CRITIQING ECO/EGO/SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: BROADENING HORIZONS.

BRIAN WHEELER
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UNWIC

Centre for Tourism, Leisure and Events
Cardiff School of Management
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Colchester Avenue
Cardiff, UK, CF23 9XR
Declaration

I declare that this work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted for any other degree.

I further declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent work and investigation, except where otherwise stated (a bibliography is appended).

Finally, I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopy and inter-library loan, and for the title and abstract to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed

Brian Wheeller (Candidate)

Signed

Professor Eliri Jones (Advisor)

November 2006
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I would like to thank Professor Eleri Jones, Professor David Botterill and Vincent Platenkamp for suggesting that a PhD by publication might be an appropriate route for me to consider. And for their subsequent support. Also, of course, Dr George Papageorgiou for his invaluable technical assistance. Harry was right, All My Life's A Circle.
Abstract

In the early 1990’s, I argued that the real issues, those at the crux of tourism impact problems, were not being addressed – pertinent questions ignored amidst the blossoming euphoria of green rhetoric. A process emerged in tourism development whereby ego-enhancing, politically correct sound bites drowned out the voice of reason, namely common sense. Wonderfully self-satisfying, this proved a smug and timely convenience as politicians, planners, ‘travellers’ and increasingly (even) many tourism academics appeared to see problems without answers as an anathema. There must either be ‘answers’ – irrespective of their practical effectiveness – or a process be enthusiastically embraced whereby difficult questions are eliminated, or dismissed to the realms of the nihilistic fringe. Enter eco/ego/sustainable tourism. Scoring heavily on both counts, dovetailing nicely into the milieu of deceit while simultaneously reinforcing the required veneer of respectable positivism, it enabled the mundane, but crucial (and I argue intractable) questions to be systematically and deliberately sidestepped. Fifteen years on, little has changed. The futility of sustainable tourism is around us for all to see – should we choose, or care, to look. But, even now, we cannot face up to seeing it for what it is. Or, actually, what it isn’t. The canard continues.

Focussing on eco/ego/sustainable tourism, the thesis presents selected published works reflecting the nexus of my thinking on – and contribution to – the body of learning. It is a subjective, emotive perspective, with the emphasis on ‘the personal’. And the eclectic. Concomitantly, the author advocates the use of ‘visual’ imagery, much in evidence in the publications, to fire imagination. The works seek to illustrate the manner in which empirical observation, experience and theory are all interwoven. Consequently, it is not just a matter of content, but of process: the means of illuminating and conveying ideas, and of teaching, are also explored.

The essence of the argument presented in the thesis is that the void, the chasm between theory and practice, between what (perhaps) ‘should be’ and what actually ‘is’, cannot be bridged. The sheer number of tourists travelling, the absolute volume involved, combined with widespread corruption and the increasing adoption (universally?) of a ‘what’s in it for me, now’ mentality, together negate any ‘sustainable’ efforts of redemption.

My cynical views of eco/ego/sustainable tourism have not mellowed over the years. On the contrary, they have hardened as, alarmed, I have become increasingly pessimistic in (the dismal) light of the burgeoning optimism of others as to the potential, always potential, of sustainability. Dream on. The counter plea here, then – in ever more stringent tones – is that of the necessity to contextualise eco/ego/sustainable tourism within reality – to exit fantasy land.
I, too, can dream, can’t I?
# Table of Contents

Declaration................................................................................................. ii  
Acknowledgements.................................................................................. iii  
Abstract.................................................................................................... iv  
Submitted publications............................................................................. vi  

1. Background: Chronological Development................................................. 1  
2. Rationale for Selection of Papers............................................................. 7  
3. Writing Style/Approach to Submission.................................................... 10  
4. Contribution of My Work......................................................................... 16  
   i) Introduction.......................................................................................... 16  
   ii) Themes............................................................................................... 16  
   iii) Student Response............................................................................ 21  
   iv) External Examining.......................................................................... 23  
   v) Citations............................................................................................. 25  
      v.i) Citations in Articles in Tourism Journals and Texts....................... 26  
      v.ii) Citations in Book Reviews etc.................................................... 33  
         v.ii.i) Citations of my Own Work................................................... 33  
         v.ii.ii) ‘Vicarious’ Citations in Reviews of Others’ Works................. 35  
      vi) Conference Contributions........................................................... 37  
5. Future Plans............................................................................................ 43  
6. Conclusion................................................................................................ 45  

References................................................................................................... 49  

Appendix A.................................................................................................. 55  
Appendix B.................................................................................................. 56  
Appendix C.................................................................................................. 57
SUBMITTED PUBLICATIONS

Appendix A

Tourism's Troubled Times (1991)  
Tourism Management, Vol.12, No.2,  
1991, pp.91-96

Is Progressive Tourism Appropriate?  
(1992)  
Tourism Management, Vol.13, No.1, 
March 1992, pp.104-105

Alternative Tourism: A Deceptive Ploy  
(1992)  
Progress in Tourism, Recreation and 
Hospitality Management, Vol.4, pp.140- 
145

Sustaining the Ego (1993)  
Journal of Sustainable Tourism. Vol.1, 
No.2, 1993, pp.121-129

Willing Victims of the Ego-trap (1993)  
Tourism in Focus, No 9, 1993 p.14

Tourism and the Environment. A  
Symbiotic, Symbolic or Shambolic 
Relationship (1994)  
Tourism. The State of the Art. Seaton, A 

Ecotourism. A Ruse by any Other Name  
(1994)  
Progress in Tourism, Recreation and 
Hospitality Management. Vol.6, 1994, 
pp.1-11

In Whose Interest? (1996)  
Tourism in Focus, No.19, 1996, pp.14-15

Here We Go, Here We Go, Here We Go Eco (1997)  
In: Tourism and Sustainability, Principles 
to Practice, Stabler, M (ed) CAB 

Eco/Ego Sustainable Tourism The  
Complete Confidence Trick (1998)  
In: Histoire and Anthropologie. Michel, F 

The Truth? The Hole Truth. Everything  
but The Truth. Tourism and Knowledge: A 
Sceptic Septic’s Perspective (2004)  
Current Issues in Tourism Vol 7, no 6, 
2004, pp.467-477

Ecotourism/Egotourism and Development  
(2005)  
in Nature-Based Tourism in Peripheral 
Areas, Hall, CM and Boyd, S (eds) 
Channel View Publications, Clevedon 
2005 pp.263-272

Issues in Teaching and Learning (2005)  
in International Handbook of Tourism 
Education, Airey, D and Tribe, J (eds) 
Elsevier Science, Oxford, 2005 pp.309-
The King is Dead. Long Live the Product. Elvis, Authenticity and Sustainability (2006)


Appendix B

Tourism and the Environment Challenges and Choices for the 90's, London (1993)

Tourism Management, Vol.14 No.3 1993 pp.234-235

A Carry-on up the Jungle (1994)

World Ecotourism Conference, Manaus, Brazil, Tourism Management, Vol.15, No.3, 1994 pp.231-233

Bahamian Rhapsody in Blue (1996)


'Sustainable Tourism Development' by Coccossis, H and Jijkamp, P and 'Tourism and the Environment' by Hunger, C and Green, H (1997)


Ecotourism: comprehensively certified? 'Tourism Ecolabelling' by Font X and Buckley R (eds) and 'Encyclopaedia of Ecotourism' by Weaver, D (ed) (2002)


Appendix C


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<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication Details</th>
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1. **Background: Chronological Development**

Given the individual nature of the submission, it would seem appropriate to initially contextualise my work with some background scene setting of 'the personal'. Cumulatively, there are a number of over-lapping, inter-twining and evolving stages of my career that have culminated in my research output. 1967-74 was spent at University – Swansea, Liverpool and Surrey. There followed nearly three years as Somerset County Council’s Tourism Research Officer. Working on the County Structure Plan, in the planning department at County Hall, Taunton, quickly reaffirmed what I already knew – that theory had to be tempered by pragmatism and that politics held sway. There was then my time at Trent Polytechnic (1978-88), initially teaching Applied Economics, but from 1979, Tourism. Essentially I was learning the art of lecturing/tutoring while simultaneously further sifting through and formulating my ideas about Tourism – a subject that, at the time, was relatively new. I was totally dedicated to my students and while research output was tentatively mentioned it was not then high on either my, or the Institution’s, agenda. I was student focussed. I felt that (under the then prevailing circumstances) if I were to dedicate time to research this could only be at a cost (rather than benefit) to the student cohorts.

In the early eighties I did, however, undertake a part-time (evenings/weekends) MA in American Studies. The primary motivation behind this was to explore the possibilities of nurturing an alternative perspective on things. Even though my three earlier degrees had been, respectively, in Economics, Applied Economics and the Economic Impact of Tourism, I’d never actually been comfortable with the economic stance, which I found
blin}ered and restrictive. And I thought it prudent to attempt to see things through ‘different’ eyes – more from an ‘Arts’ dimension. This proved to be the case. The Masters was influential to my subsequent research output in that the course at Nottingham University was grounded in literature, politics, history and geography, the dissertation on Anglo-American travel literature and the entire axis of the programme qualitative rather than quantitative. The prose of Nathaniel Hawthorne was soothing, welcome relief, the perfect antidote to Archer’s statistical machinations – my MPhil. having been based on Tourism Economic Multipliers.

