15 Sustainable Development of Tourism. A Framework for Discussion and Research

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At the end of the era in which fundamental ideologies seem to have disappeared, Korthals (1994, p. 11) points to the emergence of one new vital story, that of 'sustainability.' Almost all levels of governmental policy and almost every economic sector of society now calls for new forms of growth: sustainable, environmentally aware, integrating economic and social development and more equitable in its impact. In the wake of the Brundtland report *Our Common Future* and *Agenda 21*, the tourism sector has also gradually embraced the concept of sustainable development.

International bodies such as the World Tourism Organization, the IUCN, Earth Council and the Worldbank, have become increasingly aware of the scale and scope of international tourism which, by accelerating transformations, could lead to the exhaustion of our natural and cultural resources. The pleas of organizations such as the ECTWT (Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism), Tourism Concern and the Ecotourism Society, together with publications by scientist in journals like *Annals of Tourism Research* or the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, have encouraged many countries to look for new forms of production and consumption in this field, which could enhance the sustainable development of tourism, and indeed sustainable development more generally.

The Dutch Council for Nature Policy (1994) in their report *Are we going too far?*, provoked debate by posing the following central question: 'Do we have to go and see everything which seems attractive and interesting to us, and at what price do we allow ourselves the space and freedom to do so?' One of the consequences was the establishment of intergovernmental 'task forces,' and reluctant admission by the Dutch tourism sector that a percentage of international tourism can be seen as a non-sustainable pattern of production and consumption.

However, as we shall see, sustainable development is a flag of convenience under which diverse ships sail, which helps to explain its power and popularity as a term in debates about development (Adams 1993, p. 218). As in other sectors of society, the concept of sustainable development in tourism accommodates a variety of different disputes, ranging from economic through social and cultural to environmental issues. This variety

not only relates to scale and scope, but also to the direction of the discourse.

It is far from clear whether sustainable development offers a new paradigm, or simply a green wash over business-as-usual. According to Adams (1993, p. 207), most commentators use the term in a loose and untheorized way. The concept of 'sustainable development' accommodates (development) strategies varying from light- to dark-green, from a romantic and nostalgic conservatism to a utopian socialism, from a 'zero growth' school of environmentalism to ideas about the importance of continued growth of the world economy (Schuurman 1992, p. 31). The same heterogeneity applies to discourse on sustainable development of tourism.

There appears to be little homogeneity or sense of common interest in the immensely diverse group of practices, commercial activities and interests we call 'tourism.' Tourism (as a practice and as an industry) is specific to distinct historical, cultural or geographical contexts, which makes the notion itself somewhat artificial.

Hence, the concept of sustainable development of tourism is even more complex to work with. This chapter does not, therefore, treat the sustainable development of tourism as a solution, but rather as a problem for critical review. First there is a brief discussion of the emergence of tourism as a problem. Second we discern the central issues at stake and put forward some questions for scientific research. Third, tourism is dealt with as a process of continuous transformation due to various interventions by producers and consumers. Finally, it will be argued that these processes of production and consumption provide very good reason for conceptualizing the sustainable development of tourism.

The Problem

Tourism was seen as a marginal addition to existing local economies, societies and land-use allocation systems during the 1950s and 1960s. The widespread assumption was that the impact could be accommodated by the use of surplus or existing factors of production, and that these were in any case 'clean activities' in terms of their physical impact. Economic, social and cultural consequences of tourism were supposed to be generally favorable, or at least not disadvantageous (Theuns 1989). Tourism was relatively neglected by the social sciences in those days, and few social scientist considered it worthwhile trying to study tourism as an international phenomenon. The first publications deserving mention appeared in the early 1970s, for example *The Golden Hordes* by Turner and Ash (1975) and the thesis by Hessels (1973) in the Netherlands.

The growth of tourism during the 1970s and 1980s increasingly undermined earlier assumptions about the impact of tourism. This growth is

characterized by an increasing *volume* of international tourism: from 25 million international arrivals and $2 billion in revenue in 1950 to more than 500 million international arrivals and more than $325 billion in revenue in 1995. A redoubling of tourism in the year 2010 is expected.

Tourism is furthermore characterized by an increasing *pace of development*. The overall dominance of Europe is in relative decline, while Eastern Europe, East Asia and the Pacific are catching up very quickly. Finally, there is *increasing complexity*. The tourism product consists of a variety of components, 'manufactured' by a variety of 'producers,' diverging from transnational tourism companies to the local souvenir shop owner, which is gradually 'consumed' by all sorts of tourists, at various places and times.

