Sustainable rural development and tourism ecology

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SUMMARY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Many efforts have already been made and several ideas have been raised to solve the problems in the development of socially and economically underprivileged, peripheral areas. Most of the proposals suggest supporting rural tourism and its management based on local natural, cultural, agrarian etc. traditions and help them this way to catch up with the more developed regions of the country. Based on our findings it is obvious that sustainable and responsible development of rural tourism is only possible on the basis of ecological thinking. Tourism ecology is therefore a theory and a practice which makes it possible to develop tourism in rural areas effectively, based on local natural, social and cultural resources. Sustainable tourism involves a double task: to ensure the long-term preservation of attractions and to guarantee a return on entrepreneurs' investments into tourism and a better financial outcome for their firms. Sustainable tourism has to be ecologically and economically viable on the long term, but at the same time it has to be socially and ethically fair to the local population. A new expectation is that the main participants in the system, i.e. tourists themselves should also actively follow a responsible sustainable practice.

FROM NATURE AREA TOURISM TO ECOTOURISM

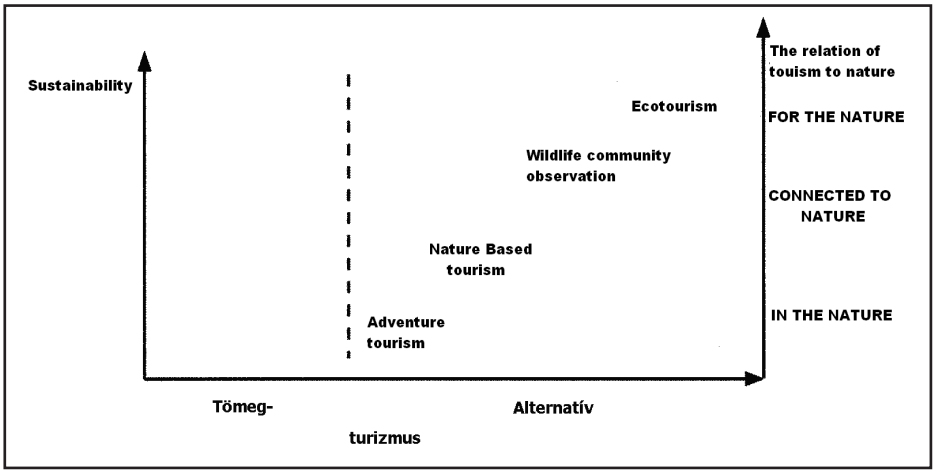
Nature area tourism

Nature area tourism represents a very wide category of the alternative forms of tourism (the ones that in many aspects differ from mass tourism; (*Michalkó, 2004, 2007; Puczkó – Rátz, 2005*).

Nature area tourism includes all those tourists who left home for the natural ambient/areas/environment. Ecotourism, ski running, sailing, fishing, nature photography, animal and plant observation, hiking and climbing are all parts of nature area tourism. Nature area tourism is an idea wider than ecotourism, because it includes all the leisure activities taking place in the nature, but at the same time it is smaller in the sense that it is not necessarily value oriented, it doesn't concentrate on cognition cultural values and environmental aspects may also be less emphasized during the activities. The relationship of types of nature area tourism (adventure tourism, nature based tourism, wildlife observation tourism etc.) to sustainability is really important and of course its relation to nature differs from are to area (in the nature, connected to nature, for the nature; Fig. 1).

Figure 1

The relation of Natural environment, alternative forms of tourism and sustainability