Around this time I also attended an evening class on Travel Literature, which similarly proved seminal in that it introduced me to a wide range of literature that previously I had been unaware of – the works of, for example, Fussell. And, in doing, further facilitated the already easy task of weaning me off Economics. By the ‘Durham’ conference, ‘Tourism Research into the 1990’s’, the transition was (evidently) complete, as Ryan’s review of same testifies: “The papers presented generally seemed to view tourism as an economic, marketing problem rather than a question of quality of experience. Indeed, only in the final paper, that of Brian Wheeller, was that concept explicitly addressed” (Ryan, 1991, p.158). So, there was, on my part, a conscious, deliberate shift towards the qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, approach.

On moving to the University of Birmingham (1989-2003) circumstances changed – some aspects for the better, others (surprisingly) for the worse. But there was one major, noticeable difference in that there was now more time available to actually crystallise and begin to put the ideas formulated at Trent Polytechnic down on paper, into
publication. Not only was the ethos of Research present but, after reflecting on my ten years’ ‘apprenticeship’ of thinking at Trent, the time was now ripe – as I genuinely felt I had something to say. Something original in the sense that it was new and didn’t appear to have been said before...but, at the same time, ordinary in that it seemed to me to be plain common sense, later expressed as “Simple common sense surely screams that sustainability is a completely futile exercise” (Wheeler, 1997, p.40).

There then followed (in the early 1990s) a burst of activity, indeed creativity, with a number of well-received publications. The flurry of early papers, each a variation on a theme of questioning the principles, principals and, particularly, the application of sustainability in tourism, developed my critique of ego/eco/sustainable tourism. I railed against the clamouring for so-called sustainability. To me the new phenomena, the supposed panacea to all development problems seemed to fall under a category best covered by the old maxim “The bigger the lie, the more people believe it.” Or is it “The bigger the lie, the more people believe (in) it”? Or both?

Crucially, while I pursued my writing, I felt my students were neither neglected nor suffered as a result of my research output. For a brief, but appreciated, period I had the luxury of ‘time’ – and sufficient flexibility to be able to balance this between the needs of the students and publication.

Around the mid-1990s, however, a combination of factors meant I re-orientated my priorities. I felt (arrogantly?) that there was very little more (that was new) to be said about sustainability/sustainable tourism: that the questions had been raised but that the
gap between theory and rhetoric on one side, and practice on the other, could not be bridged. The Masters degree in Tourism Policy and Management I had introduced, and was responsible for, at the University of Birmingham was becoming increasingly popular, especially with overseas students. As a result, I considered my priority should be to give them full value for (their) money and consequently found myself spending more and more time with more and more students. Tutoring responsibilities were increasingly important, as was, of course, lecturing. I felt strongly that the immediate interests of my students should take precedence over ‘research’; that actual teaching was crucial: that my own teaching should be more than simply run of the mill, and that I should strive to achieve this goal. In this latter respect, I was interested in further developing ways of visualising the ideas I had developed in my articles, to make them more accessible, particularly to those students struggling with English – of getting the ideas and messages across through images. With this in mind, I dedicated considerable mental concentration to this end... acquiring, poring over, and selecting appropriate images for slides. Though adopting this approach in a pre Internet/PowerPoint world proved demanding and extremely time-consuming, it was highly rewarding – both personally, and judging by their response, for my students, too. David Gates (1971) was right: a picture does indeed paint a thousand words.

So, while, at the time, I felt I could not add more to the actual ‘debate’, I did feel that here I could make the message more readily available by developing, with the emphasis on eclectic yet carefully considered, targeted imagery, the art of teaching sustainability through ‘ways of seeing’. On the whole, I was, and still am, successful at this, some confirmation evident in a student response during my subsequent research into
teaching... "I think this seminar is not about teaching tourism. It is about teaching a way of thinking and then applying it to tourism" (in Wheeller, 2004, p.4).

But there was a price to be paid for deciding that teaching should again take precedence over publication. This shift, I was aware, flew in the face of the RAE-driven publication frenzy. When virtually everyone else appeared to be orientating themselves away from the students – minimising hours of student contact, etc. – to prioritise and concentrate on their research publications/output, I was, to a large extent, moving in the other direction.

My obligations were strongly with the students; but this proved costly. However, in 2003 it eventually resulted in me moving to, and flourishing in, an environment that fosters creativity. With a light teaching load, my current post at Breda University of Applied Sciences has not only afforded me the flexibility and opportunity to re-work and build on some of my earlier ideas and material but also to continue to broaden the scope of my work. One of my tasks at Breda is to design and present a one-week seminar programme, 'Ways of Seeing'. Now, as John Sebastian, of the Lovin' Spoonful, gently and so tenderly put it, long long ago 'I feel myself in bloom' (Sebastian, 1966). Albeit, in my case, a late, late bloom.

Underlying all this has, of course, been my own background and concomitant values. I believe my upbringing and social life has been instrumental in determining my way of looking at things. A baby-boomer, from a working-class background, suddenly in the 1960s I was amazed to find myself at university. Far from the rebel, I was just grateful
to be there, and felt it was a wonderful opportunity especially given that so many of my friends remained stuck ‘behind’ in Stockport, where many still are. Once immersed in Higher Education for me it was, professionally, onwards and upwards – to where? middle age, middle class, mediocrity? – whilst many of my friends back home took on manual, some might say menial, jobs. And, to an extent, that’s how it still is today.

As a consequence, half my life is middle-class ‘professional’ while the other half remains firmly rooted in working-class culture and values. Simplistically, this schism, this dual existence is the shifting vantage point from which I question not only my own but the many values, and behaviour, that others seem to presume the norm. The assumption appears to be that, as these are their own mores, automatically they are, therefore, the ‘norm’, the benchmark, to judge others. This manifests in the high culture/low culture ‘class’ perspective that underpins much of my work and, in particular, was fundamental to my early analysis of the traveller/tourist continuum. “The association of ecotourism with exclusivity is a theme emphasised by Wheeller in his extensively quoted work” (Holden, 2005, p.200): “sustainable tourism may be elite tourism in disguise, as authorities as diverse as Wheeller (1994) and Albuquerque (1995) have noted” (Wilson, in Stabler 1997 p.173) and “Brian Wheeller raised the problem of academics tending to focus on ‘high culture’ at the expense of ‘low culture’ and its appeal to a broader base of tourists” (Towner, 1997, p.1018).
2. Rationale for Selection of Papers

Apart from a hiatus around the late 90's, output has, over the years, been relatively steady, with something of a late flourish. Overall, then, a respectable portfolio of work has materialised. The requisite selection process has, however, proved taxing. Clearly, not all publications can be included. The importance of evidencing the development of a theme, a cogent body of work is obviously crucial to this submission; hence emphasis on the eco/ego/sustainable tourism canon that constitutes the spine of my work, and is the field in which my work is most acknowledged, nationally and internationally. Specifically in this respect I have included here publications I consider to be the 'strongest' pieces of work in terms of most influential, the most cited (see Appendix A). Not surprisingly, amongst these are the three papers that have subsequently been re-issued. On a point of detail, I was unsure of whether to include the original text, in chronological order as published in the early 1990s, or the reissued versions a decade, or so, later. I have opted for the original sequence but, as explained below (see p.18), draw particular attention to the 'up-dated' version of 'Alternative Tourism – A Deceptive Ploy’ re-issued in 2003.

But, significantly, I have also chosen to present more tangential material by way of illustrating a widening of my interest. By the mid 1990s not only had my serious doubts as to the value of sustainability in tourism been cemented but, as mentioned, I was also thinking that most of what there was to say about the subject (and certainly the most obvious) had already been said. Accordingly, when approached to do so, I did continue to write on sustainability and ecotourism, but began to widen my compass (hence the
article on travel and music in 1996) to pursue subjects I was personally interested in and could see relevant to tourism. And sometimes, in a tangential, if rather obscure, way, relevant also to sustainability. Not wishing to abandon the field of research entirely I have, therefore, developed further variations on the theme of sustainability that tie in with, or have a (somewhat tenuous) link to my personal interests: music, literature, film, fish, fishing, humour, postcards, seaside entertainment etc. and, of course, education in general. This has resulted in a broadening of topic area though still, I believe, held together as a cohesive body of work by the style and critical 'personal' approach to the subject matter. But my work no longer deals exclusively with, and therefore is not restricted to, sustainability. The material selected for submission is intended to reflect this wider dimension. Thus the seemingly eclectic titles presented (see Appendix C).

Of importance to me as an academic and educator has been developing, and employing, the means of projecting one's ideas, of getting 'the' message across. Written publication, in articles and chapters, is a standard way of trying to achieve this. But so too, of course, is lecturing: as is conference delivery and reviewing responsibilities. Accordingly, there is an argument here for the inclusion of appropriate aspects of these in the submission. While teaching is beyond present scope a case, therefore, is made for including both a selection of my (early) conference reports and (some) book reviews as these, I believe, reflect aspects of my contribution to the subject. Each of these has sought to be analytical, rather than merely perfunctory and descriptive in content while, hopefully, simultaneously being original, personal and distinctive in style (see Appendix B). They constitute an integral part of my critique. Indeed, in my first publication, I conclude a review of Murphy's 1985 Tourism: A Community Approach
with “— a valiant attempt to solve what is perhaps an intractable problem” (Wheeller, 1987, p.282)...this ‘intractable problem’ is a view from which I’ve never wavered. A conference report was the prompt for Airey’s early encouragement, ‘the impetus to send this was your review of the Environmental Conference in the June Tourism Management. I enjoyed so many of the comments and turns of phrase. You will have to write more.’ (Airey, 1993). Others are referred to and/or quoted at length by various scholars (see, for example, Mowforth and Munt 2003, pp.208-209).