These developments have reached the point where discussion now focusses on such issues as 'limits of growth,' 'carrying capacity,' 'liveability' and – as in this chapter – 'sustainable development.' All these matters require choices and hence policy intervention and subsequently research to substantiate these choices. As a result, scientific interest in tourism and the discussion on 'pros' and 'cons' have rapidly increased. Among the critical issues are, first, the *economic* costs and benefits of tourism in terms of employment, foreign exchange and Gross Domestic Product (see for instance Theuns 1989; Harrison 1992). Second, the *environmental* consequences of tourism. This issue relates to two fundamental discussions: the impact of tourism on the environment in terms of depletion of water, soil and air; and the material and symbolic transformations of landscape (in the broadest sense) by tourism (see, for instance, Briassoulis and van der Straaten 1992; van der Duim and Philipsen 1995). Finally, the *cultural* 'cost and benefits,' centering on modernization and (under-)development theories and processes of globalization and localization (see for instance De Kadt 1992 and Wood 1993). Closely related to these issues is the whole field of *policy making*, which is virtual *terra incognita* with regard to tourism (Hitchcock *et al.* 1993).

Literature devoted to these critical issues has long been within the framework of a normative cost-benefit analysis. Referring to *economic* impact studies, Theuns (1989, p. 205) argued that:

'since the disutilities caused by tourism development may not only differ according to the type of tourism but also according to the institutional setting in which the development takes place, it is argued that making sweeping statements in which *the* benefits of tourism *per se* in *the* developing countries are praised or *the* costs are criticized gives evidence of unacceptable simplification.'

There has been a shift away from such simplifications in *cultural* studies of tourism within some modernization or dependency frameworks, focusing instead on people as active and strategic users of culture, participating in contexts where no single set of cultural interpretations has an inherent

claim to truth or authenticity. As Wood (1993, pp. 66–68) claims, tourism has its own peculiar dynamics which make it an interesting and challenging field of study, but its impact is always played out in an already dynamic and changing cultural context.

Similarly, the value judgements on for example *ecological* impacts of tourism are just as specific to particular (cultural or political) contexts. In other words, although ecological criteria for sustainability might seem fixed or objectively determined, they in fact are related to specific areas of reality in which interest and values are produced and established. It is therefore essential to acknowledge, when dealing with the concept of sustainability, that our environment in general (and nature in particular) is not only charged with physical impacts of tourism and recreation, but also – and perhaps more importantly – is a register of meanings. The increasingly divergent meanings held by different interest and pressure groups, government agencies and various parts of the tourist industry, need to be acknowledged in order to understand the conflicts and tensions surrounding the issue of sustainable development of tourism (see Clark *et al.* 1994).

The Discourse

The discourse on the relation between tourism and sustainable development has been broadened in yet another way. By and large, the discourse is moving from a dominant tourism-centric way to an *extra-parochial* way (Hunter 1995), asserting that tourism is in competition for scarce resources with other sectors and practices. Hence, the relation between tourism and sustainability is at least threefold:

The first important issue is how and in which and to what extent sustainable development could strengthen tourism development. Environmental problems due to agriculture, chemical industries, oil refineries and so on are influencing the quality of 'the tourist product.' According to Urry (1992), an environment appropriate for the 'tourist gaze' should be neither visually contaminated nor considered as dangerous, unnecessarily 'risky' or polluted. Other prerequisites for a healthy and sustainable development of tourism include a sound economy, a stable political context, availability of infrastructural facilities, an educated workforce, hygiene and the absence of mass poverty or disease (Theuns 1989, pp. 99–102).

A second frequently posed question concerns how and to what extent tourism can become more 'sustainable'; the central issue being how to prevent 'tourism destroying tourism.' Especially during the early 1990s, the tourism sector accepted the sustainability concept as a way of bringing the industry to the environmentally friendly side of the economic spectrum. Once the concept of 'sustainable tourism' had been introduced

there followed quite an explosion of sustainability related issues, thereby creating a kind of environmental legitimation for tourism. According to Hunter (1995), this 'dominant tourism centric paradigm of sustainable tourism development' is concerned with protecting the immediate resource base which will allow tourism development to be sustained. Attention is focussed almost exclusively on the tourist destination area, where management takes on a more meaningful scale. Tourism is primarily seen within destination areas as a triangular relationship between host areas and their habitats and peoples, holiday makers, and the tourism industry (see also Lane 1994, p. 102).

