

6

Sustainable Tourism Policy Frameworks

Introduction

Having looked at the context surrounding sustainability and tourism (Chapters 1-4), and the specific impacts of tourism (Chapter 5), you should now be wondering how sustainability in tourism can be turned into more than an ideal. The next two chapters go hand-in-hand, and consider the rules and regulations as well as the power brokering and decision making systems that surround these processes.

Perhaps one of the most obvious way to achieve this is simply to regulate the sector. After all regulation worked for the ozone layer: scientists raised the alarm in the 1970s that a hole was appearing in the atmosphere's ozone layer, caused by Ozone Depleting Substances or ODS (most notably CFCs) and resulting in adverse effects on human health and the environment. By 1987 the Montreal Protocol was established to phase out the use of ODS, and by June 2015, all countries in the United Nations, the Cook Islands, Holy See, Niue and the supranational European Union had ratified the original Protocol. The result was a 98% drop in ODS since ratification, and the hole is expected to have fully repaired itself by 2050. A significant achievement in terms of international cooperation, based on scientific advice.

Can such an approach be replicated in tourism? Well, the situation is perhaps more complex, as you've hopefully come to realise in Chapters 1-3. Sustainable tourism means different things to different people; there are significant external drivers (outside the direct control of tourism stakeholders) that hinder the move towards greater sustainability; there is relatively little coordination between the different decision makers, who often have competing agendas; there is a lack of data and understanding about the impacts of tourism at various scales; and moreover tourism can have both positive and negative impacts in equal parts – often providing development opportunities where no others exist, or where other alternatives are more harmful than tourism itself.

Key words and concepts

- Sustainable development goals
- Human rights act
- Paris Agreement
- Rights of Nature
- Supply chain management
- Organic, incremental and induced path to sustainable tourism

6.1 Overview of policy and planning in tourism

Because there is no one way of regulating tourism, we rely instead on a number of international declarations on issues ranging from Human Rights, Rights of the Child, and International Labour, to the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, Convention on Biodiversity, on the Environment and Development, and Climate Change. The more relevant ones will be briefly outlined in Section 6.2, with more detail on the significance of Agenda 21 (Environment and Development) and the UNCCC (Climate Action). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were covered in Chapter 1 are also an important part of this topic, while the emerging area of Rights of Nature represent the type of Deep Ecology movement that was covered in Chapter 5.

There are also a number of more specific tourism-related international frameworks, such as the Warsaw Convention on Air Transport (1929), the Manila Declaration on World Tourism (1980) and on the Social Impact of Tourism (1997), as well as the various Resolutions of the World Tourism Organisation's General Assembly. The rights of movement, including visas and migration, also has an important impact on sustainable tourism development. These will be addressed in Section 6.3.

In addition, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an independent, non-governmental organization and largest developer of voluntary international standards, and facilitates world trade by providing common standards between nations. Over 20,000 standards have been set, covering everything from manufactured products and technology to food safety, agriculture and healthcare. Many of these will also impact on the tourism sector, both directly and indirectly, through its supply chain. Other supply chain management initiatives exist, specifically for the tourism sector, e.g. the UNEP's Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). It's worth touching on a number of additional regulations that will affect the delivery of tourism services, e.g. building codes, food production, health and sanitisation, waste disposal, zoning regulations, and so forth. These will be covered in Section 6.4.

Finally, destinations, at a national or regional scale, will develop tourism policies and plans to guide the development of sustainable tourism. These are specifically designed to integrate concerns of economic viability of tourism, local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, community wellbeing, physical

integrity, protection of natural heritage, resource efficiency, local control and visitor fulfilment. How these are developed will be discussed and some case studies of how they are applied will be covered in Section 6.5.

6.2 International frameworks related to sustainable tourism

As mentioned in Section 6.1, there are a number of international agreements, on issues much broader than tourism, that will have a bearing on progress towards sustainable tourism. At a fundamental level these include the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights – which businesses are encouraged to take leadership in fulfilling as human rights relate to direct activities, supply chains, and communities where companies operate. As a sector, tourism has both ‘spheres of influence’ and ‘spheres of responsibility’, and must usually abide by domestic legislation designed to protect human rights at a national level.

Some of the key human rights issues that relate to tourism include:

- Labour conditions and a living wage
- Land rights and forced displacement
- The rights of indigenous peoples
- The right to water and sanitation
- The right to life and health
- The right to dignity and privacy
- Economic exploitation
- Cultural exploitation
- Child labour
- Sexual exploitation
- The right to participate

Chapter 5 highlighted some of the impacts resulting from tourism development that relate to the list above (e.g. the casualization and seasonality of jobs in tourism) but these issues can become particularly apparent where local landholders are moved on from lands to make way for enclave tourism. Examples of this abound in places where our typical (and largely Western) notions of land ownership do not exist, and sites become contested between people who live there and developers who see tourism opportunities. This Reuters’ article describes this situation after the massive Boxing Day tsunami in 2004 in Thailand, where entire beach fronts, including tourist resorts were swept away, creating an unusual blank space for local land rights versus tourism development to play out.



<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tsunami-anniversary-fishermen-idUSKBN0JX0A020141219>