One of the two conference proceedings, reflecting my interest in fish and the aquatic, is included as another marker as to the eclectic contextualisation of my sustainability thoughts within the seemingly non-academic arena. Similarly, the other, Wallace and Gromit, follows on from this while simultaneously illustrating my use of unconventional material in teaching, and my work on humour.

Set within the wider context of ‘education’, my more recent writing attempts to draw some of these threads and (inevitable) tensions together.

Therefore, after much deliberation, I present material judged most relevant for this submission. In the process, I have chosen to omit co-authored works, most conference proceedings, practice papers, etc. Overall then, a considered body of work is presented that this submission contends is representative and worthy of review for PhD by publication.
3. **Writing Style / Approach to Submission**

I have never regarded (my) writing as functional or utilitarian: rather, at the risk of being somewhat pretentious and hypocritically (see below) precious, I see it more as an art form. It takes me considerable time and painstaking effort to draft/re-draft, indeed, create each publication. Be it article or chapter, I treat every individual piece as the proverbial work of art to be carefully crafted – the content material, language and composition honed and constructed to seek greatest effect.

In my published works, I have attempted to paint pictures with words, using the ‘visual’ and imagery to fire Imagination. ‘The visual’ is, therefore, frequently in evidence. This is hardly surprising given my belief that writing should be descriptive in the true sense of conjuring up mental images: ‘descriptive’ in the style of delivery as opposed, of course, to merely being descriptive in content.

The intention has always been to write with a passion and conviction for the subject matter, crucially in a manner that aims to engage the reader. Similarly, when presenting material (be it lecture or conference presentation) I consider it vital to attempt to provide information in such a way as to interest (even entertain) and stimulate the student, delegate or audience – and have always strived to achieve this. Ideas, sometimes abstract, are ‘converted’ into, and presented as, striking, memorable images – be they text, verbal or pictorial.
In conjunction with this, a plea is made for the ‘personal’ approach. Emotive subjectivity as well as so-called ‘clinical’ objectivity has, I believe, a vital, pivotal role to play in subject development (Wheeller, 2005b). That we should not be too academic in our approach — either with ourselves or our subject — is a recurring personal theme that comes through strongly in my writing (as well as in my lecturing and conference presentations). Our sources should not be restricted, limited to academic bibliography alone. We should, I contend, interweave other, non academic points of reference into our work thereby enhancing ‘accessibility’ of both thought process and message. And of particular import here is personal experience and observation. I have tried to practice what I preach. “With refreshing candour in a direct and racy language, Wheeller, who is not averse to the occasional personal anecdote to demonstrate his ambivalence as a traveller, punctures the balloon of what he perceives as the inflated hypocrisy of the self-professed ecotourist and provider...” (Stabler, 1997, p.24). And “The personal and provocative style of commentary of Wheeller is alive and well in his re-examination of his earlier exploration of alternative tourism. His assessment is that the arguments he has posed a decade earlier retain their validity, that tourism is largely unmanageable and that the pursuit of sustainable tourism has been ineffective.” (Fagence, 2005, p.291)

Significantly too, in introducing Butler’s The Tourism Area Product Life Cycle, Vol.1 Hall notes...“The conclusion to this volume is an insightful and provocative chapter by Brian Wheeller who successfully managed to integrate issues of authenticity, sustainability and TALC with wildlife, ecology, ecolodges and Elvis Presley. Nevertheless, Wheeler’s (sic) chapter has a serious message in that it seeks to bring together a number of significant concerns in contemporary tourism studies as well as
question some of the assumptions made with respect to ethics, morals and tastes in tourism.” (Hall, p.xvii in Butler, 2005). He continues “The Wheeller chapter also provides a suitable springboard to some of the more theoretical and conceptual dimensions of TALC that are discussed in the other volume, particularly as it seeks to illustrate the manner in which empirical observation and experience and theory are interwoven.” These are my own bold italics, employed to emphasise Hall’s perceptive awareness. As a litmus paper for all my work, this chapter is indeed an attempt to link ‘the personal’ with recognised (tourism) theory.

My view is that despite pleas for complete objectivity a degree of pragmatism is unavoidably involved, but conveniently ignored, in all research activity. However objective and balanced you try to be, one’s inclinations dictate what one goes searching for. Inevitably there is an element of selectivity (Wheeller 2004). The contention that there is a way of achieving an objective ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ is easily rebuffed. As Dunn notes from a tourism perspective “no process of meaning making exists in isolation. Nothing is totally objective” (1998, p.136). Research is moulded by prosaic resource and temporal considerations. And, of course, the researcher’s personality, profile and perspectives invariably also influence the process (Papageorgiou 2004). We should, I suggest, acknowledge and accept this: and celebrate ‘the personal’ as positive.

In this regard, referring to my draft chapter in the (then forthcoming) International Handbook in Tourism Education, I received a message from the co-editor Professor Tribe (2005) “Just read your chapter. Very good. Very unlike the others. Very you.”
The deployment of ‘the personal’, feeding, as it does, into all aspects of my work has been instrumental to my career. My work, then, is primarily based on ‘observational empiricism’. It is qualitative not quantitative: subjective rather than objective, personal as opposed to remote. And is, I suggest, all the more richer and less arid as a result.

I have always been of the opinion that we, as academics, should not take ourselves too seriously. This is not to denigrate our subject, far from it. Rather we should have sufficient confidence both in ourselves and in Tourism to be neither defensive nor too precious. Not to be able to laugh at ourselves, or our work, is surely indicative of insecurity. My interest in humour as a means of ‘informing’ has always been there – in teaching, conference delivery and, hopefully, in the occasional aside in publication. There has, I suggest, therefore been an element of Humour running throughout my work (enough, at least, to sporadically, and self-indulgently, make me chuckle).

“Every article can draw my smile and laugh. I do agree with the points you raise to argue. May I ask your permission to translate some of your articles into Thai. Your critical opinion will be of help to stimulate people’s questioning minds” (Wanichanugom, 1995).

“Yet despite the seriousness of the topics, learning through laughter was a strategy adopted by several presenters. Coming to mind in this regard were contributions from Brian Wheeller (University of Birmingham) on ‘No Particular Place to Go: Travel and Tourism, a Mid-Life Crisis Perspective...” (Dann, 1997, p.188). These re-assuring
words were from 1996, two years after Butler's (see p.38) warm comments with regards my New Zealand presentation.

Latterly though humour has taken on a more 'tangible' role in that, rather than it simply being (one of) the means by which the message is conveyed, it has, in specific relation to my work on tourism, itself become an integral element of the subject matter of (some of) my research. (Maybe sustainability is itself a joke? In which case, then virtually all my work?). My interests (Wallace and Gromit, Donald McGill, and Seaside Entertainment) are the tangible, more obvious manifestations of my continued interest in humour. But of equal import is my conviction that it, Humour, continues to be a wonderful means of conveying ideas, the perfect vehicle for teaching (Wheeller, 2005b).

In my keynote address at the ‘Critical Issues in Tourism Education’ 2004 conference, using Wallace and Gromit as exemplar, I drew particular importance to humour, concluding “A laugh, it is said, is the shortest distance between two people. With this in mind, it seems appropriate to conclude with a line from the aptly evergreen titled Quotations of Our Time (Peter, 1980, p.80)...‘Two things reduce prejudice – education and laughter’. Dovetailing together perfectly in A Grand Day Out, these two precious, priceless commodities are evident in glorious excess in Wallace and Gromit’s splendid video, surely, a ‘must-see’ for all postgraduate tourism students” (Wheeller, 2005a).

I am particularly pleased to note that Wallace and Gromit has now been, or is about to be, ‘adopted’ on a number of university Tourism programmes, e.g. Hong Kong
Polytechnic University, La Trobe, Limerick, Oxford Brookes, Plymouth, etc. And if my recommendations have in some way been instrumental to this end, then I truly regard this as a major achievement.
4. Contribution of My Work

i) Introduction

Where appropriate, I have decided here to let others do the talking. In support of my submission I quote extensively, though by no means exhaustively, from a range of academic sources. I do this in an attempt to underpin the claim that my work has, in a number of ways, contributed significantly to the study of Tourism. Selectively offering support material in the form of relevant citations from tourism academic texts and journals (hopefully) conveys the relevance, significance and influence my work has, over the years, had – and continues to have – in raising awareness, encouraging independent thought and stimulating debate in the arena of Tourism Studies. I therefore draw on these citations both as illustration of what I believe in and as endorsement of the quality and relevance of my work, elaborating further on themes and ideas as and when I have considered it necessary. I have tried to keep the testaments together though, where pertinent in supporting particular points, have sometimes employed quotations in situ in the text.

ii) Themes

In my writing (and presentations) there have been a number of re-occurring themes. I have been particularly interested in exploring how we see (some) things and, crucially, how we choose (when it suits) not to see, or ignore, others: in how and why, consciously or unconsciously, these decisions are (or are not) made: in how what we
think we see isn’t what we get. I’ve been interested in a spatial and temporal analysis, and in the passing of time, and this has informed a framework on which I’ve hung empirical observation, notably in relation to short term/long term dimensions: in micro/macro considerations: in the high culture/low culture divide; and, in attempting to extricate the sustainable tourism debate from ivory-tower academia and contextualising it within the ‘real’ world, exploring the chasm between rhetoric and reality. In this respect, the more it is ignored by proponents of sustainability, the more corruption (at all levels) is of ever increasing importance to my way of thinking.