A third and more fundamental question is how and to what extent tourism could contribute to sustainable development in general. Hunter (1995) in particular stresses the importance of a broader approach, whereby the remit of sustainable tourism is reconceptualized primarily in terms of tourism's contribution to sustainable development. Since the predominant sustainable tourism development approach is overly tourism-centric and parochial (with a very limited view on scope, scale and context), 'practical measures designed to operationalize 'sustainable tourism' are failing to address many of the issues critical to the concept of sustainable development more generally, and may even actually work against the general requirements of sustainable development' (p. 156). However, even accepting Hunters' point of view, that 'under all circumstances, the resultant principles of sustainable tourism development are also principles of sustainable development' (1995, p. 163), the concept of sustainable tourism development is fraught with difficulties.

Four Questions

Achterberg points out that a meaningful use of the concept of sustainability starts from the assumption that implicitly or explicitly certain fundamental questions must be answered. Achterberg (1994, pp. 36–40) considers at least four to be extremely important: i) what is so valuable that it has to be sustained? ii) in whose interest will the objects of value be sustained? iii) what are the criteria for sustainability? and iv) how is sustainability pursued? Although extensive discussion of these four questions is well beyond the scope of this chapter, they do reveal some of the issues fundamental to the discourse on 'sustainable tourism.'

Referring to the first question, it could be argued that society should not strive to sustain every form of tourism, but rather those which enhance the quality of life. Discussion and assessment of quality standards should therefore precede decisions about forms of tourism to be promoted (and the way in which this should be done). The following examples illustrate this discussion.

Van Engelenburg and van Duyvenbode (1995) have argued for the compatibility of sustainable tourism development and NGO-development programmes, and subsequently that the quality of tourism development should be derived from development goals. In other words, the contribution of tourism development should be measured in terms of the more general goals of NGO-programmes, such as income generation, empowerment, advocacy towards the government or environmental protection. As a consequence, according to de Man (1996), tourism could sometimes even be used as a temporary vehicle for development. Once some more general development objectives (like community organization or income generation) had been achieved, tourism could be dropped.

According to Lengkeek (1994) the quality of tourist experience is strongly related to the possibility to search for 'other' realities. He argues that tourism should be safeguarded to a certain degree from continual commercialization and government intervention. The quality of tourist experience is endangered by the rationally organized everyday world, which eventually leads to an encapsulation and exploitation of 'contrastructure,' that is everything that falls outside the concept of everyday life and motivates tourists to travel. Lengkeek's theoretically argued tensions between the rationally organized everyday world and the contrastructure is at the heart of the 'sustainability' issue, since this tension, particularly apparent in the socio-cultural and physio-spatial environment, could lead to the exhaustion of the sources of contra-structural space and significance, which seems to be so fundamental for the tourist experience.

These two examples show that the discourse on the sustainable development of tourism within a wider framework should relate to fundamental societal questions, and possible answers concerning the most desirable forms of tourism ought to be subject to value judgements. As the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (1994) recently stated, it is impossible to work with one, objectively fixed, concept of 'sustainability' or 'sustainable development.' In this sense, the concepts of 'distributive justice' and 'sustainability' should both be the subject of political and ethical debates. These debates are also concerned with in whose interest it is that objects of value have to be sustained.

The second question therefore directly relates to the equitable distribution of resources, between 'rich and poor,' between the present and coming generations and among the various types of tourists looking for different experiences. In the tourism-centric paradigm this question is limited to that of preserving tourism's future seed corn, that is to protecting the immediate tourism resource base which will allow tourism development to be sustained. Stewardship of positive features of the countryside has particular resonance in the context of rural tourism (Hunter 1995, p. 157). While in the context of tourism in the Third World, there are pleas for systems of tourism education, environmental management and planning that will promote sustainable tourism.

Seen in a broader perspective, however, there are further issues at stake, through which the discourse on sustainable development of tourism is related to other, perhaps more fundamental, debates. One of these debates concerns globalization and localization (see for instance Schuurman 1996). Tourism was often seen as a form of cultural imperialism leading to economic dependency, homogenization of culture and destructing of environmental resources during the 1970s. However, recent research also indicates the dialectic between the global and the local, the interrelations between tourism and other economic developments, and the possibilities for new cultural syncretism. The concept of 'glocalization' sees ('local') people as active and strategic users of culture, leading to 'questions about the complex ways tourism enters and becomes part of an already on-going process of symbolic meaning and appropriation' (Wood 1993, p. 66). This concept also raises questions about how and to what extent the enormous migration of people as tourists, together with the flows of money and images that accompany them, could favor the protection of resources as rainforests, now threatened not so much by tourism as well by timber exploitation or cattle breeding. 'Glocalization' also concerns the possibilities for a more equitable distribution of economic resources from tourism.

