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## AlmaTourism

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### Social Issues of Ecological Problems

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There is currently a disparity in land use and urban planning fields. In fact, while the financial concept of architectural project is usually thoroughly planned, its impact on the environment is rarely taken into account. Green standards are only noticed when they conform to a faster return on investment. In such case "green" is considered as a priority, and becomes highlighted as a sign of being in a trend. Otherwise investors just look for other solutions.

However, the methods advocated by the sustainable development tend to resolve only partially the social, ecological and cultural problems we are currently facing. These problems appear in many ways: the polluted air in the cities, traffic jams, overpopulation and business activity concentration in some areas while other areas remain underdeveloped. The list can be supplemented by crime, extreme poverty etc. But the sustainable approach is often not taken into consideration, because it requires a longer return on investment, higher costs, and involves numerous risks.

The call for quick profits leads to serious problems such as environmental degradation and loss of cultural identity, as well as reduces long-term benefits. This applies to developed areas, and especially for new destinations that may represent the last chance to use natural resources "without compromising the needs of future generations."<sup>1</sup> The social issues like an increasing gap between the richest and the poorest, abandoned sites, and a decreasing quality of work... So, the subject of this paper is based on the reconciliation of the three elements of sustainable tourism development. What can be a compromise between the economical, socio-cultural and environmental management and tourism

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<sup>1</sup> BRUNTLAND H. (1987), The Report of the Brundtland Commission, Our Common Future, 318 p.

development of the territories? What prevents achievement of existing sustainable policies?

The three following assumptions guided this research. The first one lies in the incorrect and superficial understanding of the sustainable development concept, which reduces its comprehension to an ecological movement. Such a general vision of the phenomenon, pushing away many of the investors under the pretext that this sector is not profitable, must necessarily be overcome for a better coordination in sustainable tourism development. The second hypothesis is the idea that despite the widespread belief that the economic cost is the main obstacle, they are in fact the social and psychological factors that hinder the sustainable development realization. Thus, an education and training would be probably more effective than the system of financial privileges. A final assumption is to say generally that there is a distinction between global efforts and local governance in sustainable tourism. It would be essential that the various players in the tourism system agree on a shared culture of sustainable tourism to act consistently.

## **1. From Sustainable Development to Tourism Management and Urban Planning: concepts and issues**

### **1.1 Sustainable Tourism Development: complex and interdisciplinary process**

The meaning of Sustainable Tourism Development is still not obvious today, and the definition of its core notion – sustainable development – is not stable and even contradictory.

After studying the various definitions since 1970, we decided to base on the UNWTO's definition of the sustainable tourism<sup>2</sup> and the triptych vision of the sustainable development that has been exposed during the conferences in Rio and Johannesburg<sup>3</sup>. We believe that "Sustainable Tourism Development is a planned and proactive process of tourism development of a geographic area that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This process is based on the establishment of a viable economy, socio-cultural identities respect and the environmental protection.

We tried to regroup the sustainable tourism development concepts in the scheme showing our vision of this process (Cf. Figure 1).

So, we consider a tourist destination development as an interaction of four types of actors: tourists, investors, local authorities and residents. Two cases

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<sup>2</sup> UNWTO, Baromètre du tourisme mondial, volume 8, n°1, January 2010, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> UNITED NATIONS (2002), World Summit on Sustainable Development Rapport – Johannesburg (South Africa), p. 195.

represent two models of destination management. The first one is based on economical profits, the second one – on the authenticity and uniqueness of the site.

In the first scenario, the promotion is based on the tourist clichés and immediate profit, which leads to natural and cultural degradation of a site. The tourist imaginary formed on these stereotypes attracts people into the region. The cycle of driving forces loops over and over, causing damage. Finally, we note that the development policy based only on the economic efficiency aims for the mass tourism and subsequently causes cultural and natural destruction of the area.

However, the second scenario replaces exploited clichés with authenticity, uniqueness and identity. Financial model remains the same, but development focuses on cultural and social valorization, as well as preserving the nature.

We can talk about the territory attractiveness and competitiveness increase in both cases. However, if the first scenario illustrates the short-term performance, the second one introduces the principles of sustainability.

