

ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – THEIR PLACE IN TOURISM

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The term **Ecology** was coined by Earnst Haeckel in 1869. It is derived from the Greek words Oikos- home + logos- study. Thus ecology deals with the study of organisms in their natural home interacting with their surroundings.

In their book 'Perspectives in Environmental Studies', Professors Anubha and C.P. Kanshik state that 'Population growth causes ever-increasing stress on the natural environment. Human exploitation of resources leads to the loss of biological diversity and major environmental changes.

There is growing concern over issues such as the degradation and destruction of coral reefs and tropical rain forests, the loss of Arctic sea ice, the extinction of species and impact of global climate change'

The University of Sussex 2013 prospectus for the BSc in Ecology and Environment states 'Successful action on conservation and biodiversity issues should be based on a good understanding of the ecological processes and relationships that are impacted by environmental change. Key questions include:

- How quickly and where are environmental and climatic change leading to ecological change?
- What makes some species and habitats more vulnerable than others?
- What are the implications of increased ecotourism for tropical and polar ecosystems?
- How can we reconcile the resource requirements of a growing human population with the need to conserve species and ecosystems? '

By understanding of these questions we begin to understand the impact of tourism and how to plan for this impact.

Sustainable Development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations

The report of the Sustainable Development Commission, UK 2011 raised the following:

The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often competing, needs against an awareness of the environment, social and economic limitations we face as a society.

All too often, development is driven by one particular need, without fully considering the wider or future impacts. We are already seeing the damage this kind of approach can cause, from large-scale financial crises caused by irresponsible banking, to changes in global climate resulting from our dependence on fossil fuel-based energy sources. The longer we pursue unsustainable development, the more frequent and severe its consequences are likely to become, which is why we need to take action now.

The way we approach development affects everyone. The impacts of our decisions as a society have very real consequences for people's lives. Poor planning of communities, for example, reduces the quality of life for the people who live in them. Relying on imports rather than growing food locally may cause the risk of food shortages.

Sustainable development provides an approach to making better decisions on the issues that affect all of our lives. By incorporating health plans into the planning of new communities, for instance, we can ensure that residents have easy access to healthcare and leisure facilities.

Sustainable development is about finding better ways of doing things, both for the future and the present. We might need to change the way we work and live now, but this doesn't mean our quality of life will be reduced.

A sustainable development approach can bring many benefits in the short to medium term, for example: Instead of driving, switching to walking or cycling for short journeys will save you money, improve your health and is often just as quick and convenient.

Social Responsibility

It also means socially responsible investments and environmental care.

These questions stem mostly from the difficulty to forecast all the consequences linked to an innovation. These concerns are not only raised from the point of view of acceptability and market success, but also concerning general impacts which may ensue once the product has been launched. More specifically, innovation raises questions regarding its potential consequences on society in general, not only on the economics

How do we make it happen?

We all have a part to play. Small actions, taken collectively, can add up to real change.

Effects on Tourism

Climate Change

Changing climates has an effect on patterns of tourism. Changing seasonal weather both in the home countries and destinations effects when and where people want to take vacations
In addition at the tourist destinations, reduction of fossil energy, energy efficiency and use of renewable resources may slow the effects of climate change

Renewable Energy

Use of solar, wind, sea, geothermal energies and biofuels. Consideration needs to be made of their effectiveness versus cost and impact on the environment and tourism. Where should they be placed, size and number required?

Transport

Tourism demands the use of transport both to reach the destination and around the destination. Better train networks can reduce the number of flights, better bus services to reduce the number of cars on the roads, cycling routes and paths in cities and walking can reduce the impact of tourism. Whilst the promotion of walking/hiking holidays, cycling holidays and the use of slower, traditional transport (not just getting there as fast as possible) will improve the experience.

Health

Water shortages and pollution of rivers and seas are increased by tourism

Visitors need to reduce water usage, showers, not using running water, reduction of use of plastics especially shopping bags and water bottles. Recycling of waste water for other purposes e.g. gardens.

Agriculture

Sustainable agriculture favours the use of by-products, aims at preserving the soils, and reduce waste products, while the sustainable management of sea resources and forests help reach social and economic goals

Increase agricultural efforts on island, effect of economic crisis. Maintenance of walls to terrace structures

Building

Planning consideration to minimise the impact on the landscape and environment, sound and light pollution. Reduction of street lighting whilst maintaining a safe environment

Preservation of traditional building styles, maintaining monuments, churches, monasteries, towers etc. They are our past, our history and our future and should be cherished

Tourists come to Amorgos and similar destinations to enjoy the natural beauty, so it is essential to control new building to limit their impact on the environment. Restoration of old buildings preserves the villages and encourages reuse of materials

Eco-tourism

Wildlife conservation, preservation of the environment: seashores, forests, mountains, wetlands.

Eco-tourism incites us to protect natural areas and becomes a vector of education for the respect of the environment. The continued existence of diversity on the earth is a major element in the choice made by travellers to go and visit a destination. A coherent policy for the preservation of our ecosystem allows the flora and fauna to develop, survive and reproduce, protects their natural grounds and stops the degradation of natural beauties (beaches, glaciers, forests, marshes) by excessive use.

Economy and Ecology

Creation of value and environmental practices such that tourists continue to visit and enjoy the destination so boosting the creation of jobs and prosperity. Not just planning for today and tomorrow but looking at the longer term benefits.

Local people need to care for their destination, ensuring it continues to be attractive to their visitors. Also to preserve the local traditions and history – cooking, needlework, music and dance.