Sustainable development of tourism, for instance, has often been associated with communitarian ideals and a strong commitment to (local) participation, whether this be in community politics, or in the workforce. In practice, however, as Henry and Jackson (1995) pointed out:

> 'there is a general pattern for the tourism industry of, at one pole, large-scale organizations (often in divisionalized structures and with transnational interests), operating in an oligopolistic context, while at the same time, at the other end of the scale are small organizations, often operating as simple structure in crowded market places.'

In promoting a sustainable tourism strategy, one has to cope with expropriation of profits from regions by large-scale, even perhaps multinational companies on the one hand, and the development of seasonal, part-time, low paid and un-unionized jobs on the other. As a consequence, bridges have to be built between the large-scale tourism networks, driven by exogenous forces and ruled by the laws of the free market, and small-scale networks, based upon local initiatives with a great sensitivity to aspects of local interests and local quality. In this respect, Dietvorst (1996, p. 9) argues for bridge actors or gatekeepers, who are crucial for guiding the centrifugal forces of the systems world by trying to integrate them in the world of the small-scale networks.

Achterberg's third question concerns the criteria for sustainability. These are once again related to 'parochial' and 'extra-parochial' paradigms. There are many examples how to assess sustainability criteria for tourism over the last few years (see for instance de Man 1993; UNEP 1994; WTO/IISD 1993; Blangy and Epler Wood 1993). A more comprehensive

example, although primarily within the tourism-centric paradigm, of the search for principles and practice of sustainable tourism management is found in Bramwell *et al.* (1996). This publication, funded by the European Commission, by four European universities, developed a theoretical framework to assist understanding and to review the principles and issues surrounding sustainable tourism management, as well as collecting a series of eight detailed case studies from several European countries examining the potential and pitfalls of implementing sustainable tourism management within different organizations and contexts.

However, in order to enable 'the reflexive practitioner to undertake a critical review of his/her own professional practice' Henry and Jackson (1995) stress the importance of putting the discourse on sustainable development of tourism within the framework of a range of policy areas. In order to do so they tease out the relationship between tourism practices and various approaches of environmentalism. Ecocentric and technocentric approaches have various implications for tourism policy and planning. At one end of the spectrum, for instance, a reduction in travel flows is advocated, not simply because 'travel is wasteful of resources but also because it involves dislocation and unsettling of communities and community values' (Henry and Jackson 1995, p 20). At the other end of the spectrum, technocentrics will 'accept market economy principles, and the centrality of technology for the addressing of contemporary problems' (p. 19). The quest for sustainability criteria should be related to various lines of ideological thought and it is obvious that 'technocentric' criteria will not match 'ecocentric' ones.

Similarly there is an argument for deleting the self-evident distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' cultural effects and abandoning (normative) statements about tourism's 'good' or 'bad' impact, and whether culture is being ruined or preserved. A perspective in which people are seen as active and strategic users of culture, participating in contexts where no single set of cultural interpretations has an inherent claim to truth and authenticity (Wood 1993, p. 66), puts a different complexion on the question of criteria for sustainability. Sustainability criteria, if any, emerge first and foremost from this perspective out of a negotiated agreement among stakeholders ('hosts' as well as 'guests') with different interests concerning the ongoing process of symbolic meaning and appropriation.

Finally, the question of how to achieve sustainability is closely related to answers to the questions above. It is essential to realize that different stakeholders have different interests concerning the use to which natural and cultural resources are put, and therefore efforts should be directed towards fostering and facilitating the interaction between stakeholders (Röling in: WUB 1996). Since 'local' entrepreneurs and other 'local' actors as well as international tour operators or hotel companies, tourism experts or governmental institutions are stakeholders, the sustainable

development of tourism can only emerge out of a negotiated agreement. Alternative scenarios are welcomed in this negotiation process. As Korthals (1994) states: 'the public nature of a democratic culture and the thematic approach of societal issues is served by the development of scenarios.' With the help of scenarios, debates can be broadened out and collective agreement can be promoted (see also Lengkeek 1994 and Sidaway; van der Voet 1994).