The essence of my arguments has, though, stayed basically the same – that the void between theory and practice, between what (perhaps) ‘should be’ and what actually ‘is’, cannot be bridged. And that the sheer number of tourists travelling, the absolute volume involved, combined with increasing adoption (universally?) of a ‘what’s in it for me, now’ mentality, and the seductive appeal of the ‘ego-trap’, negate any ‘sustainable’ efforts to rectify the situation. My cynical views on ego/eco/sustainable tourism (and sustainability) have not mellowed over the years. Far from it (see Wheeler, 2004b). They have hardened as I have become steadily more pessimistic in light of the alarming continued optimism of others as to the potential, always potential, of sustainability. What has changed perhaps are my ever-stronger pleas to contextualise the debate within reality – “to exit fantasy land” (Wheeler, 2005c, p.263).

It is argued here that the three ‘re-released’ articles add considerable weight to the submission’s substance, validity and currency. France (1997) and then Wilson (2003), in line with the other articles in their volumes, opted to republish in full, respectively,
‘Tourism’s Troubled Times’, and ‘Sustaining the Ego’. Rather than seek the opinions of the individual authors, these editors chose to add their own insights in introductory chapters. Sandwiched between, Cooper (2003) produced his Classic Reviews in Tourism. His slant was different, preferring to ask authors to review their original work (in my case, ‘Alternative Tourism – A Deceptive Ploy), resulting in a slightly (three paragraph) longer version. It is perhaps worth pursuing Cooper’s rationale here in a little more detail.

“This book revisits the leading authors and reviews from the first six volumes of Progress and provides updated ‘state of the art’ reviews. There is no doubt that many of the papers in the original Progress book series have stood the test of time and become oft-cited classics...I therefore felt there was real value in identifying these influential papers and asking the authors to revisit them” (Cooper, 2003, p.7). I was flattered Cooper should consider my contribution, first published in 1992, worthy of being merited a ‘classic’. Cooper continues “Each author has interpreted this challenge in a different way, some staying very close to the original review, others radically changing their stance.”

On re-reading the article a decade post-publication, my own response is that it remains rigorous yet ‘accessible’ and continues to have currency – both in the sense that it is relevant to contemporary, wider issues of sustainability and that it still reflects my own thinking on the subject. Shades of Martin Peters, it was, perhaps ten years ahead of its time. I therefore was one of the authors who decided to stay very close to the original, choosing to add only a brief introduction and conclusion to the text. In this context of
continuity and currency (underlying themes of this submission) it is considered appropriate here to quote, in full, these additions to the original.

“Nearly 10 years on, the validity of the arguments outlined in the original 1992 paper in ‘Progress’ remains fundamentally robust. Indeed, as the problems become more acute, the intervening decade has added substance, further weight and a prescient resonance to the message. None of the issues raised then seem, in the interim, to have been satisfactorily addressed. Rhetoric is still rife; action lamentable. Riddled with hypocrisy selfish, vested interest still holds sway. Tourism numbers have escalated. Tourism remains unmanageable and the spatial spread of tourism continues unabated. As Mike Robinson recently remarked ‘The sustainable debate has developed little over the last ten years’ (Robinson, 2001). In effect, it is yesterday once more. So, let’s go back in time – to the present and, even more depressingly, to the future” (Wheeller, 2003, p.227).

And, concluding “On reflection, there is little in the original 1992 paper that I would wish to change. Possibly more on domestic tourism, in that there has tended to be overemphasis on the international dimensions of sustainability when a considerable proportion of tourism is domestic in nature. And maybe the title, given that alternative could be construed as ‘alter-native’ which was not, superficially at least, what new forms of tourism were necessarily supposed to be about (in itself a moot point). To the majority of mass tourists (and the majority of tourists are surely mass) sustainability is of little import – far more pressing are matters of price, value for money and fun! fun! fun! For the believers, I contend, the ineffectiveness of sustainable tourism is its
strength and remains, perversely, core to their acceptance of it. No change here then. Or elsewhere.

Just as in the early 1990s, the futility of sustainable tourism is around us for all to see. Most are, understandably, not remotely interested. For those that are, the sham could not be more apparent. But shame. Even now we just cannot face up to seeing it for what it is. Or, actually, what it isn’t. The Emperor’s Clothes – though now no longer new – show no signs of wearing thin…” (Wheeler, 2003, p.233).

Further thoughts on these (and related) matters, and how they are inextricably interlinked with our approach to tourism education are summed up nicely (in both senses of the word) in ‘The Truth’ (Wheeler, 2004b) and in my chapter Issues in Teaching and Learning (Wheeler, 2005b). The editors, in their introduction to the latter text, encapsulate the chapter thus...“Brian Wheeler paints a vivid picture of teaching under attack. Wheeler presents a powerful argument that ideals in teaching are being eroded by the clamour for funding, resource constraints, the rigours of assessment, promotion, the demands of the ‘immediate’ and the intense competition with research. Wheeler thereby sees a regrettable transformation from teaching as an educative, liberal and expansive project to a more limited utilitarian and functional one. Offering an antidote to this he concludes by re-iterating the case for the deployment of contextualisation, imagery and the visual in revitalising and enhancing the teaching and learning experience.”
And that, to me, is a first-class assessment of my (jaundiced?) view of teaching and learning: I couldn’t have said it better myself.

iii) Student Response

Through developing their confidence to think for, and indeed about, themselves, aspects of my work have, hopefully, helped students in their process of learning. By encouraging them to draw parallels between the inconsistencies (apparent) in their/our own behaviour with wider issues and then, specifically, tying these down to aspects of their chosen field of study, I have tried, in all my dealings with students to stimulate interest, and generate a ‘questioning’ mind. “I would like to take this opportunity to thank my tutor Brian Wheeller who has been a great source of inspiration since first teaching me over ten years ago and more specifically for making me think about issues in a way which I previously would not have considered” (Lyon, 1995, p.i).

There are strong links between the different strands of my work in education, be it writing, teaching, researching, tutoring, supervising, conference presenting etc. My research, for example, has significantly informed my teaching and supervision. And vice versa. But I don’t believe this to be common practice. It is a question of degree; a matter of balance. Unfortunately, to my mind, evidence over the years suggests many researchers are far more interested in their own research and their careers than they are in their students.
Of paramount importance, at least to me, is the influence my writings appear to have had on student perceptions. And not only my own students. My writings seem to have had national and international student appeal, generating considerable interest at undergraduate, masters and doctoral level. They are frequently on reading lists and included in a number of coursework study packs. I am still amazed when, usually at conferences, I am approached by young (and now not so young) academics who say how much my writing impacted on their thoughts as students. And, I'm pleased to report there still appears to be currency in my output.

Out of the blue, on 11.05.05, I received an unsolicited email from Andrea Valentin “Just a short email to say ‘thanks’, Mr Wheeller. I’m a PhD student and staff member at Otago’s Tourism Department. I am also in the initial stages of my PhD and have already hit ‘disillusionment’ stage….So I was half-heartedly browsing through some journals when I suddenly thought that a Wheeller-article may help my lack of enthusiasm…AND IT DID. Thanks so much for all your thought – provoking essays, always very readable (in particular the sceptic’s (sic) sceptic’s perspective).”

This was followed, again unsolicited, shortly after on 26.06.05 by “Dear Professor Wheeler (sic) I am drafting my first paper for hopeful publication and had the foresight to print off a copy of your paper in preparation – The Truth? The Hole Truth. Everything but the Truth. Tourism and Knowledge: A Septic Sceptic’s Perspective. I write to thank you for this paper. I find it stimulating and refreshing and therefore, (ironically?) a really positive contribution...I appreciate the scope you afford tourism scholars who might want to ‘step out on a limb’, with your honest and frank assessment
of ‘our’ environment...Yours sincerely in looking forward to your next publication” – Felicity Picken, PhD candidate, School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania, Hobart.

And “My name is Ilias Sofronas and I am a PhD candidate at the University of Brighton...it is only recently that I encountered an article of yours in Current Issues in Tourism talking about Tourism, Truth and Knowledge, which I found very interesting and I would like to share some of my thoughts (attached) about it with you” (15.11.05).

There have, over the years, been many, many positive comments and feedback from students. But these three, in particular, have a strong, reassuring resonance with me.

(I might add here that this article also initiated other favourable responses from a number of fellow academics, for example... “I have just read your CIT (2004) paper; I have been meaning to read it for a long time. What an interesting read! The last two sentences of the paper were very profound, and quite true” (email received from Marcus Stephenson, Middlesex University, Dubai 29.06.06).

iv) External Examining

In my capacity as external examiner I have tried to contribute to the transfer of ideas into practice by, where appropriate, advocating the use of as wide and diverse a range of material as possible, always encouraging staff (and students) to this end. In my External Examiner’s Report, University of Limerick 1998 I remarked “There was
evidence that the staff involved have taken on board suggestions I have made (in previous reports) as regards making more use of contemporary media sources...” (Wheeller, 1998). Similarly, for the University of Plymouth “In addition to formal academic texts and journals, tourism is a subject that lends itself readily to contemporary media sources – television, radio, newspapers, magazines, novels etc – and students should access this material more. I will look for increased use of ‘informal’ source material in next year’s work” (Wheeller, 1999). And, persevering, in subsequent reports commented “Elsewhere, I would still like to see the use of a wider spectrum of reference material in the student coursework. Building on the more traditional sources, there is surely room for a wider range of less formal material....students should be continually encouraged to look outside of textbooks and journals for relevant sources of support material” (Wheeller, 2000). And, in related vein, “I particularly liked the encouragement given to the more maverick students, combining the rigours of research methods format while embracing different approaches by students” (Wheeller, 2001).

