

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND TOURISM ECOLOGY

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Abstract

Many efforts have already been made and several ideas have been promoted 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. According to our surveys, it can be stated that sustainable and responsible rural tourism development is unbelievable without the application of ecological thinking. Consequently tourism ecology, as theory and practice, naturally helps developing the tourism of rural areas based on local natural, social, and cultural resources. Sustainance of tourism is a double task: we have to provide long-term reservation and guarantee that entrepreneurs' input of capital will return and their firm's will better their economic etc. state in the same time. Sustainable tourism has to be enduring and economically executable on long term, but at the same time, it has to be socially and ethically fair in relations to local people. Nevertheless, it is also an expectation that actors of the system, i.e. tourists must continue an active and responsibly sustainable practice (responsible sustainable tourism).

Keywords: *responsible sustainable tourism, tourism ecology, rural tourism*

Rezumat

Turismul responsabil și turismul ecologic. Au fost făcute multiple eforturi și vehiculate numeroase idei pentru rezolvarea problemelor legate de dezvoltarea zonelor periferice, defavorizate din punct de vedere social și economic. Cele mai multe dintre propunerile sugerează susținerea turismului rural și a managementului său pe baza tradițiilor locale naturale, culturale, agrare etc. asigurându-se în acest fel suportul necesar pentru atenuarea diferențelor comparative cu regiunile mai dezvoltate ale țării. Conform sondajelor, se poate afirma că dezvoltarea unui turism rural durabil și responsabil este de neconceput fără o gândire ecologică. În consecință, ecologia turismului, ca teorie și practică, ajută în mod firesc la dezvoltarea turismului în zonele rurale pe baza resurselor naturale, sociale și culturale. Durabilitatea turismului are o dublă sarcină: trebuie să dăm garanții pe termen lung antreprenorilor că infuzia de capital va fi recuperată și starea economică a companiei se va îmbunătăți în același timp. Turismul durabil trebuie să fie economic viabil pe termen lung, dar, în același timp, trebuie să asigure relații corecte din punct de vedere social și etic pentru populația locală. Oricum, se așteaptă ca actorii acestui sistem, de exemplu turiștii să continue să se implice activ și responsabil (turism durabil responsabil).

Cuvinte-cheie: *turism durabil responsabil, ecologia turismului, turism rural*

FROM NATURAL AREA TOURISM TO ECOTOURISM

Natural area tourism

Natural 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; Puczko-Rätz 2005). Natural 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. Natural area tourism is an idea wider than ecotourism, because it includes all the leisure activities taking place in nature, but at the same time it is smaller in the sense that it is not necessarily value oriented, it does not concentrate on cognition of cultural

values, and environmental aspects may also be less emphasized during the activities. The relationship of the types of natural 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 area to area (in the nature, connected to nature, for the nature) (Fig. 1).

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).

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>).

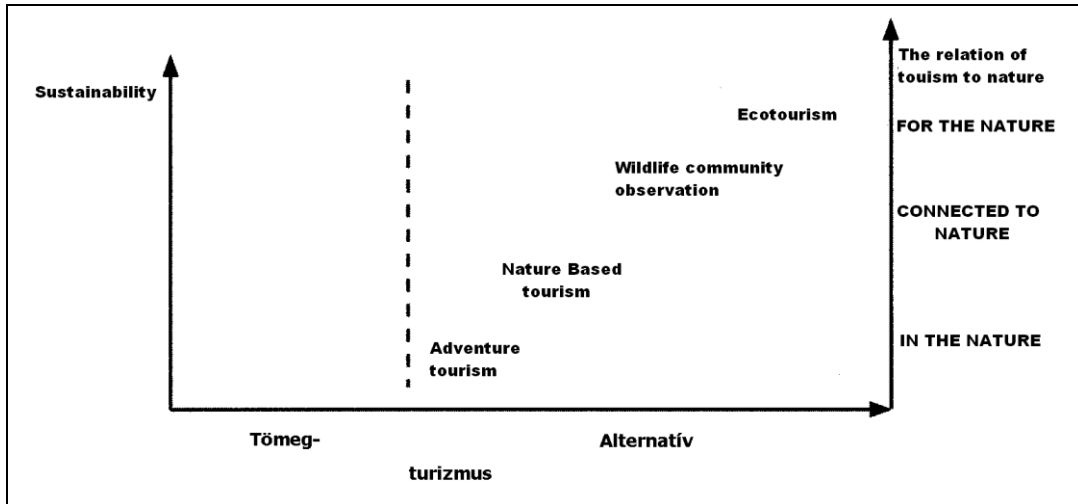


Fig. 1 The relation of Natural environment, alternative forms of tourism and sustainability, (Source: Newsome–Moore–Dowling 2002)

