

Forum:	Economic and Social Council
Issue:	Development of sustainable tourism in tropical regions
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Introduction

With over one billion people travelling abroad as of 2012 and tourism representing approximately 10% of total global GDP, it is no question that tourism has been an important focus of many nations due to it being one of the fastest-growing industries and bringing economic benefits to countries.¹

However, the benefits of tourism have completely overshadowed the issue surrounding sustainable tourism; tourism can easily lead to large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution as well as damage world ecosystems.² In fact, since 1970, a third of the natural world has been destroyed due to human activity and 58% of coral reefs as well as 70% of marine mammal are under threat.³

In tropical regions, increased tourism in these areas has encouraged immigration of new settlers and thus, the construction of new infrastructure and businesses in tropical areas has led to urban development and deforestation; consequently leading to pollution, increased demand of natural resources and lower biodiversity.⁴ However, because most tropical regions are located in less economically developed countries, it has been difficult for these countries to promote sustainable tourism.

¹ Hammond, Richard. "Why Sustainable Tourism Is the Travel Industry's Duty." *Theguardian.com*. Guardian News and Media, 06 Sept. 2013. Web. 14 Dec. 2013.

<<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/sustainable-tourism-travel-industry-duty>>.

² IBID

³ "Sustainable Tourism." *Sustainable Tourism*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.sustainabletourism.net/>>.

⁴ *Guide to Best Practices for Sustainable Tourism in Tropical Forests*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2013.

<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism/documents/tropical_forest_eng.pdf>.

Definition of Key Terms

Sustainable Tourism

Despite the political and economical benefits of tourism, tourism can lead to social dislocation, loss of cultural heritage and heritage sites and ecological degradation. Thus, sustainable tourism is tourism that respects the local people, culture and environment as well as the tourist.⁵

Ecotourism

A branch of sustainable tourism, this form of tourism focuses on ecology and how to conserve and improve the natural and cultural heritage via environmental conservation and educating tourists.⁶

Ethical Tourism

This form of tourism focuses on tourism in destinations where ethical issues are the main emphasis. Ethical tourism encourages tourists and industries involved to avoid participation in activities that may have negative ethical impacts.

Tropical Regions

These are regions that are within $23^{\circ}27'$ north and south of the equator⁷ where the sun can shine directly overhead at least once a year. Tropical countries are generally warm or hot countries that are moist all year round and have a large diversity of vegetation. These ecosystems generally have a wet and dry season only and consist of rainforests, dry deciduous forests and deserts.⁸ Tropical countries include Brazil, Australia, Indonesia and India to name a few.⁹

⁵ Fien, John, Margaret Calder, and Clayton White. "HomeTeaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future." *UNESCO*. UNESCO, n.d. Web. 13 Dec. 2013. <http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/mod16.html>.

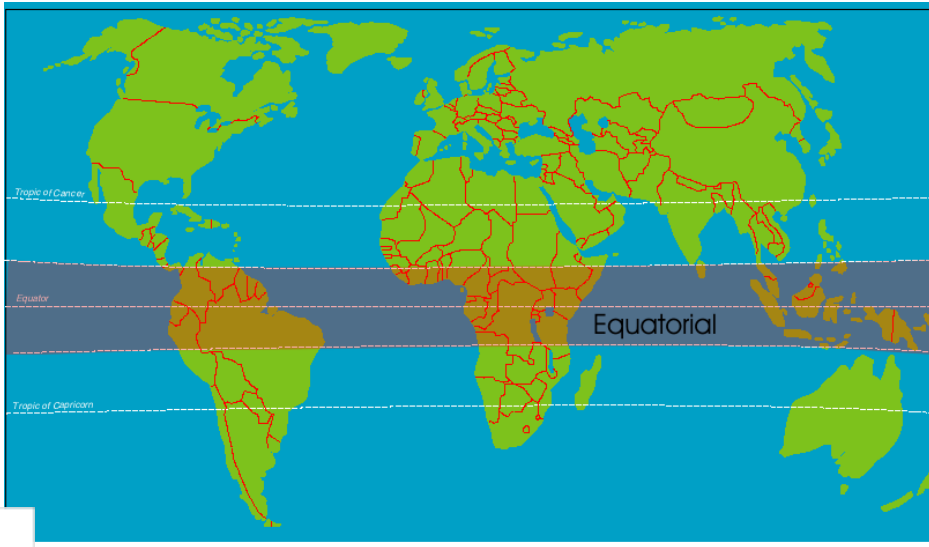
⁶ "Institut Za Turizam - Institute for Tourism." *Institute for Tourism*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <http://www.iztg.hr/en/odrzivi_razvoj/sustainable_tourism/>.

