

# Sustainable Tourism in The Third World: Problems and Prospects

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## THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO TOURISM

The concept of sustainability has become central to all aspects of development planning. The essential prerequisite of sustainable development is to meet the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). It is a particularly pertinent concept as far as tourism is concerned because tourism is often in danger of destroying the resource base upon which it depends. There is a circular and cumulative relationship between tourism development, the environment and socio-economic development. Most tourism development places additional pressures on the environmental resources upon which it is based, compromising the future prospects of the local population and, indeed, the expectations of tourists themselves. The destruction of tourism resources for short term gain will deny the benefits to be gained from mobilisation of those resources in the future. This is evident from the viewpoints of both hosts and guests. Host populations will lose out in two ways, not only will they be faced with environmental degradation which will affect their immediate prospects, but they will also be denied the tourism development potential that such environments offered for the future. At the same time future generations of tourists will be denied the opportunity of experiencing environments very different to those of home. What, then, are the prime requirements of sustainable tourism development?

- (1) It must meet the needs of the host population in terms

of improved standards of living both in the short and long term.

(2) It must satisfy the demands of a growing number of tourists and continue to attract them in order to help achieve the first aim. Tourism has become an important source of revenue for many Third World nations. In 1988 tourism receipts comprised 9.6% of exports from the less developed countries (LDCs). The corresponding figure for the more developed (MDCs) nations was 7.0%. Their significance to many individual nations is even more evident. Tourism financed 40% of Kenya's and 34% of Nepal's export earnings in 1988.

(3) The environment must be safeguarded in order to achieve both of the foregoing aims. There are clearly interlinkages between all three of these aims. Certain types of conservation may be achieved only if they contribute towards generation of income through tourism. At the same time it is essential to recognise an environmental tolerance limit, or carrying capacity, which if exceeded, will lead to an unacceptable degree of damage to the character and quality of destination environment, compromising the first two aims.

#### **PROBLEMS OF ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE THIRD WORLD.**

There are three major sets of problems which militate against achieving sustainable tourism in the Third World. Firstly it is vital to consider the international context in which tourism is cast as a process. Secondly the numbers and

characteristics of tourists arriving at specific destinations are likely to compromise sustainability. Thirdly the characteristics of host nations must be considered.

#### 1. Organisational aspects of tourism in the Third World

As Britton (1981) points out, because the tourist industry is designed to meet the recreational needs of affluent middle class citizens in the MDCs, it follows that metropolitan companies have become predominant in the control of international tourist movements. They can influence the volume of tourist flows to any one market as they control the key link in the tourist flow chain: contact with the potential tourists. In addition their expertise, marketing connections and capital resources give them an overwhelming competitive advantage over local tourism operators. Although the international tourism sector did not reach the mass production stage until quite recently, it is already dominated by transnational tourism corporations (Ascher, 1985). These corporations have placed considerable investment into the establishment of impressive computerised networks which serve to further concentrate their power and influence.

The three main organisational branches of the tourism industry are transport companies, the hotel sector and tour companies. They have all become increasingly transnational in their operations during the 1970s and 1980s to the extent that metropolitan interests dominate the development of tourism in the

carriers such as British Airways. They can influence the number of tourists arriving at specific destinations through marketing strategies such as discounting seats and changing seating allocation on specific flights and also determine the viability of intermediate destinations as stop-over points. They have a strong competitive advantage over Third World airlines. Rajotte (1987) for example, documents how Kenya Airways carried only 7% of holiday visitors arriving in Kenya in 1980. Not only do the companies of developing countries have little direct access to the tourist generating markets located in the MDCs, but also it is estimated that their operating costs are 30 per cent higher. Fuel, servicing and training are purchased at high prices from countries in the industrialised nations (Ascher, 1985). Air transport equipment (aircraft and ground equipment) is very expensive and is produced in a very small number of industrialised countries. The development of national carriers in LDCs therefore requires heavy capital investment and very high foreign exchange costs. It is not surprising, therefore, that despite a few success stories amongst the national carriers of the more economically advanced developing nations (for example Thai Airlines and Singapore Airlines), the national airlines of most Third World countries are little more than heavily subsidised flag-carriers. The above constraints militate not only against existing carriers, but also against potential newcomers. Air Lanka ran into such serious difficulties by 1986 that a government commission was appointed to investigate its operations. An estimated \$142 million of government money had been allocated to the airline since its establishment in 1979.