The actual scenario will certainly deviate from the ideal strategy depending on the level of understanding and taking into account of the sustainability principles by policy makers. Indeed, it is very difficult or even impossible to reconcile the three dimensions of sustainable development in practice - there is always one that will weigh more than others, causing conflicts. And the balance may lean towards the economic and financial element that seems very attractive and can challenge the sociocultural development and environmental protection. Or, on the other hand, a conservation side can become excessive in the context of global warming and the existing biological systems' maximum preservation, resulting in lower revenues.

## **1.2 Human Factor Role and Governance Importance**

A Destination Management as a territory transversely evolution implies tourism sector actors' coordination and requires knowledge in the contiguous areas – economics, finance, sociology, urban planning, law...

Moreover, given the dual nature of territorial development – both creative and destructive – the role of project governance seems to be paramount. Even if the ecological techniques are impeccable and financial calculations are viable, the realization of the program itself can lead to an impasse if the management system is not thought in detail. Thus, the policy selection and principles of management are the key factors of successful development.

The effective implementation of such development model requires an active participation of all actors in the social, economic and political sphere, of associations and citizens. The importance of the human factor as an engine of governance must be especially noted. At the heart of the sustainable tourism development triptych, man is in a position of decision maker with different

functions at each stage of project realization. Indeed, these are people who make the decision on each step of sustainable tourism development process. So, their action's result depends on their way of thinking and their own morality. It's true for both environmental degradation (economic, socio-cultural and natural) or heritage valorization.

## **2. Economical and Ecological Constraints**

### **2.1 Existing Green Norms, are they sufficient?**

The presentation of the existing green standards as a tool of control and also an indicator of "sustainability degree" shows the current panorama of development (Cf. Figure 2).

Most of Greens Standards are intended to reduce the symptoms of environmental problems - lack of water and energy, pollution, natural resources use, waste etc. However, the source of these problems - the management and governance - is not considered in the majority of cases. Only the BREEM Standard sees the role of management as important but not priority. The analyzed Green Standards reflect also the perception of the sustainability concept. We can say that in the majority of countries the sustainability is seen now as an attempt to reduce an area development negative impact on the nature. In this context the economy is thought as opposed to the environmental component, while the socio-cultural aspect is not taken into account.

We selected three international organizations – representatives of Green and Sustainable Movement:

- Greenpeace as a pacific association at the beginning has a strong environmental image today;
- WWF with panda on its logo proclaims the protection of animals but also acts for "the creation of a future in which humans live in harmony with nature" ;
- Unesco shows the value of sustainable tourism development, given its objectives of Global Heritage protection for future generations, and despite its rather cultural orientation.

The message of international organizations so called "green" - WWF, Greenpeace and Unesco - does not target the human factor and neither psychological feature. Indeed, they highlight the themes of global warming and ancient forest protection, of flora and fauna and art conservation, while the words "our Earth", "our Planet" or "our House " are very rare in their promotion.

## **2.2 Contemporary Sustainable Trends**

The study of international green trends indicates to a more systemic and complex approach in tourism destination management (Cf. Figure 3). Sustainable development is now seen as multi-faceted phenomenon with tourism as a vector for sustainability. However, we must note that the role of project governance with human decision in the center is still not a priority.

## **3. Possible Solutions**

Based on the principal that a disease should be treated and not its symptoms, we can say that we should begin with the human factor if we want to change the situation around sustainable development – in fact, the human beings are in the center of the sustainable projects governance.

The consumer society, prospering today in the majority of countries, prescribes utilization of everything for the well-being of humans and supports a taking ideology and not a giving-one. Further, non-intervention and individual development principals are deeply implanted in the human mind. Therefore, selfishness as well as an attitude towards a salary and social benefits as to givens influence and even excuse the crude use of natural resources.

Taking into consideration the unsure conditions of everyday life, it is not reasonable to plan for a long time. In other words, a sustainable perspective, especially in terms on investment, is not so popular.

However, should we shift this consumer's way of thinking into a more creative one, it will be possible to direct the human development to the sustainability. If people care about their homes first, then the public areas around, further about the street, their neighborhood... and finally, about the city, the Planet will be also perceived more as our common domicile. And its resources use won't be so crude.

In the same manner, an attitude to work for a salary can be shifted to a reward, proportional to the contribution. Replacement of a routine by a system approach could lead to the local economies development, traffic issues resolution, overpopulation of some zones and abandonment of others.

In plus, it makes sense to change the message of Green Organizations and Standards to be more efficient and to call for mass action. The new message should be based on human emotions and needs.

Moreover, a self-example and incorporation of both residents and visitors, even in tiny amounts, into making a territory better, could also be a great way of populating ideas of sustainability.