For information, I have considerable experience of doctoral examining, and some of supervising. Although primarily located in sustainability, sustainable tourism and ecotourism, there has been variety in the range of topics of the (fourteen) PhDs I have been invited to be External Examiner for – including tour guides and archaeological sites, rural tourism, cultural tourism, museums and education etc. And, as regards supervision, I was particularly pleased with the External’s opening remarks in his report on one of my students PhD...“This doctoral thesis is one of the best I have ever read and both candidate and his supervisors are to be congratulated on the outcome” (Dann, 1998, p.1).
My publications have struck an agreeable chord not only with students. Peer review has also consistently been positive and favourable.

But before proceeding with academia, it is perhaps worth noting that, significantly, my work has found voice in the wider non-academic media. Early attention was given to my views by, for example, Hutchings’ (1993, p.39) short piece in the New Statesman and Society...“Going on a mindless package holiday to Gran Canaria is just the sort of thing to worry the greenish person, like myself, who secretly thinks they ought to know better...But an article in the latest edition of In Focus has cheered me up immensely. It looks at the phenomenon of eco-tourism, and takes it for a spin round the block, only to dump it in some breakers’ yard in disgust. Brian Wheeller feels so strongly about it that he has already renamed it ego-tourism”. She continues, employing further direct quotations from the original article, to highlight the essence of my argument. Similar attention has been afforded to my arguments on egotourism in a number of media outlets, for example The Daily Telegraph, the Melbourne Age, BBC Radio 4, Channel 4 television etc.

My work has been cited extensively in over 150 journal articles, books, book reviews, conference reports, newspapers, magazines etc. Overwhelmingly tourism based, academic references are also to be found in geographical, environmental, anthropological etc sources, too. On occasion given a more or less perfunctory mention in a list of references (Garrod, 2000; Faulkner, 2002), in other instances quoted at some considerable length (Butcher, 2003; Fennell 2003) the full range of my work has been
deemed worthy of mention – though particular articles and/or specific phrases have more universal and perennial appeal than others. Frequently cited are my ideas on the ‘micro/macro’; ‘egotourism’; and the gap between rhetoric and reality etc while other examples are more esoteric for instance, Busby’s (1998) highlighting of my reference to Butlin’s.

By way of example, and in roughly chronological order, I draw on the following citations, most of which are self-explanatory.

v.i) Citations in Articles in Tourism Journals and Texts


Hughes, in his studied article on the cultural construction of sustainable tourism, draws on three of my papers (Wheeler 1991, 1992, 1993) to conclude “...in Wheeller’s fulmination against the potency of sustainable tourism...it is a self-evident question of numbers. The capacity to either attract or absorb sufficient tourists, of the sustainable mould, remains insignificant in the context of an industry regularly cited to become the largest in the world by the end of the century. Despite the emotive tone of the rhetoric Wheeller pursues his critique in very functional terms. ‘Tourist or traveller, we are simply customers/clients to be targeted, wooed and seduced by industry’ (Wheeler,1992,p105). This critique seems predicated in the commoditization, or logic of capital, theses that earlier informed the left-wing theorizing of scientific socialism”
(Hughes, 1995, p.51) ...though when I read this, the latter was news to me. However, on reflection and if I understand Hughes correctly, there is perhaps some basis in his assertion.

“...Wheeller(1995) question(s) the nature of visitor responsibility, arguing that in reality visitors tend to be far less altruistic than the literature portrays” (Lumsdon and Swift, 1998, p.168).

Similarly, Sirakaya (1997, p.920) writes “Conversely, the premise that ecotourism will always promote benign and balanced tourism development in a sustainable manner was challenged by some tourism scholars (Butler 1990; Wheeller 1991).”

Butler, (1998, p.28) comments “Thus began what Wheeller (1993) has so aptly called ‘ego tourism’” and (p.32) “...the difference between the concept and the reality has been effectively challenged (Wheeller, 1993...)”. One might add here ‘and subsequently ignored’.

“Wheeller (1994a, b), without doubt, provides the most uncompromising critique of ecotourism, maintaining that the various participants are fundamentally motivated by self-interest, as in all forms of tourism: companies seek maximum short-term profits, tourists try to obtain above all a self-rewarding experience, and host communities seek maximum economic benefit from the tourists. According to Wheeller, however, ecotourism is especially insidious given the tendency of many advocates to assume a mantle of moral superiority” (Weaver, 1999, p.796).

27
“Although the naivety of assuming that ecotourism will equate automatically with a more ‘responsible’ kind of tourism had been questioned by the early 1990’s (Wheeler 1993a,b; Cater, 1994), a common agreement of what it is still remains elusive” (Holden and Sparrowhawk, 2002, p.436).

“Arch-critic of ecotourism, Brian Wheeller argues that ‘new-wave tourism’ is a sheen on a destructive industry” continuing “Wheeler rightly conveys the sense in which New Moral Tourism is an etiquette that contributes to the moral authority of those adopting it.” (Butcher, 2003, p.46) And “The view that this growing band of travellers simply adds to tourist numbers is developed by Brian Wheeller. For this critic, travel companies promoting ecotourism...are simply engaged in a marketing ploy providing a cosy, environmentally friendly feel-good factor for western tourists – meanwhile, global capitalist growth in tourism continues unchecked but in a more acceptable guise. Wheeler (sic) argues that, whatever the label, it is all pretty much the same when it comes down to it – all pretty negative” (Butcher, 2003, p.43).

Well, yes and no. A misunderstanding here, Jim, I think. While I am extremely pessimistic about both ego/eco/sustainable tourism and aspects of mass tourism I am, as far as I am aware, not entirely ‘against’ either per se (and certainly not mass tourism with, at least for the tourists, its egalitarian/democratising appeal). My ire is focussed more on those that argue the solution to tourism problems has been found and/or that ecotourism is automatically ‘better’ than mass tourism.
And on codes of practice... "Wheeler, for example, is not convinced of their utility, as demonstrated in a stinging review of ecotourism. He feels that there are no answers to the confusion surrounding both ecotourism and sustainable tourism..." (Fennell, 2003 p.186).

Writing in 2004, Kerstetter et al. observing the behaviour of Taiwanese ecotourists note “Fennell and Eagles (1990) and Wright (1993) indicated that ecotourism has the potential to act as a force for community development. Our results do not lend support to their contention. Instead, our results suggest that domestic tourists may not view sustainability of local resources, including local businesses, as their responsibility. The potential ramifications of such thinking are quite disturbing (Wheeler, 1993)” (Kerstetter et al, 2004, p.496).

“...ecotourism literature broadly falls into two camps. First is the literature on demand-side; the characteristics and motives of ecotourists (for excellent critiques refer to Munt 1994 and Wheeler 1993)...” (Jones 2005, p.305).

Simpson, writing in 2001, reminds readers that “Though the concept of sustainable tourism development is widely supported in the literature, and its desirability can be argued on both philosophical and practical grounds, there has been some suggestion that the tourism industry has been slow to adopt sustainability principles. In this respect, it has been suggested that sustainable tourism is easier to describe than to implement (Butler, 1990; Wheeler, 1991), as evidenced by the dearth of illustrative examples at regional or national levels of planning” (Simpson, 2001, p.13).
"The reality of rapidly increasing tourist numbers in natural settings causes some authors to caution that education and self-regulation, whilst essential, is (sic) rarely sufficient to achieve appropriate standards (Burgess, 1992:92). Others are more candid in their assessment of the potential of education. ‘Education is seen by many as the way forward for nurturing a ‘better’ tourism. Dream on.’ (Wheeler (sic), 1994:9). However, while understanding the reason for this cynicism, it would be inappropriate to discount interpretation as a possible solution to managing nature-based tourism without having sufficient empirical evidence to do so” (Orams, 1995, p.91). To an extent, Orams makes a fair point about empiricism. But observation is, it is suggested here, a form of empiricism and it doesn’t take too much observing to see that, on the whole, tourism (with or without education) is pretty much an ‘unsustainable’ phenomenon...if only on the basis that all tourism involves travel, no transport is sustainable so how can we have sustainable tourism? Orams is referring specifically to interpretation and education but even here, on the grand scale of things, ‘education’ seems to me to be ineffective.

Writing in Ocean and Coastal Management, “Although Orams found a number of authors who are cynical about the idea of sustainable or environmentally sensitive ecotourism, for example, Butler, and Wheeller” (Lück, 2003 p.948).

“High fees, such as those levied in the mountain gorilla parks of East Africa or the trekking venues of the Himalayas, may somewhat offset small numbers, but also foster a high cost, elitist model that raises ethical and other questions (Wheeller 1997)” (Weaver, 2005 p.439).
By way of introducing the new Journal of Sustainable Tourism Bramwell and Lane’s (1992, p.3) first editorial article states “Good intentions and idealism alone are not a sufficient basis for real advances in our understanding...This means recognising that in practice there are often limits to what will be achieved...The sheer complexity of environments and of places and people should alert us to be wary of apparently simple solutions and of general application of one prescription. (Butler, 1990, Cohen, 1988, Wheeler (sic), 1992)”. Laudable in the circumstances, in the next edition they published Sustaining the Ego. However, celebrating a decade of publication Bramwell and Lane (2002, p.4) reflected on the first ten years of the journal and concluded that sustainable tourism has been a success. “Ten years on the worst predictions of the pessimists have been proved (sic?) wrong. Sorry Mr. Wheeller (See Vol.1, 2, 1993, pp. 121-130).” They then add, tellingly, “To be fair, the implementation of sustainability has been slow...there is a lot of rhetoric and greenwash...there are a lot of uncertainties...and many half-truths need questioning...”. I rest my case.