Tour companies.

The great bulk of tourists travelling overseas do so on inclusive tours. Tour operators have revolutionised international tourism since the 1960s through their successful packaging of transport, accommodation and additional services. As Lea (1988) points out, this has raised the potential volume of sales far above that which can be expected from supplying a single service such as a ticket or hotel room on its own. The bargaining power of tour companies with the suppliers in the tourist industry has consequently been considerably enhanced. They can lower their costs by negotiating lower air fares and hotel accommodation prices due to their guarantee of block bookings.

The past twenty years has witnessed the situation whereby a few tour operators have grown to the size of international companies (Ascher, 1985). These multinationals control large percentages of the market. In the UK, for example, over 80 per cent of turnover is in the hands of ten companies. The top two alone, International Leisure Group (until its demise early in 1991) and Thompsons together accounted for 50 per cent of the UK market.

It is evident, therefore, that once again the LDCs are at a disadvantage. The actual location of the metropolitan companies in the main markets places them at a strong initial advantage. Most holidays are bought 'sight unseen' by the

tourist (Jenkins, 1982), so it follows that the image or perceived attractions of a destination are critical factors in directing tourist flows. Inevitably it is the larger tour operator companies based in the metropolitan countries, with their direct sales and marketing links within these countries, which can successfully promote destinations through extensive advertising. Conversely, indigenous small scale local operators within the Third World with their limited resources, limited experience and few connections within the industry, cannot hope to compete with the extensive image of multinational companies.

There are two major implications of this pattern of MDC dominance in the international organisation of tourism. Firstly, the decisions affecting destinations are made from afar. They are more likely to be concerned with profits than the adverse impact on the prospects for sustainability of host environments and populations. Secondly, as mentioned previously, the leakages consequent upon the location of headquarters of multinational tourism companies in the MDCs considerably reduce the net tourism receipts in Third World economies. Britton, (1982) estimates these leakages to be of the order of 55 to 60 per cent of the inclusive tour retail price paid by tourists in their home country if a foreign airline is used. If both the airline and hotel used are foreign owned this figure rises to 75 to 78 per cent.

## 2. The characteristics of tourists to the Third World

There are two major features of significance to the prospects for sustainable tourism in the Third World arising from the characteristics of tourists visiting such destinations. These are, firstly, the rapid growth in the number of tourists to the LDCs in recent years and, secondly, what they then demand at the destinations.

In 1950 a total of 25.3 million tourists was registered worldwide. By 1989 this figure had increased to 405.3 million. Although the LDC share in this total is small, it is a rapidly growing one. The share grew from 18.7 per cent in 1980 to 22.1 per cent in 1989. The average annual rate of growth in the number of tourists visiting Third World destinations was 5.9 per cent between 1980 and 1989. The corresponding figure for the MDCs was 3.5 per cent. Institutionalised travel, in its search for new and alternative destinations, has brought an increasing number of Third World destinations into the locus of international tourism. The increasing popularity of winter sun destinations such as the Gambia, the Seychelles and the Maldives bears witness to this fact. The Gambia, for example, experienced an average annual percentage growth rate in the number of tourists of 63.6 per cent between 1981 and 1985. The rapidity of such growth cannot help but bring with it associated problems of adjustment for host populations and environments. Furthermore when we consider that certain favoured destination countries will experience growth rates far in excess of average figures,



together with the topics of seasonality and concentrations of tourism development within countries, the immediate impact becomes all the more evident. Ninety per cent of the Gambia's tourists arrive in the winter months, between November and March. Fifty per cent of tourists to Sri Lanka stay in coastal resorts along the south west coast of the island.