Finally, to resolve the conflict of economy and ecology, and to attract the investors into the sustainable field, we should talk to them in their language. To estimate the changes to profit along the impact to nature, these terms have to

be correlated in a same dimension. So, we need to elaborate a model of numerical calculation of the effect of a territorial development to the environment.

Obviously, the proposed recommendations do not offer a solution to all the sustainable development questions. However, taking into account that these were given on the basis of the green malfunctioning comprehension, they could at least change the situation in a positive way.

There are a lot of additional factors that could be also taken into consideration – public-private partnership, participative democracy, international partnership and best practices exchange. We should note a huge role of education system as well.

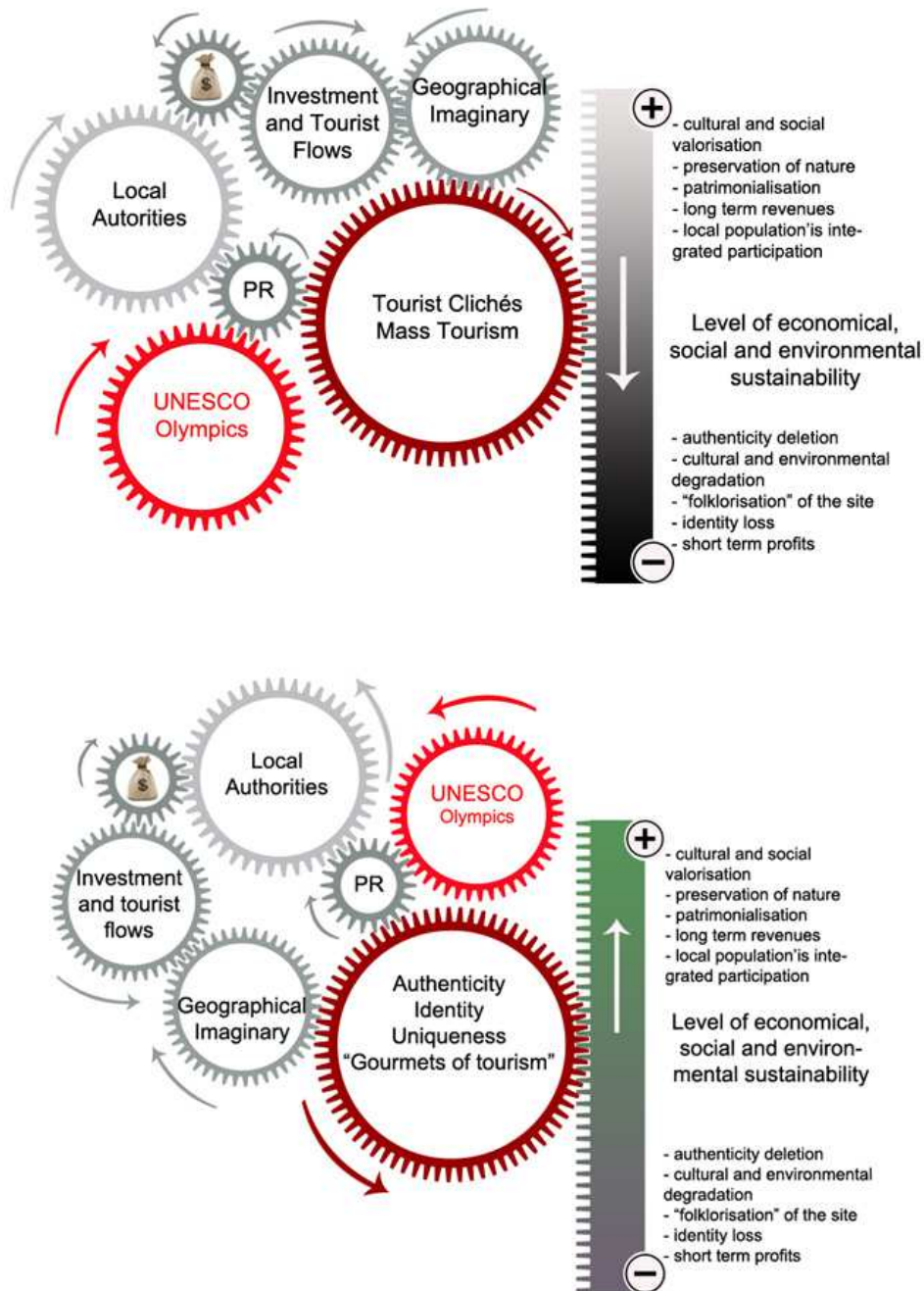
These transformations can take a long time before the noticeable results will occur. Some generations could swap before it will be the most people on Earth that prefer the long terms profits to the momentum benefits and are eager to create something for the common wellbeing.