Earlier (see p.12) I refer to Hall’s perspicacious comments in introducing Butler’s 2005 edited work on the Life Cycle. I now turn, at some length, to Butler’s own remarks in drawing his Vol.1 to a close... “In looking for a chapter to close this volume, the solution emerged fortuitously. Those who have read his works, and particularly those who have heard Brian Wheeller present his views on tourism development and on rock and roll in person, will realise that it is next to impossible to follow him at a podium or in a volume...In his chapter Wheeller takes the unlikely pairing of Elvis Presley and sustainable tourism and manages to make sense of their seemingly impossible relationship in the context of TALC. He argues effectively that what may seem like
deterioration and reduced appeal to one ‘market’ is not always that to all markets. Perhaps more importantly, he links spatial location and stage of development in the context of ecolodges that are likened to the King of Rock and Roll. He also focuses, unlike most of the other authors, on the analogy of TALC to the population life cycle of wildlife, again, with comparisons to Presley. Apart from containing many images that are poignant and relevant to those of us who grew up with real rock and roll, it is both a perceptive and thought-provoking chapter with which to end this volume” (Butler, 2005, p.338).

Again response to this chapter from various colleagues and peers has been encouraging. For example, Sue Beeton emailing from La Trobe University “I was browsing through the Life Cycle book and saw your contribution which I promptly read – brilliant. I really enjoy the way that you think and hope to do more myself that is ‘creative’ – we really need people to think ‘outside the box’ in our field. I believe we have been constrained by the dominance of mainstream geographers and economists for too long (my conversion obviously complete), thanks for the inspirational book chapter. Your use of Elvis and the fresh way of looking at the Life Cycle has inspired me to make sure I keep finding time to let ideas form and play around with them” (Beeton, 2006).
v.ii) Citations in Book Reviews etc.

v.ii.i) Citations of My Own Work

In an early review “The language in the article that follows is even more caustic; in Brian Wheeller’s ‘Alternative Tourism – A Deceptive Ploy’ the new vocabulary of the industry is put under scrutiny, at last” (Hartmann, 1994, p.96).

“...discussion of the main components of ecotourism is complemented by Wheeller’s well-known critique of ecotourism as ‘a ruse by any other name’” (Kinnaird, 1995, p.478).

And Dowling (1998, p.396) notes “Brian Wheeller’s warning that predictably ‘the white elephant of ecotourism has metamorphosed into the equally deceptive oxymoron of mass ecotourism’”. It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that in Dowling’s comprehensive review of Stabler’s edited collection, this is the only direct quotation selected from the text under review; and, furthermore, that previous work of mine is quoted in ten of the conference papers published in the volume reviewed.

“The second essay, by Brian Wheeler (sic)...is equally cynical of the ‘nebulous principle of sustainable tourism’. It is an unreachable utopian ideal to marry financial gain and conservation of the environment. One can expect an angry reaction from ecologists to Wheeler’s (sic) sarcastic comments on the ‘supposed’ need for conservation and biodiversity. Nevertheless, one is confronted with the question
whether ecotourism is ever going to be anything other than a niche market based on the
standard business motive of short-term profits. Humans are basically greedy and thus
sustainability will remain a philanthropic dream, never to be attained” (Hugo, 1998, p
353). I draw particular attention to this quotation and the deployment of ‘confronted’. I
like this very much, as we so often fail to confront the difficult, often impossible
questions that undermine sustainability.

“The book concludes with two thought-provoking chapters on nature-based tourism as a
tool for development in peripheral areas. The first is a very challenging argument by
Wheeler based on the position that for nature-based tourism ‘to have real, practical
credibility we must exit fantasy-land and contextualise the eco/sustainability debate
within the wider arena of power, economics, greed, racism and hypocrisy’ (p.263). The
chapter might be uncomfortable reading for some but it is the sort of thing that all final
year university students should confront, notably in regard to what it says about empty
words, easy platitudes, the cult of the cuddly, and the museumisation of society. After
that, any final chapter might be a let-down…” (Walmsley, 2005, p.637).

Here is another review I am greatly encouraged by. Phrases like “uncomfortable reading
for some but it is the sort of thing all final year university students should confront” are
sweet music to my ears.

As is Cooper’s comment in his forthright review of the International Handbook of
Tourism Education... “Brian Wheeler’s (sic) ‘issues’ chapter is typically thought
provoking and pulls no punches” (Cooper, 2006, p.99).
Vicarious’ Citations in Reviews of Others’ Works

Over the years it has been seductively flattering, rather humbling, yet disturbingly gratifying, when looking through various book reviews I have seen my opinions cited, even though I hadn’t actually contributed to the material under review. Some examples...

Derek Hall, reviewing Global Tourism: the Next Decade observes “Overall, the text could be seen as a little bland in places, presenting few new conceptual insights. It could have benefited from, for example, the critical conceptual perspective of a David Harrison or the laconic questioning voice of the likes of Brian Wheeller” (Hall, 1995, p.163).

“Here the study authors do not acknowledge that several previous academic commentators – including Greg Ashworth and Brian Wheeller – have argued that recent policy statements by English public agencies fail to grasp the scope and complexity of the problems surrounding tourism and the environment” (Bramwell, 1995, p.164).

Courtney, reviewing A Question of Balance: Natural Resources Conflict Issues in Australia, points out that while it is true that “Some alternative forms of development have occurred...these tend to be merely ‘micro solutions to what remains...a macro problem’ (Wheeler, (sic) 1992)” (Courtney, 1996, p.977).
“Although calls to incorporate tourism development into Agenda 21 implementation are mentioned in this compiled work, the book’s contribution might be strengthened by revisiting the critique of sustainable development (e.g. Peterson, 1997; Wheeler (sic) 1997)” (Jamal, 2001, p.172).

“Over the last ten years, a variety of authors – notably Wight (1993), Mowforth (1993) and Wheeller (1993), as early critics, have explored the meaning of ecotourism and given warnings that what companies promote using this label is often just a ‘green veneer’ ” (Yeoman, 2001, p.206).

In concluding his assessment of The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism, Higham, cautioning as to the (possible) over optimism of the texts, notes “At least two schools of thought exist relating to ecotourism development and its associated impacts. The Encyclopedia of Ecotourism presents the views of many prominent researchers who are optimistic about the future of ecotourism…. This should not obscure the view that significant barriers to achieving this potential remain, as critically addressed in earlier published contributions from the likes of Brian Wheeler(sic) and C. Michael Hall” (Higham, 1997, p.91).

Also, Buckley (2000, p.435) while reviewing Pearce and Butler’s Contemporary Issues in Tourism Development and commenting on a section on unruly tourists, adds, as an aside, “ Oh well. What would Brian Wheeller have to say about that?” And, again, reviewing Duffy’s A Trip Too Far: Ecotourism, Politics and Exploitation notes “ She
seems disgruntled to find that her interviewees still want, to paraphrase Wheeler (sic) to get a tan, get drunk, get laid and get back to the hotel” Buckley (2003, p.143).

And again Derek Hall, this time reviewing Jafari’s Encyclopedia of Tourism laments a number of omissions and goes on to suggest “‘Egotourism’ as employed by Brian Wheeller, amongst others, perhaps deserves some reflection” (Hall, 2002, p.94).

More recently, reviewing Tourism in the Kullu Valley, Ryan states “The final chapter is the ‘crunch chapter’ – how does one mitigate these negative impacts? The main response appears to be a strategy of decentralisation and dispersal of activities, and even as I write I envisage Brian Wheeller commenting that this does nothing to solve problems induced by numbers, and the very extension of touristic opportunities might mean only more are attracted to the region, or stay longer” (Ryan, 2006, p.350). He knows me so well.

vi) Conference Contribution

My conference presentations have played an integral role in developing my body of (written) work – in some instances gauging response to new ideas to be included in future articles: in other cases, based on already published material. They have effectively been the oral and visual interpretation of my publications. As such, I feel justified in drawing attention here to a selection of peer response to my conference contributions. Again, it is a selection rather than a comprehensive list.
Reporting the Transport for Sustainable Tourism, 1993, Conference Bruce noted "The Princess Royal joined us to hear Brian Wheeller on how at present the industry was treating sustainability basically as a PR issue. With his usual devastating acumen he took his theme 'Is Sustainable Tourism Viable' and analysed the unbalanced way costs and benefits accrued...The gap between rhetoric and reality was highlighted – between the soft agreeable imagery of Sustainable Tourism on the one hand and target figures and growth projection on the other: kidiology versus economics. These views generated debate around how the hard realities of transport impact on tourism on the natural environment might be mitigated and something more than a PR meaning given to the sustainability aspiration (Bruce, 1993 p.17).

The following year, reviewing the 1994 Tourism Down-Under Conference for Annals of Tourism Research, Butler generously observed "Although it is difficult in a relatively short review to comment on individual papers, it seems appropriate to note a 'tour de force' presentation by Brian Wheeler (sic) (University of Birmingham, UK) on 'Ego/ecotourism – a muddled model'. Wheeler (sic) presented a cleverly illustrated and biting critique of ecotourism hype and myths, which was both hilarious and thought provoking. The discussion held the audience fascinated and probably raised feelings both for and against the views presented. While few other papers drew such strong reactions..." (Butler, 1996, p.227).

My contribution to the University of Strathclyde's 1994 Tourism: State of the Art 1994 conference was also controversial..."Efficient chairing ensured that there was always time for questions and discussions; that this was usually lively testifies again to the quality of the material presented. One speaker who questioned certain cherished views
was called a disgrace to tourism by a fellow presenter from the industry – surely a compliment: bland acceptance is no substitute for intellectual inquiry” (Brown, 1995 p.81). And, paraphrasing Wink Martindale, ‘friends, the story is true, I know, I was that speaker.’