The development of scenarios is facilitated by (theoretical) tools, such as those offered by Ashworth and Dietvorst (1995) and the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (1995). I shall therefore argue in what follows that developing scenarios for the sustainable development of tourism would be promoted first by viewing the development of tourism as a continuous transformation process due to interventions by producers and consumers of many types. Intervention should be dealt with as a 'an ongoing transformational process that is constantly reshaped by its own organizational and political dynamic and by the specific conditions it encounters or itself creates' (Long 1992, p. 37), embracing both formally organized state agency intervention as well as that of companies, NGOs, 'local' entrepreneurs and the like that attempt to organize the 'tourism production process.' I shall also assert that these intervention by producers and consumers are a very good pretext for conceiving perspectives on sustainable development, which can be elaborated into scenarios.

A Transformation Model

The transformation model developed by the Center for Recreation and Tourism Studies of Wageningen Agricultural University emphasizes the dynamic character of tourism product development while providing an overarching concept that integrates both supply and demand (Dietvorst 1992; Ashworth and Dietvorst 1995). This model shows the continuing transformation of the original resource (whether a tropical rainforest, monument, traditional practice, urban public space, national park, or whatever), due to activities and interventions by producers and consumers of many types, wittingly or unwittingly, for a variety of reasons. It embraces material practices as well as the role of image production and interpretation.

The resource can be any element used in the creation of a tourism product. A distinction can usually be made between resources for which no regulation mechanism is necessary and scarce resources. Scarce resources can be divided into physical resources (land, water, vegetation, energy), economic resources like labour and capital goods (resources converted entirely through human effort), and socio-cultural resources (historical and here-and-now patterns of social life, folkways, traditions,

built environment, art and so on). According to this model, four different but related transformations can be distinguished.[1]

Material Transformation by 'Producers'

Producers are understood as social actors such as capitalist enterprises, state agencies or local people (Long 1992) who transform the original resource (such as the landscape or the city) by various practices (including building facilities, transforming coastal landscapes into tourist resorts, transforming historic buildings into museums, and by constructing trails). Tourism products emerge out of a network of actors who become partially, though hardly ever completely, enrolled in this 'production' process. The suppliers of the tourism product act upon other actors and are also subjected to the influence of activities of others in their region. The different functions compete for their share of the scarce space available. The changing relationship between the state and the market also exerts an influence upon the character and direction of tourism development in a certain area. Competition also occurs between tourism countries, regions and places in the struggle for a part of the market.

Symbolic Transformation by 'Producers'

It is widely acknowledged in the field of marketing that the acquisition of product information is influenced by a personal interpretation of the design or package. Because the tourism product often has a specific spatial character, people's view of the environment and the resulting mental image is subject to manipulation by producers. These producers transform the physical structure of a region more or less indirectly through coding. A certain coding is added to the already transformed material resource. In many cases this is the real added value of the tourism product, i.e., the illusion. The tourism product is packaged, designed and assembled. Lengkeek (1994) has argued that in this respect, tourist attractions are increasingly 'created' today. Attractions receive a 'signifying' function in modern society because they are designated as beautiful, worth-while, 'extra-ordinary' (Urry 1992) and funny. It is through coding that the producer can manipulate the consumer market.

Symbolic Transformation by 'Consumers'

Consumers or visitors transform the resource in the region or the area visited by them through their distinctive interpretation of the product offered. Tourists somehow 'match' their motives, needs, preferences with advertisements in newspapers, recommendations by friends and relatives, and with former experiences, which influence their decision to go for a day out, on holiday or to visit a museum. This transformation or assem-

blage is indirect because the supplier reacts to the trends in the market: the behaviour of the visitors.

Adventure and challenge is no longer looked for in stories or printed material but increasingly in visualized fiction and personally sensed authentic experiences. Pictures, movies or television replace verbal contacts or written sources. Sensory and more especially visual experiences are important today and form a major source of orientation for tourists: we are gazing at the Alps, the 'wonders of nature,' other tourists or the eruptions of El Arenal in Costa Rica. Lifestyle changes are not only important explanatory variables here. Different lifestyles also compete for the use of the same space at the same time, leading to conflicts between local inhabitants and visitors for many resources and facilities that are of central importance in much local policy for such areas.