## **Conclusion**

This study offers a response to the three research hypotheses. First, it confirms that the understanding of sustainable development is ambiguous and that this phenomenon is currently perceived as an ecological movement. This reduces the importance of sustainability principles and creates myths around the concept, pushing the investors away. Green Standards and International Organizations do not contribute to the concept evolution, because of their focus on the symptoms and not on the causes of a disease. In addition, the rejection of the priority of governance in international green trends, while the human factor plays a key role in project realization, also blocks the sustainable approach implementation. Thus, this paper also validates the assumption that the main obstacles for sustainable development are in social and psychological issues rather than in economic or financial ones. Moreover, the lack of coordination among decision makers, given their different goals in the process, strengthens the sociological barriers to applying sustainable methods.

Nevertheless, the actual situation of multiple global crises, when it becomes clear that the traditional system does not work anymore, and innovative ideas are welcome, could be a starting point for the new development concept elaboration. We believe that the unique historic opportunity to lay the foundations for the new green economy has emerged. This concept makes the investments, both the financial and natural ones, more effective. We must seize this opportunity to change the way of developing the human civilization.

**Figure 1: Model of Tourist Development based on Economic Revenues (Scenario 1, on the top) and on the Authenticity (Scenario 2, on the bottom)**



**Figure 2 : International Green Standards Comparative Analysis**

	<b>LEED</b>	<b>BREEM UK / Europe / Gulf</b>	<b>DGNB</b>	<b>CASBEE</b>	<b>Green Star</b>
<b>Elaboration Date</b>	1998	1990	2009	2009	2009
<b>Country</b>	USA, Canada	Europe, GB, Golf countries, Russia	Germany, Austria	Japan	Australia, New Zealand, South Africa
<b>Main sectors</b>	Energy Water CO <sub>2</sub> Resources Impacts	Energy Water Resources Transports Pollution Waste and Recycling Management Wealth and Well-being Ecology Urban Planning	Construction practice Future development Eco-balance	Environmental effectiveness Japanese version of LEED	Technical construction criteria Environmental design Australian limited version of BREEM
<b>Human Factor's Consideration</b>	Absence of Management section and the project governance role	Management section exists and includes trainings and control, but the role of governance is not underlined.	International practices comparison, professional network creation, exchange	Japanese version of LEED	Management role is reduced to a capacity of finding a common language with other players

Source: Ksenia MUSTAFINA, Master's dissertation, M2 TEP 2010-2011, Sorbonne, Paris, France



**Figure 3 : Urban Planning and Territorial Management International Trends Comparative Analysis**

	USA, Canada	Europe	GB, EAU	SE Asia, Australia
<b>General Trend</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial ecology methods, eco-city</li> <li>• 'Agricultural Units' creation in the cities and in the outskirts</li> <li>• Utilization of renewable energy sources</li> <li>• Diminution of air conditioning use</li> <li>• Transport system amelioration, optimized route planning, bicycle-culture development</li> <li>• Residential density</li> <li>• Sustainable city increase</li> <li>• 'Green roofs'</li> <li>• Active building</li> <li>• Waste, recycling</li> <li>• Kserolandchafting</li> </ul>			
<b>Particular Features</b>	"Archology", water and canalization systems, waste treatment, air pollution	Green mayo, effective solar economy, low energy consumption, city without cars and vehicles, sustainable materials	"0 carbon" Program, solar energy, sustainable design	"0 carbon" Program, solar residential heating
<b>Projects</b>	Arcosanti, Mesa-del-Sol, Duglas Ranch, Koyot Springs (USA) Calgary (Canada)	Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany), Kalundborg (Denmark), Novoe Stupino (Russia), Elvstranden (Sweden), Strasbourg, Bordeaux (France)	St David's, Leicester (GB), Abu-Dabi (EUA)	Maurland (Australia), Tiānjīn (China), Sondo (Chorea), Singapour,

Source: Ksenia MUSTAFINA, Master's dissertation, M2 TEP 2010-2011, Sorbonne, Paris, France