It is not just the numbers of tourists arriving at specific destinations at specific points in time that have implications for tourism sustainability but it is also their characteristics. The tourists visiting Third World destinations are relatively affluent, coming predominately from the MDCs. The top four tourist generating countries alone, namely the US, Germany, Japan and the UK, generate half of total tourism expenditure. This means that tourists have high levels of expectation. Often the standards they require mean importing goods from the MDCs, again causing import leakages. Excessive pressures are placed upon infrastructure at LDC destinations. Tourist use per capita of utilities such as water and electricity is much higher than that of the resident population. Facilities such as air conditioning, swimming pools and en suite bathrooms in hotels place excessive demands on beleaguered supplies. Load shedding may result in frequent electricity blackouts and disruptions to water supply may occur. Holiday seasonality means that a destination has to scale up its infrastructure to cope with the period of maximum utilisation. A costly option when for the remaining seven to eight months of the year it will be underutilised. This problem is particularly acute in small island economies where tourist

numbers may outweigh resident populations. The argument that such infrastructural improvements will benefit the local population is a somewhat tenuous one when the poorest cannot afford to avail themselves of such facilities. In the Seychelles, the Creole underclass are constrained to the use of candles for lighting whilst witnessing the lavish lifestyles of the visiting tourists. The opportunity cost of investment in such infrastructural improvements is high, tourists are effectively subsidised by poor economies already stretched beyond their financial limits.

Tourist activities also impinge upon the physical and socio-cultural environments. Specific physical environments will be considered presently but the socio-cultural impact in terms of the demonstration effect and on local traditions and morality also has considerable implications for sustainability. These latter impacts have received considerable documentation in the literature (see, for example de Kadt (1984) and Mathieson and Wall (1982)) but it must be pointed out that traditional practices, evolved over generations, are frequently more sustainable than those with which they are supplanted, partially as a result of tourism.

### 3. Characteristics of the host countries

There are three major factors which affect the sustainability of tourism which relate to the characteristics of the host nations in the Third World. Firstly there is the

rapidity of growth in tourism to these destinations referred to earlier. This means the problem is an immediate one. For the sake of expediency and in the interests of short term profits local environmental laws are frequently flouted. Such an example is the recent construction of the Ramada hotel Varca in southern Goa, India which violated both the maximum height and minimum distance from the sea criteria. There is no time for adjustment. The wholesale clearance of land for hotel buildings and infrastructural improvements results in increased runoff and consequent increase in turbidity of coastal waters. The discharge of partially treated sewage into the sea from hotels is a matter for particular concern in countries such as Belize where a long term study is examining the effects of such activities on marine ecosystems.

Secondly, because these countries are, by definition, poor they lack the economic base to cash in on the benefits arising from tourism in the way that the multinational tourism companies based in the MDCs are able to. Also they simply cannot afford to undertake preventative or restorative measures to counter environmental degradation. This has clear implications for sustainability in so far as Third World economies are faced increasingly with the fact that their long term prospects are being sacrificed in the interests of short term gains, and that these gains accrue to outside interests whether they be those of the tourists themselves or of the multinational tourism companies who are essentially exploiting the environmental carrying capacity of such destinations. Rees (1990) examines this

neocolonialist exploitation with regard to sustainable development in general, but his point that the more developed nations are in essence importing carrying capacity from those less developed is equally relevant to tourism.

Thirdly, whilst it cannot be argued that Third World countries are unique regarding the fragility of their environments, it must be considered that as more and more remote localities with delicately balanced ecosystems and vulnerable cultures are brought into the locus of tourism the prospects for sustainability are again compromised. Amongst such ecosystems which have suffered as a result of the recent influxes of tourists are coral reefs and mountain ranges.

Offshore reefs in localities such as Belize and the Maldives are showing distinct evidence of degradation whether it be through direct physical destruction or as a result of increased marine pollution. The former results from blasting to create access channels such as in Barbados or to utilise the coral for building material (a quarter of the coral mined from resorts in the Maldives is used directly for resort construction) as well as from souvenir hunting and careless treatment due to the mishandling of boat and scuba equipment together with direct trampling of the reefs at low-tide. Pollution results from the increased turbidity and sewage discharge which arise from the construction phase and ongoing site utilisation, as well as petrol and oil spillage consequent upon boating activities.