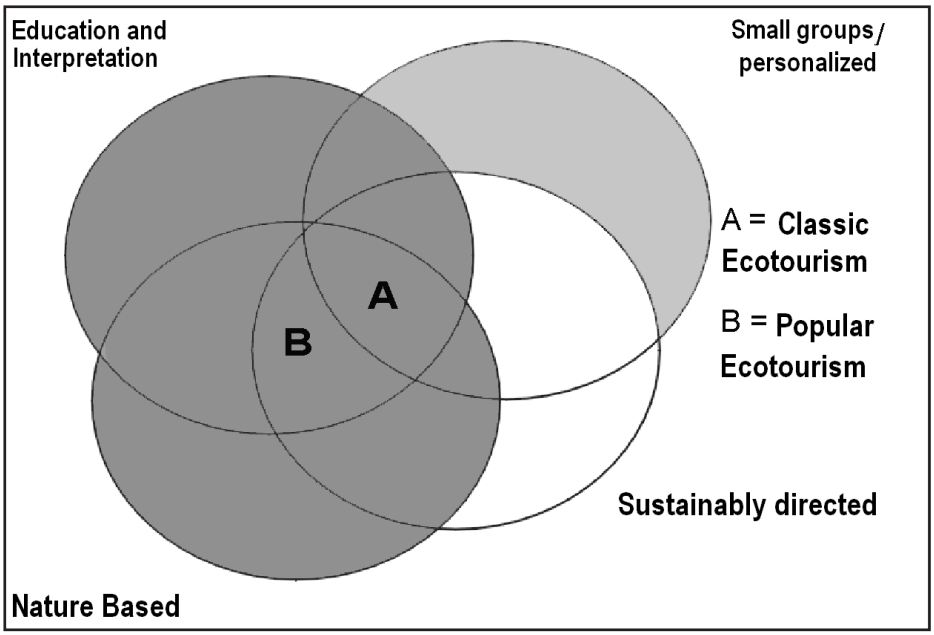
Source: Newsome – Moore – Dowling, 2002

Ecotourism

When understanding ecotourism, we have to consider four important aspects: small groups (and system of personal services), basement on natural values, sustainable control and criterions of education and definition. The popularization of ecotourism is undeniably true as well (Fig. 2).

Figure 2

Dimensions of ecotourism



Source: Weaver, 2003

By the end of the 20th century it became obvious that the direction tourism had been heading for (and still is) would cause the destruction of those natural elements that form the basis of these tourist products. Negative effects deriving from motion, staying and different forms of leisure activities lead to pollution and quantitative decrease of natural resources, to the endangerment of the unmolested and diverse wildlife, and in many places to the destruction of natural landscapes. Finally, areas once loved so much by tourists will lose their appeal. Thus, more and more among the actors of one of the most dynamically developing economic sector recognize the seriousness of the situation. Researches are started with the intention of finding solutions that may provide the basis for the long-term sustainable development of tourism. And they do it primarily because of the growing pressure from the demanding side (*http://www.kvvm.hu*). There are surveys proving that for a huge part of tourists the undisturbed landscape, diversity in wildlife and clean, unpolluted environment have become the most important factors of attraction. As a result of this strengthening attitude of environmental responsibility the number and rate of attendance of the world's natural parks and other protected natural areas is constantly increasing. It is a widely spread intention of the nature reservationists to make decision makers classify some of the countries areas with valuable wildlife and landscape as National Park sin order to maintain them for themselves and the coming generations. Growing interest and basic preservation functions if not well defended may lead to a significant conflict during maintenance and function. However, the creation of a kind of symbiosis is unavoidable because functioning of National Parks has an important role in laying down the basis for the social and economic changes that are necessary to attain attitudes of environmental responsibility. Apart from its impact on natural environment, we also have to consider the positive and negative effects it has regarding the population and community of the host territories. Development of tourism may contribute considerably to the economic development of a given area by creating workplaces etc. however a counter process occurs when its income is not reinvested into it. Mass appearance of tourists may disturb the everyday life of the local population; the encountering of different cultures may become a source of misunderstandings and contrasts. Thus, the idea of sustainable tourism requires the active contribution of the ones living on the hosting area and also to guarantee them the advantages of the developments. As it follows from the application of sustainable nature and rational landscape usage in the protected areas nature aspects of preservation have to be endorsed in accordance with other branches. In the course of this one has to meet many law limitations, restrictions that for example may have a disadvantageous affect on a national park and its population compared non-protected areas and their population. Thus, it is understandable from their side that if they are not offered, ensured any proper compensation or resolution alternative they will encounter the interests of conservation and this way with their resistance they could make practice of conservation impossible. Conservation and demonstration, these two, seemingly irreconcilable oppositions, may be formed into a symbioses during the practical course of tourism. This way ecotourism may provide a complex resolution possibility for the managers of protected areas, so that they could control tourist circulation and apart from the establishments of conservation, local communities could also profit from the advantages of the developments (*http://www.kvvm.hu; Dávid – Jancsik – Rátz, 2007*).