⁷ "Tropical Region." *The Free Dictionary*. Farlex, n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Tropical+region>>.

⁸ "Tropics." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 12 Oct. 2013. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tropics>>.

⁹ "List of Tropical Countries?" *Ask.com*. Ask, n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.ask.com/question/what-countries-are-in-the-tropics>>.

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Ethical Consumerism

This is the practice of producing, selling, consuming and discarding products and services that minimize social and environmental damage in an ethical manner.¹¹ Ethical consumerists aim to produce products that damages natural resources as little as possible, sell them with honesty and integrity (e.g.: Fair trade), consuming goods that support ethical habits and recycling used products.¹²

History

The concept of sustainable tourism stemmed from the idea of sustainable development developed as early as the ancient Roman civilization which attempted to design cities in a sustainable way.

Ethical Consumerism is also a main theme of sustainable tourism. This idea has likely become popular when Oxfam, founded in 1942 by Quakers, began purchasing goods from disadvantaged producers at above-market prices, thus increasing the income of the producers.¹³

¹⁰ "Understanding Epidemics: HIV/AIDS: Geography." *Understanding Epidemics: HIV/AIDS: Geography*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Jan. 2014. <http://pcwww.liv.ac.uk/epidemics/map_world_region.htm>.

¹¹ "What Does Ethical Consumerism Mean?" *Ask.com*. Ask, n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.ask.com/question/ethical-consumerism>>.

¹² "Ethical Consumerism." *IGD*. IGD.com, 10 Oct. 2007. Web. 15 Dec. 2013. <<http://www.igd.com/our-expertise/Sustainability/Ethical-social-issues/3429/Ethical-Consumerism/>>.

¹³Hanna, Paul. "Conceptualising Sustainable Tourism – Ethics, Inequalities and Colonialism." Diss. University of Brighton, 2009. Nottingham.ac.uk, Mar. 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2013.

Most recently, the aftermath of the Second World War brought to light the importance of sustainable development. Carson's book *Silent Spring* (released in 1962) largely influenced the American environmental movement¹⁴ and thus, developed concern over ethical consumption as well as developed people's awareness of the detrimental impact consumption may have on the environment.¹⁵

The rapid development of environmental awareness throughout the 1960s eventually crossed over into the tourism industry and not only questioned the common belief that the industry is non-polluting, but also to what extent it has an impact on the culture and natives of foreign countries.

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Brundtland Commission, 1983

Formerly known as the World Commission on Environment and Development¹⁷, this commission aimed to unite countries to pursue sustainable development. It was led by Chairman Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Commission was formed after many world leaders felt that there is a need to create an organization dedicated to raising awareness regarding sustainable development, especially when during this time, there have been a strong environmental movement by people in developed countries.¹⁸ Although the Commission was officially dissolved in 1987 and was taken over by the Center for Our Common Future,¹⁹ it is advised that delegates read the report regarding the Commission's philosophy.

<http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>²⁰

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UNCED

The United Nations Conference on

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/shared/shared_enquire/PDFs/ENQ_2_-_Paul_Hanna.pdf>

¹⁴ "Silent Spring." [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Spring). 14 Dec. 2013. Wikimedia Foundation. 15 Dec. 2013

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Spring>.

¹⁵ "Sustainable Tourism." [Your guide to sustainable tourism](http://www.telta.de/te1801/fh/morwenna/history.php). 15 Dec. 2013

<<http://www.telta.de/te1801/fh/morwenna/history.php>>.

¹⁶ Hanna, Paul. "Conceptualising Sustainable Tourism – Ethics, Inequality and Colonialism." *Dis. University of Brighton*, 2009. Nottingham.ac.uk, Mar. 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2013.

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/shared/shared_enquire/PDFs/ENQ_2_-_Paul_Hanna.pdf>.

¹⁷ "Brundtland Commission." [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brundtland_Commission). 12 July 2013. Wikimedia Foundation. 15 Dec. 2013

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brundtland_Commission>.

¹⁸ IBID

¹⁹ "Wced." [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wced). 12 July 2013. Wikimedia Foundation. 15 Dec. 2013 <<http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>>.

²⁰ "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future." [Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future - A/42/427 Annex - UN Documents: Gathering a body of global agreements](http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm). United Nations. 13 Dec. 2013 <<http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>>.

²¹ "Liberstilo.com." [Liberstilo](http://liberstilo.com/). Liberstilo. 15 Dec. 2013 <<http://liberstilo.com/welcome-home/communities/agenda-21/>>.