Mountain ranges also have distinct ecosystems threatened by tourism pressures. Even the most remote mountains are at risk. In Nepal pressures from population growth have been exacerbated by a phenomenal increase in trekking tourism. In 1977 14,000 trekking permits were issued, by 1988 this figure had risen to over 61,000. It is estimated that the Annapurna region alone, home to some 40,000 mountain farmers, now receives some 35,000 visitors annually. Additional pressures are placed on the soils, water and forests as well as on the local population. The average daily consumption of firewood has been estimated to be 6.4 kg per tourist. The average size trekking group uses as much firewood in two weeks as a local family uses in six months. Disposal of human waste and litter has led to the route to Everest base-camp being dubbed as the 'Kleenex trail' and prompted an Environmental Expedition in 1990 to clean up the area. The scoring of paths across steep, unstable slopes has resulted in an increase in the incidence and scale of landslides and rockfalls. Amongst other detrimental effects are the trampling and partial destruction of natural vegetation cover and the virtual disappearance of many species of wildlife. Such adverse effects have necessitated the adoption of policy measures which will be discussed presently.

It is not just the natural environment but also the historical, cultural and built environments which experience degradation as a result of tourism. Amongst such documented cases are the deterioration of the tomb frescoes in the valley of the Kings, Upper Egypt, the desecration of religious statues

in Kathmandu, Nepal, and the artificial processing of traditional practices such as the burial ceremonies of the Toraja region, Sulawesi. Architectural 'pollution' arises from the construction of large, often unaesthetic hotels and facilities which are out of scale with the surroundings and fail to incorporate environmental considerations into their design. Sprawl of buildings along coastlines may obstruct windows to the sea and deny access to public beaches, such as along the south west coast of Barbados. Similar obstructions to views may occur along scenic routes inland.

To summarise: the three major problems to achieving sustainable tourism in the Third World, namely the international organisation of tourism, the characteristics of the tourists and those of the host countries, militate against the prime requirements of sustainable tourism development outlined earlier in the following ways:

- (1) It can be seen that the needs of the host populations in terms of improved standards of living both in the short and long term are clearly not being met. Not only are their immediate prospects being threatened, but also the potential that their environments offered for both tourism and development in general is being compromised. Furthermore the benefits from tourism are largely accrued by foreign interests. Where they are realised locally they are likely to benefit primarily privileged commercial and political groups.

(2) There is a clear danger that tourism is a self destructive process. Tourism, if not properly managed, may destroy the very things that attract tourists in the first place. Consequently it is likely that the demands of growing numbers of tourists will not be met and degraded locations will not succeed in continuing to attract them. This has obvious implications for future earnings from tourism in specific destinations.

(3) In most Third World destinations there are inadequate environmental safeguards to prevent degradation. These arise not only from the pressures placed upon them from tourism and other forms of development but also due to the low level of development of such countries. Increasingly the populations of the LDCs are forced to commit ecocide in the long term in order to ensure short term survival. As Blaikie (1985) suggests 'environmental degradation is seen as a result of underdevelopment... a symptom of underdevelopment and a cause of underdevelopment'.

What, then, are the prospects for sustainable tourism in the Third World?

#### **PROSPECTS FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE THIRD WORLD.**

There are a number of recent developments in the tourism industry which appear to auger well for sustainability. Amongst

these are the trends towards alternative and responsible tourism as well as Green or Eco-tourism.

Alternative tourism has become synonymous with independent travel. By the late 1970's organising one's own travel was facilitated by the availability of cheap flights and the proliferation of cheap local accommodation and eating places at destinations. The path of the independent traveller was considerably smoothed by the advent of a multitude of alternative travel guides, such as the Lonely Planet guides. The basic premise of independent travel embodies the principle put forward by Smith (1978), that the lone 'explorer' type of tourist not only gains far more in terms of experiences offered by a locality, but also minimises the adverse impact made in that locality. In the case of the mass charter tourist, however, the situation is inverse. Unfortunately this premise does not hold true for two very important reasons. Firstly even small group alternative tours can be damaging. In their desperate search for 'unspoilt' locations alternative tourists bring more and more remote communities, with delicately balanced environments and economies into the locus of tourism. Furthermore, enterprising travellers who penetrate new and as yet unspoilt areas frequently become the unsuspecting pioneers of the tourist penetration of these areas. (Cohen, 1987)

Access and facilities become improved and tourists arrive in larger and larger numbers as the locality becomes opened up to tourism. A prime example of this is the Toraja region of



Sulawesi with its distinctive architecture and burial practices. Independent travellers in the early 1970's faced a bone-shaking day's bus journey from the capital. Since the opening of a local airstrip and a thrice weekly flight with Merpati airlines the Toraja region has been placed firmly on the tourist circuit. In July and August it is crowded with German, French and other tourists.