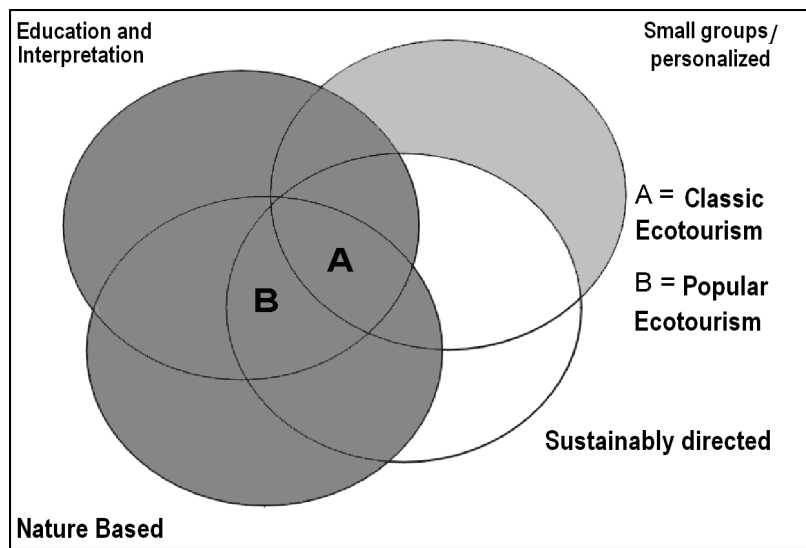


Fig. 2 Dimensions of ecotourism (Source: Weaver 2003)

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 Parks in 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 effect on a national park and its population compared to 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 sustainable, economically executable, but also socially and 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 does not imply unfavourable social or physical changes, thus it is still acceptable for the destination;
- tourism does not displace other economic activities that are also competing for the natural resources of limited availability

Principles of sustainable tourism development can be defined in various ways presented below.

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 as it 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 emphasized properly, tourism could not 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 could not 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 does not 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).

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 ed. 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 is still a vision, but we should not forget about the already existing practices people are trying out on

different fields (environmental excursions, waste collecting excursions, ethical code of tourism).

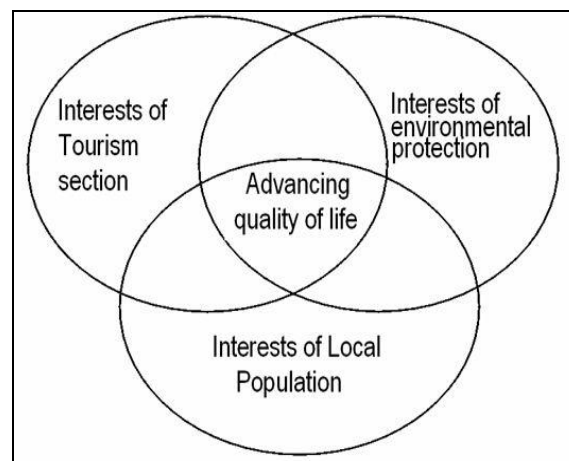


Fig. 3 The relationship of tourism, environment, and local society (Source: Inskeep 2000)

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 following figure (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.

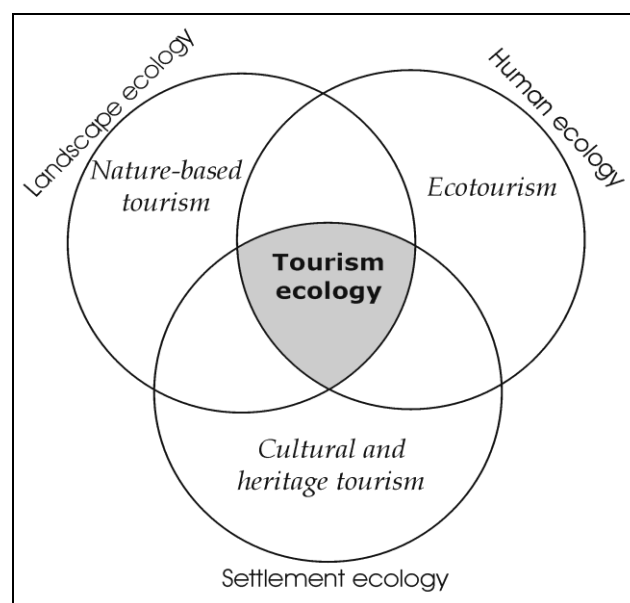


Fig. 4 Relationship of tourism ecology

(Sources: original self-made edition, 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 services in rural environment and rural-like host capacity either as a complex product or product element (Fehér–Kóródi 2007). For an easier overview we represented 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 it provides a basis for responsible sustainable rural tourism development.