Material Transformation by 'Consumers'

Finally, the decision to take a walk in the neighbourhood or a holiday in Costa Rica or on the Costa Brava contributes to the transformation of the physical and social structures of the areas visited. Space consumption, crowding, wear on infrastructure, deterioration of natural or historic monuments, erosion in vulnerable rainforests, disturbance of birds and other animals, traffic congestion and all kinds of environmental impacts belong to the direct transformation of the original tourism resource, as well as 'the struggles that take place over the attribution of specific social meanings to particular events, actions and ideas' (Long 1992, p. 24).

Fundamental to the understanding of each of the transformation processes described is the context in which they take place. The four transformations in the model form just the surface reflections of much wider and more complicated developments in society. The model focusses upon the spatially visible tracks of the transformations, but neglects the explanatory mechanisms. In order to reveal these, and reflecting discussions earlier this chapter, the original model has been extended by adding for instance the dialectic between the *global* and the *local*, between *flexibility* and *sustainability* and between *acceleration* and *inertia*.

We have already made some observations relating to the global–local debate. The closely relate discussion concerning the dialectic between acceleration and inertia points to the different time-space axes in which tourism transformation processes are taking place. On the one hand, tourism is part of the even faster circulation of goods and services within consumer capitalism and the ever increasing mobility opportunities. On the other hand, these increased mobility opportunities enable people to sustain their own small worlds at greater distances, through the same acceleration processes that threaten spaces which are characterized by (relative) inertness (rainforests, traditions etc.). According to Dietvorst (1996), the challenge is to find a balance between the development pro-

cesses on these very different time-space axes. Indeed, it is one of the central issues with respect to sustainable development of tourism.

The tension between sustainability and flexibility leads to all kinds of systems control and intervention. More insight is needed on the impact of these interventions in complicated social reality. The actual debate on the shift in roles between the public and the private sectors offers interesting viewpoints in this respect. However, in the following we will confine ourselves to some preliminary perspectives on sustainable development of tourism based on the above mentioned model.

Transformations Towards Sustainability?

One of the key issues involved in the discussion on sustainability is the debate about the level of consumption and production processes. Precisely consumer and producer behaviour is situated at the heart of the transformation model, and precisely consumer and producer behaviour lend themselves to direct interventions by (governmental and non-governmental) agencies.

The question, however, is which intervention practices will lead to the sustainable development of tourism. Although the concept of sustainability might seem fixed or objectively determined, it is not. It is in fact related to specific areas of reality in which interests and values are produced and established. Not only the world, but the tourism sector as well, are at the beginning of a lengthy process of scientific research and opinion formation concerning the meaning of sustainability. As we stated earlier, the concept has been unduly elevated into a symbol with which it is not possible to take issue.

The intention, however, is clear: we are concerned with a relationship between tourism and the environment (in the broadest sense of the word) that will safeguard the quality of at least the latter, but preferably both, on a long-term basis. The analogy with 'social justice' is self-evident: it is no more possible to provide an operational definition of the sustainable development of tourism that will have the same meaning for everyone and that will remain valid over time, than it is for the concept of social justice. Defining the meaning of the concept is a continuous and political process, which always takes place on the basis of incomplete knowledge and which will not be the same for everyone at any moment (Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy 1995, pp. 19–22). Hence, there are numerous views on sustainability, closely related to the discourse earlier in this chapter. Within a tourism-centric paradigm the issues at stake are clearly different than those within a less limited view on tourism.

In the following we will share the views of the Netherlands Scientific Council, which has discerned four different perspectives. These four perspectives on sustainability provide the basis for scenarios. It will

become clear that these four views or perspectives are primarily analytical, ideal-type constructs based on *a priori* attitudes. An analytical working method is, however, needed in order to provide a sufficiently clear framework for the many choices that need to be made in an exploration of future trends. The significance of the various positions to be distinguished is that this ambivalence is systematically charted and can therefore serve to clarify opinion formation.

The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy has specified these views in the form of scenarios for a number of basic environmental issues, such as world food supply, the management of resources like copper and chlorine, and nature conservation. Unfortunately they have not yet been specified for the relation between tourism and the environment. We will therefore briefly discuss four basic views or perspectives concerning the way in which sustainable development of tourism is to be attained. These four views focus especially on the consumer needs and practices that are to be fulfilled and the activities of all kinds of producers through which those needs can be met. We will add some preliminary remarks on possible consequences of the four views for the development of scenarios for sustainable tourism. However, these remarks are tentative and confined to the relation between tourism and the natural environment.