Responsible tourism, as the term suggests, attempts to confer an aura of respectability on tourism. Its principles of small scale and gradual development, as opposed to large scale, rapid, development appear very laudable. However, faced with the rapid growth of tourism, its feasibility needs to be questioned. Furthermore its basic ineffectiveness at addressing the problems mean that it is in danger of being nicely co-opted by both the tourist and the tourism industry alike in an attempt to salve guilty consciences and promote seemingly more conscientious marketing. Wheeler (1991) describes responsible tourism as 'a pleasant, agreeable, accessible but dangerously superficial, ephemeral and inadequate escape route for the educated middle classes unable, or unwilling, to appreciate or accept their own destructive contribution to the international maelstrom'.

Green or Eco-tourism focuses on the need to promote a symbiotic, or, at worst, co-existent relationship between tourism and environmental conservation. Tourism companies are increasingly responding to green consumerism and are anxious to promote an environmentally friendly image in their marketing

strategies. Amongst such examples are the collective promotion of selected companies under the 'Green Flag' umbrella in the U.K. and the commitment of British Airways to present a corporate image of an environmentally conscious operation. Again there is a danger that such exercises may not go beyond marketing tactics, involving 'window dressing' in response to consumer pressure. Ecotourism has become big business. It is the fastest growing sector of tourism, and has consequently generated unprecedented interest in the travel trade. The first Caribbean Conference on Ecotourism, held this summer in the small Central American state of Belize, attracted a total of 350 delegates. That commercial interests predominate, however, it is evident from the fact that 70 per cent of the conference delegates were representatives from travel agencies, tour operators, transport companies, hotels and resort developers. Commercial pressures may well dictate that ecotourism will merely replicate the economic, social and physical problems associated with conventional tourism. The only difference, and herein lies perhaps the greatest threat, is that previously underdeveloped areas, all the more vulnerable, become the prime targets.

Even resource conservation policies may be regressive from the local population's viewpoint. The creation of National Parks to protect extensive tracts of land denies access to local populations for agricultural purposes, or the gathering of fuel, fodder and building materials. Further adverse effects include the disruption of local cultures and economies by tourists, increased depredations on crops and livestock by wild animals and

displacement of peoples from their traditional lands. These result in social and cultural disruption and enforced poverty (Hough, 1988). Such a conflict is evident in the National Parks of East Africa, where the pressures of a rapidly growing population and limited availability of cultivated land conflict directly with wildlife tourism (Wyer and Towner, 1988). A more detailed example is furnished by the dilemma of the nomadic Masai pastoralists of Ngoro Ngoro, Tanzania. In the early 1970's the systematic burning of upland grazing by the Masai was banned by the National Parks Authority in the interests of tourism. This ban led to a deterioration in the quality of grazing and increase in the incidence of tick-borne diseases amongst the cattle (Branagan, 1974).

Furthermore the question must be posed as to what extent the local population will realise any of the benefits arising from Green or Eco-tourism? The failure to integrate local involvement in the tourism industry is particularly well exemplified by the Galapagos Islands (Kenchington, 1989). Here, in the face of the very rapid growth of tourism, the viability of existing conservationist strategies is in question. The maximum number of visitors to be admitted has been progressively revised upwards over recent years. In particular there has been a marked increase in the number of Ecuadorian nationals visiting the islands. Whereas international tourists are accommodated primarily on cruise vessels, Ecuadorians stay on the islands themselves and local tourism is now an established and increasingly important socio-economic factor. The Ecuadorian

government has yet to formulate an overall plan for sustainable tourism which effectively involves Galapagan participation.

Consequently it can be seen that whilst Green or Eco-tourism may satisfy environmentalists it may not constitute sustainable tourism development. Unless a more holistic approach is taken, incorporating the needs of the host population, sustainability will be compromised.

**THE WAY FORWARD: POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
IN THE THIRD WORLD.**

To accomplish sustainable tourism existing attitudes and policies will have to change. Such changes will apply to the three main sets of actors in international tourism: the tourist destinations, the tourists themselves and tourism enterprises. Finally it is vital to consider the global context in which tourism is cast as process.