Environment and Development (A.K.A the Earth summit) was a conference that was hosted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992. During the conference, government officials from 178 countries discussed solutions for several global problems. However the most important issue was the protection of environmental systems through sustainable development. The conference resulted in the Rio Declaration which established 27 principles on environment and development

(<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=78&articleid=1163>), Agenda 21 and the establishment of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development among others.²²

Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is an international plan of sustainable development that intends to meet the needs of the poor and recognize that it is difficult for development to achieve global needs. Overall, the Agenda aims to find a sustainable balance between production, consumption, population, development and the well-being of the planet.²³ The document is available at the following link:

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

Key Issues

Emission of greenhouse gases

Tourism does indeed consume lots of energy, especially with the vast amounts of it needed for transportation and accommodation. In fact, World Tourism Day 2012 was themed under 'Tourism and sustainable energy': Powering Sustainable Development.²⁴ Often, energy is generated by fossil fuels such as coal that generates greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. Greenhouse gases can damage the ozone layer and cause rising

²² Kubiszewski, Ida. "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil." The Encyclopedia of Earth. 9 Nov. 2007. 15 Dec. 2013 <<http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/156773/>>.

²³ IBID

²⁴ "Tourism & Sustainable Energy: Gearing up for World Tourism Day 2012." World Tourism Organization UNWTO. 27 June 2012. 15 Dec. 2013

<<http://www2.unwto.org/press-release/2012-06-27/tourism-sustainable-energy-gearing-world-tourism-day-2012>>.

temperatures to the planet.²⁵

Many countries have taken up measures to make tourism more energy efficient. In hotel resorts in Fiji, many have taken the initiative to reduce their carbon footprint by using much more energy efficient technologies, thus also reducing costs.²⁶

Loss of biological diversity

²⁷ Species richness tends to be higher closer to the equator and thus, the majority of species reside in tropical, developing countries. Developing countries often face issues such as rapid population growth, low levels of technology and high debt thus, this can lead to over-exploitation of natural resources.²⁸ These acts of exploitation in tourism may include the construction of resorts in



ple and in some cases, consequently, species

Effects on natives and their cultures

A large part of tourism is interest in local cultures. Unfortunately, tourism can have a negative impact on local communities as commercialization of traditions will encourage locals, despite being inexperienced in the tourist industry, to try to profit off their cultural practices³⁰ by altering their practices to suit tourist expectations and allowing sacred sites and objects to be violated.³¹ Furthermore,

²⁵ "Problems of Unsustainable Coastal Tourism." Problems of Unsustainable Coastal Tourism. 14 Dec. 2013 <http://www.coastlearn.org/tourism/why_problems.html>.

²⁶ "WWF - Efficiency in Tourism." WWF. WWF. 15 Dec. 2013. <http://www.wwfpacific.org.fj/what_we_do/efficiency_in_tourism/>.

²⁷ Matt, Nomadic. "Why Tourists Ruin the Places They Visit (and What to Do About It) | Nomadic Matt's Travel Site." Nomadic Matts Travel Site RSS 092. 23 Apr. 2013. Nomadic Matt. 15 Dec. 2013 <<http://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/why-tourists-ruin-the-places-they-love/>>.

²⁸ Gössling, Stefan. Ecotourism: A means to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem functions? Diss. Lund University, 1999. Ecotourism: A means to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem functions? 1999. Elsevier. 15 Dec. 2013 <<http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/seagrant/ClimateChangeWhiteboard/Resources/Mac2/ee%20ecotourism%20biodiversity.pdf>>.

²⁹ "Problems of Unsustainable Coastal Tourism." Problems of Unsustainable Coastal Tourism. 14 Dec. 2013 <http://www.coastlearn.org/tourism/why_problems.html>.

³⁰ Matt, Nomadic. "Why Tourists Ruin the Places They Visit (and What to Do About It) | Nomadic Matt's Travel Site." Nomadic Matts Travel Site RSS 092. 23 Apr. 2013. Nomadic Matt. 15 Dec. 2013 <<http://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/why-tourists-ruin-the-places-they-love/>>.

³¹ "United Nations Environment Programme." Resource-efficiency Business Sectoral Activities Tourism Facts and Figures about Tourism Impacts of Tourism Socio-Cultural Impacts Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts From Tourism. UNEP. 14 Dec.

impeachment of large, foreign tourist business can threaten cultural survival as many locals are driven off by said businesses.³²

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

The recent meeting of IGAD states, which include Eastern African countries Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea, proposed to improve tourism sustainability via the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP). The conference saw tourism as a means for socio-economic development, alleviating poverty and thus providing inter-generational equity as well as promoting cooperation between neighbouring regions.³³

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The upcoming 2014 ASEAN forum held in Kuching, Malaysia plans to discuss the sustainable development of tourism and the implementation of sustainable energy initiatives in order to preserve the environment for future generations.³⁴

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

UNESCO and UNWTO have been working closely to promote sustainable tourism and protect world heritage sites. Under a memorandum of Understanding, the two aim to promote the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme.³⁵

2013

<<http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Business/SectoralActivities/Tourism/FactsandFiguresaboutTourism/ImpactsofTourism/Socio-CulturalImpacts/NegativeSocio-CulturalImpactsFromTourism/tabid/78781/Default.aspx>>.