FROM SUSTAINABLE TO RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Sustainability in tourism

Sustainability of tourism is a double task: one has to ensure the long-term preservation of charm and guarantee that those who invested in tourism will see their capital returning, their firm's results getting better. Sustainable tourism, on the long run, has to be ecologically durable, economically executable, but also socially ant ethically fair regarding local population. Sustainable tourism development satisfies the necessities of present-day tourists and hosting areas, furthermore protects and expands any future possibilities. According to the concepts, it will make possible the managing of resources in a way that humanity may satisfy its economic, social and aesthetic needs, it may preserve basic ecological movements, biological diversity, life-sustaining systems and the cultural integrity of different nations and ethnic groups at the same time. The connection among tourists, hosting communities, enterprises, attractions and nature is complex, interactive and symbiotic at the same time. It derives from the upper mentioned comes that sustainable management with the resources would lead to acceptable conservation and a better quality tourism. All in all, sustainable tourism may effectively enlarge and enrich the environment.

Tourism development may be considered sustainable if

- it makes possible the renewal of natural resources by taking also into consideration the capacities of the natural environment of a given destination;
- it recognizes that local communities, habits, lifestyles are important segments of tourist products;
- it accepts that local population has to benefit proportionally from the positive economic effects of tourism;
- it respects tourism development related interests and desires of the population of the hosting area.

The concept of sustainability includes also

- that the tourism sector itself is sustainable on the given area, i.e. the pace of its development doesn't imply unfavourable social or physical changes thus it is still acceptable for the destination;
- -tourism doesn't displace other economic activities that are also competing for the natural resources of limited availability.

Principles of sustainable tourism development can be defined as:

- For continuous future utilization, the natural, historical and cultural etc. resources of tourism have to be preserved in a manner so that they benefit present societies as well. It is extremely important for the sector itself depends on tourist attractions, activities that are connected to natural environment, historical and cultural heritage of the given area. Were these things be destroyed or not emphasised properly tourism couldn't prosper.
- When planning and managing tourism development no serious environmental or socio-economic problems could be caused. Decreasing energy consumption or waste-production and sustaining biodiversity could help us achieving this goal.
- The general environmental quality of the tourist areas has to be sustained or where possible developed. Most of the tourists prefer visit places that are spectacular, clean and not polluted. For the maintenance or development of proper conditions local management may ensure support and means. High level of environmental quality is also important for local population.
- High satisfaction level of tourists has to be maintained in a way that tourist destinations could keep their popularity and market value. If not realized destinations

couldn't keep their market and would stay as a viable destination.

- Profit deriving from tourism should be prevailed in the whole society.
- Sustainable tourism means a sort of increase or development that doesn't exploit natural and constructed environment, but preserves the culture, inheritance and artistic values of the local community.