1 Destination Areas

Local populations must be involved in tourism development if their needs are to be met. This involves four major policy considerations: ownership, scale, timing and location. The question of ownership is particularly pertinent in LDC destinations. As has been discussed earlier, net foreign exchange earnings from tourism are considerably less than the gross receipts. Substantial leakages result from the repatriation of wages and profits, and imports due to the

transnational operation of transport carriers, hotel groups and tour operators.

Third World destinations receive only a small return for the exploitation of an increasingly scarce resource, their natural environment. Such destinations have to bear certain costs, both in terms of environmental degradation and in prospects for sustainability. Any extra earnings which do accrue locally benefit a small commercial elite, more concerned with early profits than environmental considerations. It is therefore insufficient to advocate local as opposed to foreign ownership without considering distributional aspects and environmental accountability.

The scale of tourism development is a complex issue. Whilst small scale projects, locally controlled, can have a significant impact on raising living standards (Britton & Clarke 1987), they are unlikely to meet the needs of large numbers of tourists. Some large scale projects are inevitable, but it is important to consider the complementarity of large and small scale developments. As tourism development proceeds, indigenous firms and locals gain knowledge and experience. Government planners should co-ordinate investment in infrastructure with the needs of small scale entrepreneurs and the needs of local communities, paying careful attention to the environmental component. Large scale development is often the precursor to small scale development. The growth in mass tourism and the building up of infrastructure in Senegal were essential prerequisites for the success of the Lower Casamance project in promoting rural

development through tourism (Pearce 1989). It is a two-way process. Large scale developments benefit from improved local expertise and knowledge through increased participation.

As far as timing is concerned it is easy to advocate a gradualist approach, allowing time for adjustment both environmentally and socio-economically. However, the problem is an immediate one. The rapidity of growth in tourism to the Third World and the fact that such a growth is vital to the economic prospects of such nations presents them with a considerable dilemma. To limit the number of tourists admitted in the way that Bhutan restricts entries to 2000 per annum may well minimise adverse impacts, but it will not maximise revenues. At present, however, the picture is one of incomplete accountancy. Long term prospects are sacrificed for short term gains. It is essential that the costs of environmental maintenance are built into the accounting procedure when weighing up the costs and benefits of tourism development. The question then arises as to who should pay these costs. It is manifestly unfair that the poorer countries should shoulder the burden of the costs of the exploitation of their environment by international tourism. How those that incur the costs can be made more accountable, both practically and financially, is a contentious issue. Third World destinations are competing with one another to attract tourists and earn much needed foreign exchange. If a host country is unprepared to accept the terms of international companies they will have little difficulty in finding another that will. In principle market prices should reflect producer's costs for

environmental maintenance (Rees, 1990). This would, however, imply significant increases in operating costs and market prices which would be ultimately passed on to the consumers, the tourists themselves.

The location of tourism development is also a crucial element in sustainable tourism. Development concentrated in tourism enclaves, e.g. Nusa Dua in Bali, may minimize adverse impacts elsewhere, but does not constitute sustainable development. The local population may be denied continuance of their traditional practices as well as being excluded from any economic benefits of such development.

There appear, therefore, to be many contradictions concerning the ownership, scale, timing and location of tourism development at destinations. It is not as simple as resolving the issues of indigenous versus foreign, small versus large, gradual versus instantaneous and dispersed versus concentrated developments. It is more a question of ensuring complementarity between all these issues, so that tourism can contribute towards the development of an area whilst minimizing adverse environmental, social and economic effects in order to ensure sustainability.

An example of an attempt to reconcile the rapid growth of tourism to an area with the needs for sustainability is furnished by the Annapurna Conservation Area in Nepal (Hough and Sherpa, 1989). This scheme has attempted to integrate the twin goals of

conservation and local development in order to achieve sustainable development by utilising a multiple land use approach. The needs of the local population, tourists and the natural environment have been carefully balanced through careful zoning (Fig 1) and local participation. Villages continue to practice traditional methods of resource utilisation and participate in decision-making via the existing village assemblies. Fuelwood conservation, forest management, environmental education and research and community development are all important aspects of the scheme (Fig 2). Furthermore the local population also benefits directly from the funds generated by tourism. Trekkers to the Annapurna area pay an additional 200NRs (under current exchange rate approximately £3) in addition to the standard 200 NRs trekking permit fee. This levy goes directly to the Annapurna Conservation Area project.

