**

The book is divided into five main sections focusing on the theoretical considerations of ecotourism policy and planning (Section 1) followed by case studies at a range of levels including regions (2), countries (3) and continents (4), ending with some brief conclusions (5).

Section 1 on 'Understanding Ecotourism Policies' includes five chapters. Chapter 2 examines the institutional arrangements for ecotourism policy (Michael Hall, New Zealand). Hall argues that ecotourism policy does not occur in a vacuum but instead is the outcome of a shared process reflecting a combined set of stakeholders' interests and values. He outlines a range of ecotourism policy scales (e.g. local, state, national and international) and instruments (e.g. regulatory, voluntary, expenditure and financial).

Christopher Holtz and Stephen Edwards (USA) describe the synergy between biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism in Chapter 3. The authors note that while this can be achieved through appropriate planning and management of tourism, to date this has not occurred to any large extent. They argue that tourism planning should include biodiversity conservation at all levels in order to sustain the resource base upon which it is built.

Heather Zeppel (Australia) explores the relationship between ecotourism and indigenous people (Chapter 4). She asserts that indigenous ecotourism ventures focus on the cultural significance of the natural environment. Indigenous tours educate visitors on their environmental values combined with the sustainable use of natural resources. Zeppel concludes that, in Australia, indigenous ecotourism ventures remain peripheral to the ecotourism industry of the country.

The wider aspect of culture and ecotourism is investigated by David Crouch and Scott McCabe (England). The chapter (5) seeks to explore the issues surrounding the labelling of ecotourism as a set of ideas and practices. It examines ecotourism from the standpoint of tourist consumption and production practices and investigates the effects that these may have on the creation of ecotourism policy development. The authors conclude that ecotourists should be made fully aware of their contribution towards development and their role in affecting the cultures of their destination hosts.

Tanja Mihalič (Slovenia) outlines the economic instruments of ecotourism policy derived from environmental theories (Chapter 4). Mihalič concludes that market, fiscal and administrative instruments can be used in ecotourism to minimize or prevent environmental damage.

Section 2 presents two case studies of ecotourism development policies in regions in Australia and the People's Republic of China. The former examines policy and strategy issues for ecotourism in Australia's tropical rainforests (Diane Dredge and Jeff Humphreys). The chapter (7) examines the approach of the Douglas Shire, North Queensland, in regard to the development of ecotourism in the Daintree River area. The discussion includes an examination of a number of environmental, social and economic issues arising from ecotourism and demonstrates the complexity of local government's role in ecotourism management 'especially where overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities give rise to complex policy making environments'.

Chapter 8 by Trevor Sofield and Sarah Li, explores the complexities of ecotourism policy formulation in Yunnan Provinces, south-west China. Some of the issues canvassed by the authors include a lack of fit with existing government priorities, the politics of the situation and the power exercised by vested (often competing) interests in the recipient society, and a lack of cultural values which conflict with those imported by the plan. Another issue is that planning had to take account of the Chinese desire to visit reserves in extremely large numbers, instead of the idealized 'Western' concept comprising small-scale, low impact ecotourism development.

Section 3 comprises five country case studies. In Chapter 9 Karen Thompson and Nicola Foster (England) examine ecotourism development and government policy in Kyrgyzstan. The authors note that the country remains at a relatively primitive stage of tourism development and is hindered by unresolved political and economic difficulties. However, they argue that the ecological and cultural resources present a strong base for its emerging ecotourism market.

Ecotourism development in Fiji is investigated by Kelly Bricker (USA). Like Kyrgyzstan, Fiji is politically unstable, thus presenting another level of challenge to the establishment of ecotourism policies and plans. Nevertheless the country has a national professional association ecotourism plan and advisory council. Overall the seeds of a sound future have been planted but, until confidence is restored in Fiji's political situation, this seed will lie dormant.

Ecotourism in Australia is described by John Jenkins and Stephen Wearing (Chapter 11). Despite the fact that the country is upheld as one of the world's leaders in ecotourism development, the authors present a number of issues, which are critical to its future growth. These include public sector reforms influencing the management of tourism in protected areas, the imposition of user fees and other charges, and the role of the private sector in protected areas. They conclude that there is a continued need for scientific research in ecotourism planning and management as well as the increased protection of protected areas and greater conservation measures.



Ecotourism policies in New Zealand are outlined in two chapters. The first, by James Higham and Anna Carr (Chapter 12) describes the scope and scale of the industry and provides a critical review of current policy initiatives to develop high quality and sustainable ecotourism in New Zealand. Policy directions advanced include redefining the country's definition of ecotourism, the establishment of an accreditation scheme and enhancing the place of interpretation within ecotourism operations.

Ken Simpson examines broader policy issues related to the protection of the environment and the development of tourism in New Zealand's national parks and other protected areas (Chapter 13). Ecotourism policy development is investigated both in theory as well as in practice in relation to the government departments of conservation and tourism. Simpson concludes that the foundations for effective ecotourism policy are in place but that major problems are inherent in these departments' roles. The Department of Conservation advocates both environmental protection and tourism development, while Tourism New Zealand calls for maximizing international tourist visitation to the country with little responsibility for them once they arrive.

The fourth section comprises three continental case studies of Europe, the Americas and Antarctica.

Dimitrios Diamantis and Colin Johnson (Switzerland) investigate the economic role of ecotourism development within central and eastern Europe (Chapter 14). They particularly highlight the importance of biosphere reserves in ecotourism. Tourism markets are likely to focus on the high value added, environmentally aware niche of Western tourists combined with the traditional mass demands from more general tourists. To cope with both it is proposed that a key element in the successful management of ecotourism attractions such as biosphere reserves is the introduction of carrying capacity levels.

Ecotourism policies in North and South America are investigated by Stephen Edwards, William McLaughlin and Sam Ham (Chapter 15). The study describes how governmental tourism agencies define ecotourism and foster its development through legislation, plans, reports and discussion documents, speeches and the range of tourism policy roles. The authors find that the countries on the two continents still lack clearly defined ecotourism policies. They argue that defining ecotourism is a necessary first step in the ecotourism policy development process. Once this has occurred then ecotourism acts as a positive force in conservation, benefits host communities and promulgates environmental awareness.

Chapter 16 examines ecotourism policies in Antarctica. The authors, Thomas Bauer (China) and Ross Dowling (Australia) outline the growth and impacts of tourism on the continent.

The conclusions of Section 5 (Chapter 17) are formulated as a synthesis of what is viewed to be the most salient issues emerging from the book. In particular, the discussion touches upon the importance of stakeholder groups in policy; management actions; and policy development, complexity and governance. An attempt is made to examine both the macro perspective of policy (i.e. the role that sustainable development and governance play in policy) and the micro perspective, which involves how ecotourism operators might better structure their services to fit into a broader policy environment.

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