Four Views on Sustainability

Following the transformation model, the four views should focus especially on the practices of producers and consumers. The view may for example be taken that only minimal adjustments are required in order to cope with environmental problems. Both the present level of tourism consumption and production can be continued with some adjustment over a lengthy period without endangering sustainability. This perspective may be described as *utilizing*. It could also be argued that the solution should not so much be sought in the production sphere but that, instead, the volume or pattern of consumption should be modified. This perspective may be labelled *saving*. Further alternative would be to counter environmental problems by continuing to meet the present high level of consumer needs while modifying productive activities directed towards those needs, for example by a change in technology or the use of different energy sources. This action perspective may be described as *managing*. Finally, environmental problems may be viewed as being so serious that both the level of tourism consumption and production processes need to be adapted. This perspective is concerned with *preserving*. The four views which have been taken as the starting point are outlined in more detail in Table 1. Four perspectives on the sustainable development of tourism can be discerned on the base of these four views.[2]

Table 1 Four Views of Sustainability

	Level of consumption	
Production	high	low
Adaptation of production methods	utilizing	saving
Change in nature of production methods	managing	preserving

Source: Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (1995)

Utilizing

In the *utilizing* perspective, deliberately engineered radical social transformation of tourism for environmental purposes is regarded as undesirable and impossible. At best, the social dynamic of tourism can be adjusted, not directed. In addition, there is the danger that simpler solutions to environmental problems will be ruled out in the laborious process of imposed behavioral change. This applies not just to consumption processes but also to excessive intervention in production processes in tourism. Problems need to achieve a certain scale in order to unleash creative energy, as with Mallorca where the EC is financing a project on sustainable tourism.

The development of tourism may in this view be at the expense of particular environmental wishes; a certain level of environmental risk can never be ruled out. Some forms or levels of pollution of water, soil and air due to tourism and transport are, however, acceptable. Others can be mitigated by means of technological adaptations. The availability of energy and raw materials is not regarded as a major problem. Much can be achieved by technology. Furthermore, the growing scarcity of resources will mean a rise in prices, leading in turn to endogenous substitutions.

Under this action perspective however, there is a particular need to check the rapid growth of the world population. The growth of the population in the Third World is a source of major concern. The associated poverty results in major environmental problems (erosion, destruction of the tropical rainforests, etc). Precisely because it is difficult to alter the development of consumption and production, tackling poverty becomes an important lever and tourism is seen as one of the instruments for economic growth. A rapid increase in prosperity is called for, both indirectly in order to mitigate the population numbers and directly to improve the environment. An increase in prosperity in western countries, and as a consequence growth of international tourism, is also regarded as desirable and possible. Practices as leisure and tourism, predicated on high living standards, are so firmly enshrined that any reduction in prosperity

may be regarded as illusory. Tourism is thus seen as a driving force behind development, contend with poverty and an economic alternative for other production processes like agriculture or cattle breeding. In summary, under the 'utilizing' perspective tourism will be more or less *business as usual.*

Saving

Under the *saving* perspective, both environmental risks and the risks inherent in the process of social adaptation are, to a certain extent, accepted and taken in the interests of sustainability, in that the resilience of both systems is regarded as considerable. Methods of production in tourism, including technology, cannot however be changed rapidly. Nor is this required from the viewpoint of environmental risks. These risks can be reduced to acceptable levels by reducing the *volume or pattern of tourism-oriented consumption* bearing on the environment. This provides the most important lever for change. Cutbacks in consumption are not just required for the environment but are also regarded as necessary in the interests of a fairer distribution of scarce resources both worldwide and between present and future generations.

Under this view, it is desirable to work towards a package of consumer needs in which each world citizen makes limited use of natural resources. This is based on the assumption that ultimately everyone has the same right of access to sufficient resources in order to meet certain priority consumer needs (that is, redistribution), before all kinds of luxury needs can be met. Environmental problems which, despite the lower level of consumption, could still arise, are accepted as potentially insoluble or inevitable.