## 2. The role of tourists in sustainable tourism

As mentioned earlier there is a clear danger that tourism can be a self destructive process: successive waves of tourists arriving at a destination may progressively downgrade the distinctive characteristics of an area which constituted its very attraction in the first place. Sustainable tourism offers tourists the prospect of a guaranteed level of satisfaction whenever a destination is visited, a vital consideration if a destination is to continue to attract tourists.



Figure 1 : The Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal

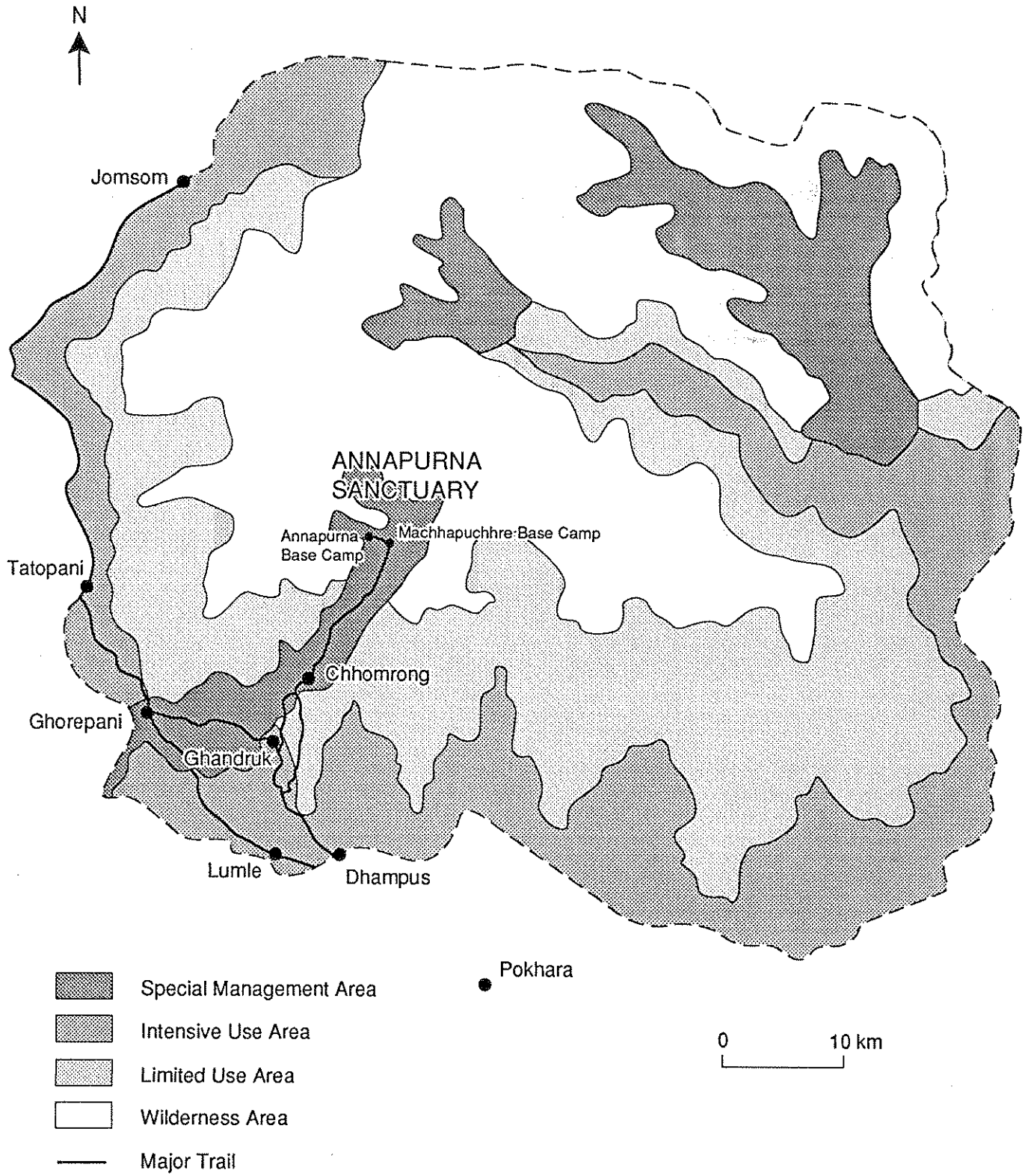


Fig 2. The activities of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project