Apart from these, we also have to take into consideration the realization of

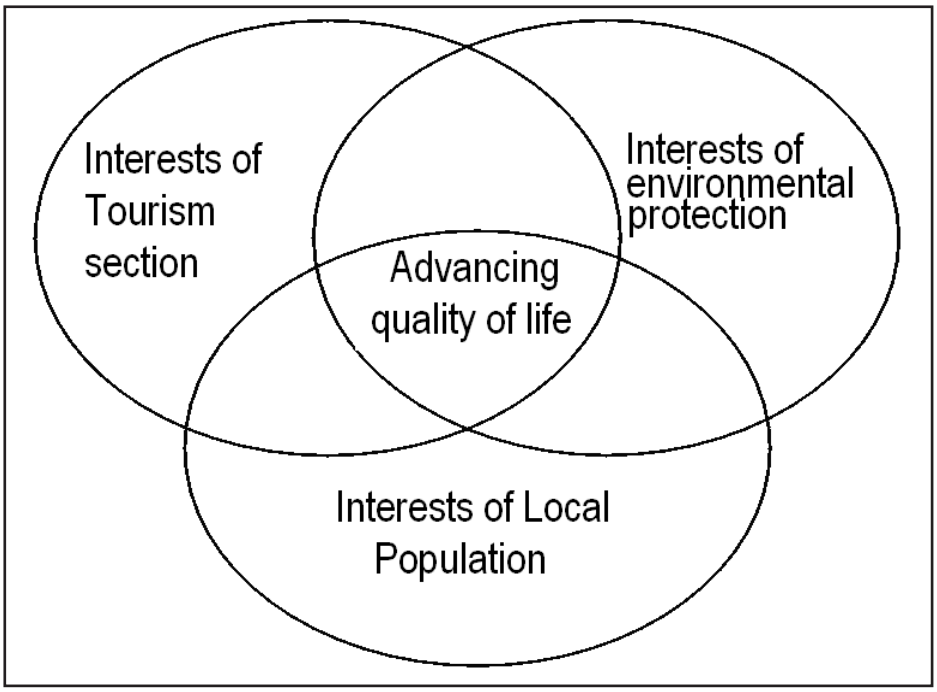
- integration of tourism into planning;
- supporting local economy;
- involving local communities;
- communication between shareholders and community; involving local population to planning;
- human resources training;
- responsible tourist marketing; and
- making tourism policy an organic part of the general politics of the society (*Dávid – Jancsik – Rátz, 2007*).

Responsibility in tourism

Responsibilities in the multi-actor tourism industry are divided so that the different „resource owners" are responsible for different segments. It makes the formation of guideline development, the maintenance of reliable quality level and the well-balanced communication much more difficult. The seriousness of the case having been recognized institutions all over the world were set up with the intention to relieve these problems (they are commonly referred as offices or tourism management organisations, however there are several other names to them; *Dávid – Jancsik – Rátz, 2007*). Cooperating with different partners they have to work on the task of developing responsible tourism so that life quality would develop as well (Fig. 3).

Figure 3

The relationship of tourism, environment and local society



Source: Inskeep, 2000

Responsible and sustainable tourism development

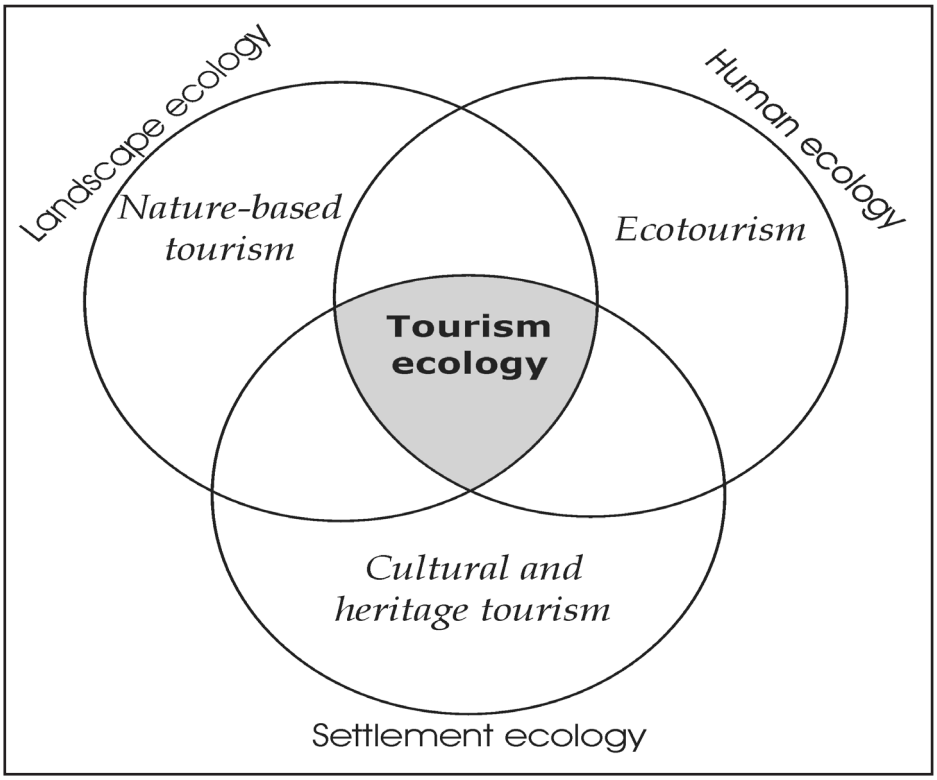
Because of the complexity of tourist motivating factors it is clear that visitors arriving to given destinations have different behaviour or attitude towards that area (*Spenceley, 2008*). It would be ideal if tourists could participate in environmental protection meaning that they could be actively and responsibly sustainable (responsible sustainable tourism). Today it's still a vision, but shouldn't forget about the already existing practices people are trying out on different fields (environmental excursions, waste collecting excursions, ethical code of tourism).