³² "Problems of Unsustainable Coastal Tourism." Problems of Unsustainable Coastal Tourism. 14 Dec. 2013

<http://www.coastlearn.org/tourism/why_problems.html>.

³³ "IGAD meets in Nairobi and launches regional Sustainable Tourism Master Plan." ETurboNews.com. 15 Dec. 2013. ETN.

15 Dec. 2013 <<http://www.eturbonews.com/40541/igad-meets-nairobi-and-launches-regional-sustainable-tourism-mas>>.

³⁴ "Sustainable tourism at the heart of ATF 2014 in Sarawak - TTG Asia - Leader in Hotel, Airlines, Tourism and Travel Trade News." Sustainable tourism at the heart of ATF 2014 in Sarawak - TTG Asia - Leader in Hotel, Airlines, Tourism and Travel Trade News. 11 Dec. 2013. 15 Dec. 2013 <http://www.ttgasia.com/article.php?article_id=22265>.

³⁵ Malone, Charlotte. "UNESCO and UNWTO team up to promote sustainable tourism." Blue and Green tomorrow. 3 Dec. 2013. 15 Dec. 2013

<<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2013/12/03/unesco-and-unwto-team-up-to-promote-sustainable-tourism/>>.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
December 1987	Dissolving of the Brundtland Commission and succeeded by the Center for Our Common Future
June 3-14 1992	UNCED (also known as Rio summit)
April 23 1993	Agenda 21
September 27 th 2012	World Tourism Day 2012 was themed under ‘Tourism and sustainable energy’: Powering Sustainable Development. ³⁶
2014	ASEAN conference in Myanmar

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Although it is clear that sustainable tourism is an important issue that the UN must deal with due to not just the socio-economic impacts such as alleviating poverty, but the environmental impacts as well, there are some criticisms to previous attempts to resolve the issue. Many countries encourage businesses to develop ways reduce their negative impacts on the environment, however, the capitalist nature of this means that there becomes a larger gap between big and small companies as the latter are unable to adopt such environmental policies as often, they can be very expensive and long term.³⁷

Furthermore, it could be argued that attempts at sustainable tourism in developing countries (as most tropical countries are) can be considered a form of colonialism (although perhaps not as aggressive). This is because many large tourist businesses in developing countries that are able to afford more environmentally friendly techniques often dominate the tourism industry. To add to this, actions to promote sustainable tourism does not consider that tourists from first world countries

³⁶ "Tourism & Sustainable Energy: Gearing up for World Tourism Day 2012." World Tourism Organization UNWTO. 27 June 2012. 15 Dec. 2013

<<http://www2.unwto.org/press-release/2012-06-27/tourism-sustainable-energy-gearing-world-tourism-day-2012>>.

³⁷ Hanna, Paul. "Conceptualising Sustainable Tourism – Ethics, Inequalities and Colonialism." Diss. University of Brighton, 2009. Nottingham.ac.uk, Mar. 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2013.

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/shared/shared_enquire/PDFs/ENQ_2_-_Paul_Hanna.pdf>.

exploit the land and cultures of third world countries.³⁸

Possible Solutions

Despite the trade-offs of attempts at sustainable tourism mentioned above, there is no reason to stop those practices. Instead, governments and the UN have to attempt to also minimize the tradeoffs generated from practicing sustainable tourism. The UN may encourage members to help aid governments in develop, tropical nations to subsidize local tourist businesses and promote sustainable, environmentally friendly practices. Education could also have a large impact on future generations knowing of the dangers of unsustainable tourism. Overall, solutions to sustainable tourism are generally long term however; the results will mean a safer and greener Earth.

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³⁸ IBID

<<http://www.igd.com/our-expertise/Sustainability/Ethical-social-issues/3429/Ethical-Consumerism/>>.

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Impacts Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts From Tourism. UNEP.

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<<http://www.eturbonews.com/40541/igad-meets-nairobi-and-launches-regional-sustainable-tourism-mas>>.

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<<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com/2013/12/03/unesco-and-unwto-team-up-to-promote-sustainable-tourism/>>.