1. FOREST CONSERVATION
  - community fodder and fuelwood plantations
  - agroforestry
  - training for local nursery workers, forest guards and extension staff, and lodge owners
2. ALTERNATIVE ENERGY
  - kerosene depot
  - improved stoves, water and space heaters
  - micro-hydro electricity
3. CONSERVATION EDUCATION
  - literacy programmes
  - mobile audio-visual extension programmes
  - school programmes and curriculum development
  - environmental library
  - public campaigns
  - museums, visitor information and interpretive displays
  - study tours for village leaders
  - materials development (e.g. ACAP filming projects)
  - youth training programmes
4. TOURIST AWARENESS PROGRAMMES
  - mobile audio-visual extension programmes
  - museum and visitor information services
  - Khuldi model guest house
  - ACAP brochures and minimum impact codes
  - Interpretive maps and displays
  - Guide book on birds and mammals
5. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
  - bridge and trail repair
  - agricultural extension
  - women's programme
6. COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SANITATION
  - health clinics, family planning
  - mobile vaccination and health education programmes
  - toilet and rubbish pit construction
  - improved water supply with biological filters
  - clean-up campaigns
7. COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES
  - forest management committees
  - community health centre management committees
  - lodge management committees
  - drinking water management committees
  - kerosene depot management committees
8. RESEARCH AND TRAINING
  - bird, mammal and butterfly surveys
  - traditional forest management surveys
  - in service training for staff
  - training course for lodge operators
  - alternative energy surveys

Tourists should be made more environmentally aware of the damaging potential of their stay in Third World destinations. This will imply in many instances considerable changes in tourist behaviour and attitudes so that the indigenous cultures and environments are respected. Often tourists visiting less developed regions must be prepared to forego accustomed standards of comfort and convenience. In order that they might do so, however, it is essential that they are adequately briefed beforehand about the backgrounds of the localities that they will be visiting. There have been encouraging developments towards better informed tourism. Lufthansa charter flights screen short educational films about the destinations passengers are flying to (Tyler, 1989). In the UK 'Tourism Concern' and in India 'Equations' fulfil an important role in promoting enlightened tourism through the collection and dissemination of information to interested parties. Tour operators, such as Intasun offer weekend briefings for those interested in learning more about their destinations. The essential cornerstone towards achieving sustainable tourist behaviour is therefore one of education.

### 3. Tourism enterprises

It follows that tourism enterprises can provide an important function towards encouraging their clients to respect the socio-cultural and physical environments that they visit. It is also essential that these enterprises incorporate environmental considerations in their operations. Again there are encouraging developments towards achieving this aim. British Airways

declared commitment to the development of an environmental strategy in April 1989 and has allocated responsibility for environmental affairs at Director level in the company.

Undoubtedly, however, profit maximisation remains paramount in the decision making of tourism enterprises. Rees (1990) suggests that it is essential to recognise that historic levels of profit are not compatible with sustainable development. He suggests that resource corporations should be required to demonstrate adequate maintenance of the resource base before declaring a dividend. This can also apply to tourism enterprises, concerned as they are with mobilisation of tourism resources. More complete accountancy procedures would involve the concept of 'green auditing' (Cater and Goodall 1992) which would examine the environmental integrity of both the operations and products of tourism companies.

The presentation of an environmentally friendly corporate image in itself is a commercially viable proposition. It has been estimated that approximately US\$ 25,000m are transferred every year from the MDCs to the LDCs via 'nature' tours (Whelan, 1988). In the interests of true sustainability, however, it is essential that the local population of destination areas benefit from what should become a symbiotic rather than an exploitative relationship between tourism, the environment and development.

#### 4 The global context.

It is vital to remember that tourism is only a process cast

within a markedly inequitable structure both internationally and intranationally. This has vital implications for sustainability. In their desperate attempts to ensure survival in the short term the poor are forced to compromise their longer term interests. The poorest countries are the least capable of withstanding the adverse impacts on their potential for sustainability, yet these are the very nations most in need of sustainable tourism development. The implications for collective responsibility are clear, if somewhat utopian.

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