Also in Scotland a couple of years later, my contentious views were once again to the fore at the University of Caledonian’s The Environment Matters “Further challenges to conventional thinking were forthcoming from, amongst others, Brian Wheeller” (Leslie, 1998, p.370).

A review of the ‘From explorers to mass tourism’ the 1998 conference organised by postgraduate students on the MA Tourism and Social Responsibility at St. Mark and St. John, Plymouth observed “Last, but certainly not least, was Brian Wheeller, with his usual high-standard provocative style of delivery. The first overhead projection slide made the statement, ‘if you look like your passport photo, then in all probability you need the journey’, this led the conference via Elvis Presley, Antoine de St.Exupery’s Little Prince and numerous photographic transparencies to the point that high culture is eco-tourism is ego-tourism. It’s a theme Wheeller has developed over time but it loses none of its poignancy for that; as with James Burke’s BBC series ‘Connections’ in the late 1970’s, he is capable of showing how personal views are so salient in terms of sustainable tourism” (Busby, 1998, p.480).

I really appreciate this quotation – the apparent eclectic nature of various, at first sight random, ideas and material to support and illustrate a personal perspective that follows a
consistent theme, honed and “developed over time”. It would, I hope, be equally apposite in summing up my publication output.

Busby (p.481) continues “Selwyn’s final observation was that the sustainable tourism debate shows there are three approaches: the individual project approach... the structural approach.... and the approach which suggests the debate is useless – à la Wheeller”. While Selwyn’s comments were delivered tongue-in-cheek (clearly debate is essential, and raising it has been part of my ‘mission’) there is relevance here in that, as I see it, the debate is worse than useless if said discussion is conducted in an academic vacuum. Debate must surely be contextualised and located in reality: it should acknowledge and then confront the core, integral (and to me intractable) underlying issues.

And then came fish. Reviewing the 2000 Rural Tourism Management, Sustainable Options Conference Hall notes “Wheeller, in his inimitable way, used fish and fishing as a metaphor and symbol of what he sees as the hypocrisy surrounding eco-branding and corruption” (Hall, 2000, p.296).

Similarly, as Keynote at The University of Brighton’s 2002 Tourism and the Natural Environment “Brian Wheeller presented a unique study which deconstructed traditional approaches to eco-tourism through the use of fish-related imagery. His approach to the subject was not only distinctive and entertaining, it also prompted the audience to contemplate alternate scenarios relating to the consideration of the environment” (Ferguson and Williams, 2002).
That same year, I also delivered another Keynote, this time at the Nature-based Tourism in Peripheral Areas, held at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand... “Brian Wheeller addressed the conference delegates and members of the public with an open lecture ‘Egotourism: Ten years on and worse than before’, questioning whether ecotourism or sustainable tourism is achievable. His views challenged many audience members to contemplate the outcomes of good intentions not being achieved should an ecotourism destination’s popularity direct it to a future as yet another tourist location coping with the sheer pressure of numbers. The need to preserve a quality environment, both socially and physically, was conveyed strongly by his talk” (Carr, 2003, p.136).

My latest Keynote at the 2004, Association for Tourism in Higher Education’s Critical Issues in Tourism Education, (Wheeller, 2005a) on a (seemingly) somewhat lighter theme, was very warmly received. “Brian Wheeller closed the conference with a memorable evaluation of the possibilities of using audio-visual material for teaching tourism...” (Stuart-Hoyle, 2005, p.4).

Coincidentally, I note that the flyer for the 2006 Royal Geographical Institute of British Geographers Annual Conference begins with a quotation of mine from 15 years ago...“We look for an answer, an alternative – ideally to plan not only to minimise the cost of tourism and maximise the benefits but simultaneously to ensure an equitable and just distribution of these costs and benefits.” (Wheeller, 1991, p.91-92). And continues...“Sadly, many of the questions set to academics and practitioners by Wheeller in his paper on responsible tourism have not yet been answered...In line with
the questions...raised by Wheeller, the session aims to bridge the gap in responsible tourism between production and consumption...” (retrieved from Conference website).

Don’t hold your breath.
5. Future Plans

I have always maintained that, whenever possible, we should focus our writing on subjects we actually want to write about, convinced that this is the most pleasurable and *de facto* productive scenario. After all, isn’t this the basic principle that we always tell our own would-be dissertation students to adhere to? So, with this philosophy in mind, and as the first priority, a more reflective, comprehensive article on Wallace and Gromit (building on the 2004 Keynote and more recent conference presentations in Hong Kong and Poland) is of paramount import. I am disappointed that, to date, I haven’t managed to produce an article on fish/fishing/travel and tourism, and would like to rectify that situation – possibly with a piece focussing on the ‘aquarium’ – my interest having been further fuelled by a recent research visit to Monterey Aquarium; a follow up article on tourism, travel and music; one on British seaside humour, developing thoughts on McGill; and realising current work on film tourism, scheduled for the Tourists and Tourism in a Visual World 2007 Brighton conference. And, perhaps a little contradictory, reacting and responding to a number of ideas that have of late come to mind, another (final?) paper on my well beaten path as to the futility of sustainable tourism. Seemingly eclectic, but to me these are all parts of the jigsaw waiting to be completed – even if, as yet, the pieces are still scattered (some face down) on the carpet, while others are temporarily lost down the sides of the settee. Each of these papers, couched in familiar style, will be approached from the same personal stance and questioning perspective, thereby providing the threads of continuity present in all my work.
Strategically, from a career perspective, I have not always 'placed' my articles in the 'best' or 'most appropriate' outlets. I have tended to go more with the flow, responding pragmatically to approaches for chapters in books, requests for book reviews etc as opposed to a calculated publishing regime. I suspect it is too late to change now and assume if, in the future, I am asked to continue to submit chapters, review books, referee journal articles, present Keynotes etc. I will also respond pretty much in similar fashion as before.
6. Conclusion

Although a number of my most influential articles germinated in the eighties and reached fruition in the nineties, they are still regularly referred to in contemporary literature and have, I suggest, stood the test of time. Some of the arguments have subsequently been re-worked and refined and most contextualised in the ‘real world’.

As regards the spine of my work, there has (hopefully) been coherence – a consistency of thought and clarity of argument throughout. But just as sustainability itself should not, and cannot effectively, be isolated, it has, in turn, proved increasingly implausible for me to ring-fence my work on sustainable tourism from my personal interests. Accordingly, as my perspectives of sustainability have evolved, the body and focus of my output has increasingly embraced ‘the personal’. Broadening my horizons, I have attempted to locate sustainability in the wider arena, exploring linkages and parallels in seemingly disparate, tangential areas, always seeking new ways to shed further light on, and expand our vision of, tourism and sustainability.

However, while major problems can be identified – whether they can be measured is another matter. Whether the more subtle, and longer term, ramifications of growth/progress have as yet been identified and acknowledged is a moot point. To then automatically assume that there is a solution (or indeed, a phalanx of palliatives that combined would constitute ‘the solution’) seems overtly optimistic. After all, what is it exactly we are actually trying to sustain? And over what time span?
My work, therefore, has been more about posing acute, perspicacious, provocative questions than providing (easy, palatable) answers. Not too surprising given my contention that there are no real answers anyway, the inherent problems intractable – one of a number of familiar, recurring themes underpinning my arguments. Partly as a result, there is considerable over-lap in my work. Euphemistically one could call this ‘cross-referencing’: some, less generous, would call it repetition. I consider it the (inevitable) combination of the two. While providing an element of continuity, importantly it should be noted that some things are well worth repeating. Especially messages people do not want to hear and are reluctant to take on board.

Sustainability somehow assumes an innate goodness in mankind, an optimism that I do not share. The news each night must surely be enough to at least question the validity of such a positive (naïve?) view of humanity. Despite it being one of the root problems, sustainability fails to embrace the reality of pervading corruption of humanity – the evil in us all – be it at individual, societal and/or institutional level.

Perhaps, in a way, we can help. I have always had the burning desire to put into practice the belief that we in education should eschew any traits of arrogance and use our knowledge, position and influence to (at least) attempt to push back boundaries and barriers while stimulating, encouraging and supporting ‘responsible’ critical thought. Maybe students, if encouraged to think originally, for themselves, from a realistic vantage can come up with the elusive ‘solutions’. Perhaps. Actually though, I doubt it very much. They, as indicative of the new generation, may themselves actually be part of the problem. To me there is need for a fundamental shift in (Western) culture: from
one of ‘taking’ to one of ‘giving’. And this, at least for as far as I can see, is never going to materialise.

What is more, I’m not at all sure to what extent, if any, ‘liberal’ academia is influential in the realms of either tourism policy or vital aspects of the tourist industry: vocational training yes, influencing corporate strategy for the greater good – well, no. And similarly, at the wider level of resource management I’m unconvinced as to the contribution of tourism academics. And I certainly have no illusions as to my own contribution in this respect. There is a chasm between academia and tourism industry/tourism policy practice, the situation compounded by the insular remoteness of (tourism) academia from the general public. And it is these ‘distances’, rather than notions of its more conventional usage, that should surely concern us far more than is the case at present.

Accepting this crucial caveat, if asked what have I added to Tourism Studies, I believe that as a major contributor, with the temerity to challenge prevailing thought, I offered originality to the early deliberations on eco/sustainable tourism. I was at the vanguard of debate, rather than in the guards van of the subsequent runaway train, The Sustainability Express. Evidenced by, for example, student response, the re-issues and continuing citations, my input (by way of critique, ideas and views, doubts, fears and uncertainties) continues to have currency. Through incisive questioning, I have continued to highlight the fundamental flaws in eco/ego/sustainable tourism in a consistent but imaginative, distinctive and characteristic manner.
Where there has been criticism of my work, I have attempted to reason with it – but accept that my style, approach or fundamental beliefs are not, and never will be, to everyone's tastes.