As stated in the introduction, this argument has recently been promoted by another Dutch Council, the Council for Nature Policy (1994). In line with the Rio Declaration, the Council drew the attention to the extremely high and non-sustainable consumption levels in the Netherlands. For example, every year more than 75 percent of the population takes a holiday with an average of nearly 2.5 holidays per person. Yearly, almost 12 million holidays are spent abroad of which almost one million in non-European countries. This volume and pattern of tourism consumption should be subject to debate form the 'saving' perspective. The message under the 'saving' perspective is: *less far and less often*

Managing

The *managing* action perspective is based on the assumption that, contrary to the way in which they are met, tourist needs cannot be rapidly changed. The natural environment is regarded as 'robust within limits,' meaning that these limits need to be monitored closely in order to prevent acci-

dents. Risks exceeding those limits are not acceptable. The social capacity for adjustment is regarded as considerable, but the optimism of the 'preserving' action perspective is not shared. It is not for nothing that the present level of consumption in the West is widely pursued throughout the world. For this reason the potential in terms of organized human inventiveness – Research and Development – needs to be exploited in order to come up with new production methods in tourism that spare the environment as far as possible. The focus is on regulating adjustments in tourism production processes. It is important to accumulate as much information as possible in order to provide the foundation for a deliberate, future-oriented tourism policy. By 'investing in the future' – for example by the development of 'clean' technologies and new materials – it would become possible to revive renewable resources and reduce leakages on a worldwide scale. From the managing perspective, changes in the nature of tourism production methods are welcomed, in order to make tourism *cleaner and greener*

Preserving

From the *preserving* action perspective, there is a willingness to change both consumer and producer behaviour in tourism. Environmental risks are regarded as high and avoiding them requires adjustments to the level or pattern of leisure and tourism consumption, *and* changes in the relevant production activities. It is held that the necessary social willingness will ultimately be available. Undoubtedly this will arouse resistance, since the necessary intervention will cut across numerous interests and acquired rights.

This vision of sustainable tourism development means that people must submit to tight ecological constraints and reconcile themselves to a sober lifestyle. Even more than in the 'saving' perspective, the emphasis is on meeting certain priority consumer needs for each world citizen now and in the future. This course of action is advocated since it allows for a substantial increase in population. The uptake of scarce resources by the rich countries must be reduced so as to leave something for the developing countries and for future generations.

Radical government intervention is legitimated to an even greater extent than from the 'saving' perspective. This in turn calls for strong governments that are capable of making use of all the available means, both directly and indirectly, for example via the market. The 'preserving tourist,' in other words, is a post-tourist who stays at home, and is striving for what Backers (1994) has called *hedonistic austerity.*

Table 2 Four Views of Sustainable Tourism

	Level of tourism consumption	
Production	High	Low
Adaptation of tourism pro- duction methods	*utilizing* business as usual	*saving* less far and less often
Change in nature of tour- ism production methods	*managing* cleaner and greener	*preserving* hedonistic austerity

Conclusion

As the discussion of sustainable development of tourism moves from a dominant tourism-centric way to a broader approach, whereby the remit of sustainable development of tourism is reconceptualized primarily in terms of tourism's contribution to sustainable development (Hunter 1995), the discourse has become more complex as well as more important. The complexity and importance is closely linked to the extent in which the discourse on sustainable tourism development is and will be connected to other more fundamental societal issues, such as which forms of tourism one should strive for and in whose interest it is to do so.

The complexity is also linked to the basic assumption that it is impossible to work with one, objectively fixed, concept of 'sustainable development of tourism.' Although ecological, socio-cultural or economic criteria for sustainability might seem fixed or objectively determined, we consider sustainable development of tourism to be the outcome of the struggles and negotiations that take place between individuals or groups, directly or indirectly involved in the 'production' of tourism, with differing and often conflicting social interests, operating along various time-space axes.

As a consequence, social science research in tourism should focus on the practices of all sorts of actors involved and intervening in tourism development and the resulting material and symbolic transformations. Research should include the analysis of tourism's impact in an already dynamic and changing cultural context: the analysis of mechanisms and conflicts of interest leading to exhaustion of the sources of contra-structural space and significance, which seems to be so fundamental for the tourist experience, and the development of scenarios by which debates can be broadened and collective agreement can be promoted.

Perhaps the perspectives mentioned above could facilitate these debates when specified as scenarios. However, it has only been possible to make some preliminary remarks on perspectives on sustainable development of tourism here. These remarks illustrate the incompleteness of the information and scientific uncertainty, but also demonstrate how different atti-

tudes need to be adopted if sustainability is to be a 'realistic' concept. From such a starting point, a social science research agenda should facilitate developing perspectives on sustainable development of tourism, and get the various interested parties on speaking terms.

Notes

1 For a more extensive discussion, see Asworth and Dietvorst (1995). This part of this chapter is based on the introductionary chapter of the their publication *Tourism and Spatial Transformations.*
2 The following ideas rely on the perspectives and scenarios elaborated in report 44 of the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (1995), called *Sustained Risks: a Lasting Phenomenon* (pp. 43–47).