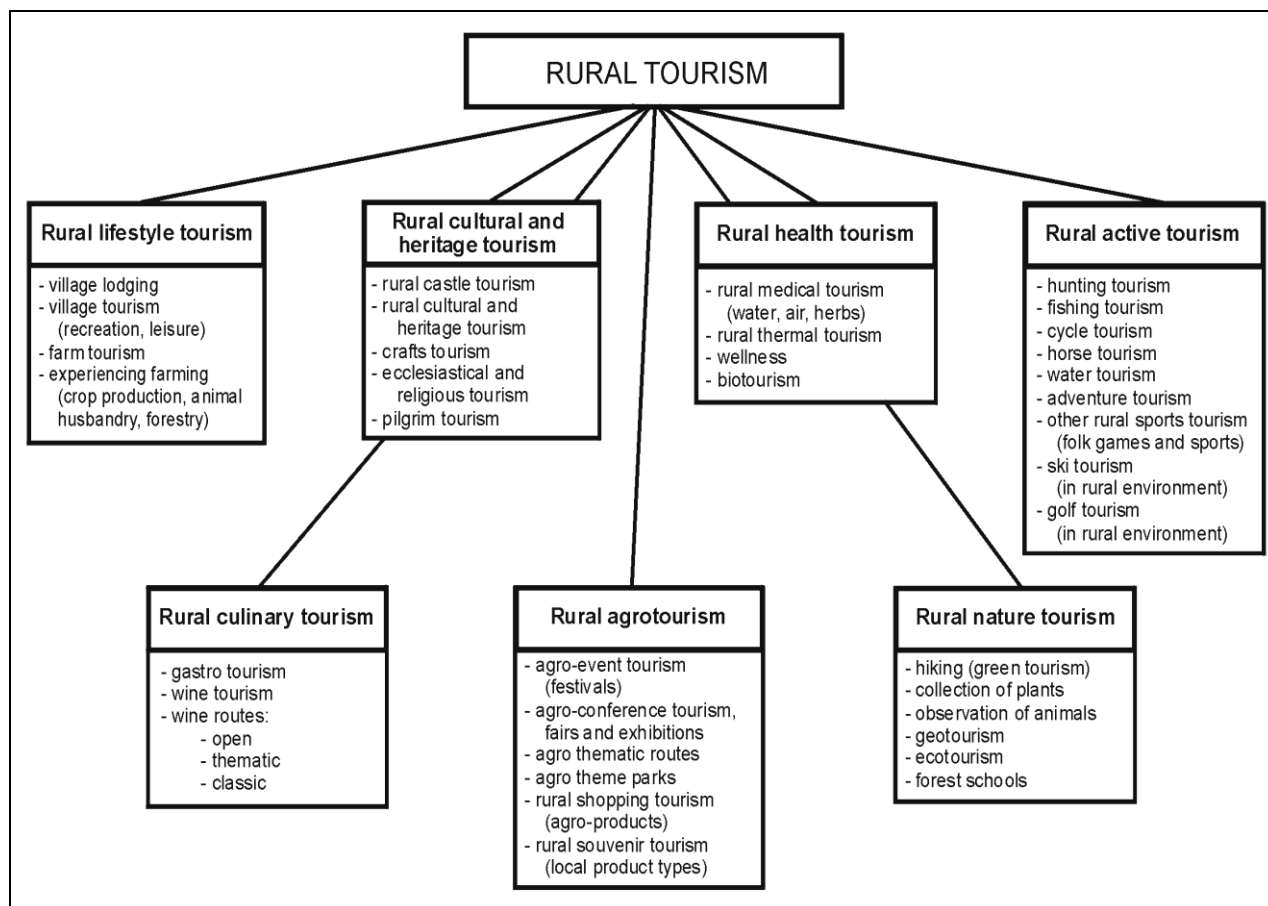


Fig. 5 Standardization of rural tourism (Source: Dávid–Tóth–Kelemen–Kincses 2007)

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