OF THE JUSTIFICATION AND NATURE OF TOURISM ECOLOGY

Several authors of international specialized literature have publications on the relationship of ecology and tourism (*Tyler – Dangerfield, 1999; Grgona, 2005*). Proceeding with their ideas and suggestions and taking elemental thesis of ecology and scientific approach of landscape ecology and settlement ecology as a basis, the phrase of tourism ecology could be introduced. The basis, correlations and investigational territories of tourism ecology are illustrated on the Fig. 4. Thus, tourism ecology is a tourism development theory and practice that naturally makes possible the efficient development of rural areas building upon natural and socio-cultural resources.

Figure 4

Relationship of tourism ecology



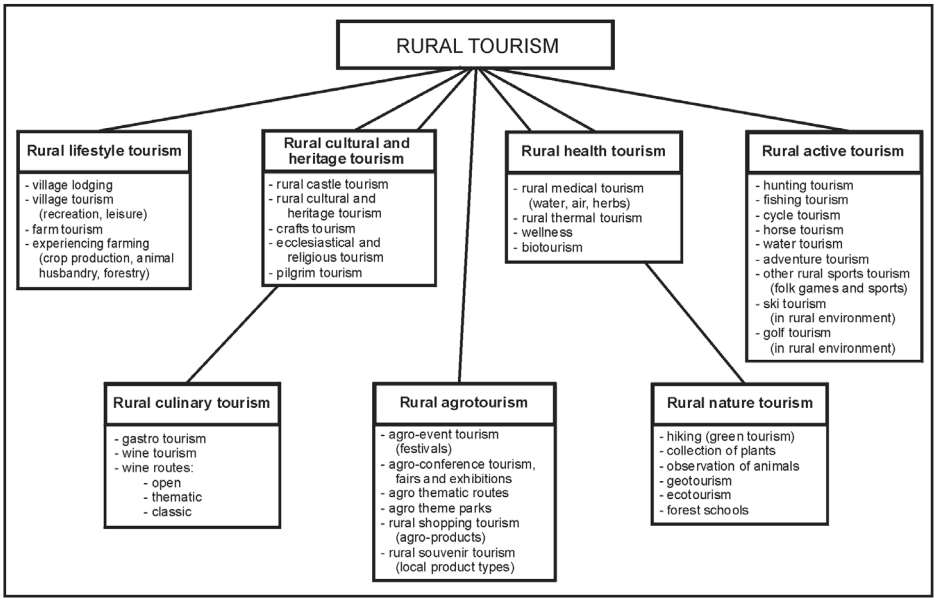
Source: Dávid, 2009

RURAL DEVELOPMENT, RURAL TOURISM, TOURISM ECOLOGY

In our interpretation, rural tourism is not a concrete form of tourism, but a set of sorts and categories of tourism. It provides the entirety of rural experience and means the adequately structured, natural and tradition based diverse supply of unique and general elements. Tourism forms and categories that partly or entirely take part in it provide rural-like service sin rural environment and rural-like host capacity either as a complex product or product element (*Fehér – Kóródi, 2007*). For an easier overview we made them to a summarizing chart (Fig. 5). The tourism ecology linkage is obvious: in the case of each form of tourism a close relation to natural and built environment is observable and that provides a basis for responsible sustainable rural tourism development.

Figure 5

Classification of rural tourism



Source: Dávid – Tóth – Kelemen – Kincses, 2007

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