Using, amongst others, the academic hallmarks that research should be “personal, original and problematic” (Dann, 1998, p.1), I submit the selected publications and thesis in support of that contention.

I conclude by quoting from my application for my current position as Visiting Professor of Tourism “I have felt encouraged to apply for the post not just by the content of the advert and further particulars but by their tone. Most notably what attracts me are your requirements of ‘commitment, student orientated attitude, a willingness to question and challenge assumptions and the audaciousness to speak out for what one believes in’. Add to that integrity, honesty, sensitivity (too much?), compassion and a sense of humour, together with an appreciation of the ironic and the melancholic and perhaps you have encapsulated most of my professional and personal values in a nutshell.” (Wheeller, 2002).

I truly hope that over the years these values have been, and currently are, reflected in my writings and contribution to the study of Tourism.
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### Appendix A

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Tourism’s troubled times

Responsible tourism is not the answer

Brian Wheeller

Rather belatedly, some sections of the media have increasingly drawn attention to the negative effects that have invariably accompanied tourism development. Recent newspaper articles and television documentaries have served as a graphic warning of the real destructive power of that potential pollutant – tourism.

At many UK tourist resorts some of the problems highlighted are all too apparent – congestion, noise, litter, environmental deterioration, etc are depressingly familiar and examples legion.

In the wider global arena the situation is more acute. The magnitude and intensity of effects are exacerbated by the current tourist invasion in many developing countries. Environmental destruction is prevalent, cultural differences are most marked and social tensions heightened by the rapid uncontrolled flood of tourists from the alien industrialized nations into the developing world.

While notable contributions towards addressing and resolving the negative impact of tourism have been attempted, overall there has so far been little actual deployment of effective policies. In reality, adequate comprehensive management policies to cope with the accompanying problems of tourism development are scarce. To suggest, however, that these contributions have failed would clearly be unfair – they have at least raised the level of awareness and debate. Indeed, many would argue vehemently that firm foundations for long-term solutions have been laid. I would disagree. These ‘solutions’ remain essentially theoretical, are not practical answers for the future and indeed are likely to fuel the very problems they are seeking to solve.

Whether there is an overall plus or negative balance from tourism is open to conjecture, the questions involved complex. What seems indisputable, however, is that the costs and benefits do not accrue evenly. Some benefit more than others – frequently some benefit while others pay the costs.

Although many concerned parties now acknowledge some of the negative aspects of tourism, there remains the general misapprehension that these costs are only or primarily associated with mass tourism. It is not really the individual tourist or small groups of tourists that are identified for criticism, nor is it travel – travel and the traveller are beyond reproach. It is in fact popular mass tourism that is seen as the villain of the piece. The volume, the huge numbers involved, are critical. We look for an answer, an alternative – ideally to plan not only to minimize the cost of tourism and maximize the benefits but simultaneously to ensure an equitable and

just distribution of these costs and benefits.

Responsible tourism
One way of achieving this, it is argued, is through the adoption of what has become euphemistically known as ‘responsible tourism’. Although there are some variations, responsible tourism can broadly be interpreted as an umbrella term embracing this supposedly more caring, aware form of tourism. Prefixes include alternative, appropriate, sustainable, soft, green etc. In essence, the traveller is preferred to the tourist, the individual to the group, the independent specialist operators are more acceptable than large firms, indigenous homely accommodation is preferred to multinational hotel chains etc – basically ‘small’ versus ‘mass’. The pace of development is also vital – it must be controlled, relatively slow and capable of being absorbed into the host environment without any negative repercussions.

The prevailing power base should be altered and decision-making on tourism and tourism development be in the hands of the host communities. Raising the awareness of the traveller prior to departure is also considered a vital element – education is seen by some as the key.

Responsible tourism has grown as a reaction to mass tourism, being caught up in the groundswell of green issues and championed as a suitable way forward. I would strongly question this latter assertion – it cannot, by its very nature, be the way forward everywhere and it is, in fact, dangerously misleading. We have, on the one hand, a problem of mass tourism growing globally, out of control, at an alarming rate. And what is our answer? Small-scale, slow, steady controlled development. They just do not add up. It is true that both domestically and internationally there are many examples of small-scale ‘alternative’ successes. I am not suggesting that this is not a good thing, merely that they should not be cited, deliberately or inadvertently, as evidence that tourism as a whole can in a physical sense be sensitively controlled.

Although the idea of small-scale development is laudable, it does not tackle the large-scale problem of volume. If all tourist destinations could carefully calculate their appropriate tourism thresholds and then miraculously impose restrictions to keep tourist numbers below these limits and if all the tourists were indeed ‘sensitive travellers’ – even then the tourist problem as a whole would not be solved, as the effective demand for tourist destination at a macro level would far outstrip the supply. At best it is a micro solution to what is essentially a macro problem.

The notion of educating the tourist/traveller in destination awareness is surely idealistic. Just how is the Utopian sensitive traveller to be created? How is the exercise to be coordinated? Who pays for it? What time span is envisaged for the effect of the educative process to reach fruition, and what precisely is meant by educating? (What influence can education have in the light of such contradictory messages from, for example, The Sun’s ‘How to be a beast in Benidorm or a terror in Torremolinos?’ is the press to be controlled to eradicate such views?)

To implement effectively such a mammoth educative task in all tourist generating countries presents enormous and, I would suggest, insurmountable practical difficulties. Given the speed with which tourist impact is spreading, the reality of the situation is that if such an education programme could somehow be achieved, the time span required for its inception would inevitably witness continued irrevocable tourism damage. If we look at tourism/travel education in perspective then, however hard it is to accept, it seems the problem is now but education is for the future. There is also, of course, the salutary thought that by raising awareness (by ‘better’ education) we also raise demand – one of the main factors in the growth of tourist demand has undoubtedly stemmed from education itself.

In their rush to escape the mass tourist, the so-called aware, educated, ‘I’m going ethnic’ individual traveller is forever seeking the new, the exotic, the unspoilt – the vulnerable. Inevitably, however, they are inexorably
paving the way for the package tour. The sensitive traveller is the perpetrator of the global spread, the vanguard of the package tour - where he or she goes others will, in ever increasing numbers, eventually follow. Who, in the long term, is responsible for the most damage - the mass tourist to the Mediterranean, or the sensitive traveller to the Amazon, the Himalayas or the Sahara?

It is perhaps also worth noting here the ambiguity of the term 'appropriate'. Arguments for appropriate tourism are being heard everywhere - but the vexed question of appropriate to whom or to what is left unanswered. I would suggest that for a number of interested parties, be they tour operators, international hotel chains, local indigenous beneficiaries and indeed many of the tourists themselves, we already have appropriate tourism. Vague, glib assertions as appropriate 'to the environment', 'to the host community' are not good enough. What, after all is precisely meant by the host community - the majority, those in power (democratically elected?), or the local politicians? Is, for example, the decision-making and development of the UK tourist industry in the hands of the 'host community'?

The old adage put forward by the tourist industry is that it must, by careful, sensitive and sensible management, preserve and enhance the product it is selling in order to maintain its market appeal. Tourism, it is argued, must therefore make a positive contribution to the host region. While perhaps valid in some micro-situation, this patently has not been happening on a global scale. In the context of a rapidly spreading international pleasure periphery, the philosophy of 'bigger it up and pass it down' seems to be a far more accurate description of what is actually taking place - witness the North European successive tourist invasion of Spain, Greece and Turkey and the subsequent meteoric growth of long-haul holidays. As O'Grady points out, the tourist industry inadvertently acknowledges its own destructive power when it advertises new 'unspoiled' destinations away from and, as yet unfettered by, tourist pollution. 3

Micro- versus macro-tourism

I understand the desire for small scale, for slow steady development, for a caring tourism. However, there are a number of fundamental economic dilemmas in converting this ideal into reality - in resolving the conundrum of size, appropriateness and economic viability of tourist activity. If, from the perspective of the host community, tourism is to create, or generate, substantial income and a significant number of jobs (full-time, all year-round?) in relation to the economic scale of the area, then surely that development has to be of a significant size?

On the micro-level of the individual firm or project, clearly there can be small-scale yet viable development. By keeping costs down, charging high prices for a specialist product etc, small firms can compensate for, and overcome, their lack of economies of scale. (We will sidestep here charges of elitism which, if proven, seem uncomfortably at odds with many of the overt liberal, caring attitudes of the green movement.) Even with high-spending customers, the fact remains that a small-scale development catering for small numbers will only have a correspondingly small effect on income and employment. The argument that together a number of small projects operating in unison could make a significant economic impact might be acceptable but then, of course, the aggregate number of tourists would also increase to significant (intolerable?) levels. This is the situation that the new forms of tourism are trying to avoid.

Sustainable tourism has burdened itself with conflicting incompatible objectives - small-scale sensitivity and limited numbers to be achieved in tandem with economic viability and significant income and employment impacts. What happens when the prerequisite size of tourism activity to ensure economic viability is too large to meet the other appropriate yardsticks of sustainability? Is tourism development run uneconomically, subsidized, abandoned or, as seems likely, are the 'appropriate' standards relaxed?

There is the school of thought that

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suggests sustainable does not necessarily mean small. Certainly from an economic vantage, there is credence to this. But surely there are extreme difficulties in marrying large-scale tourism developments with the concomitant beliefs of sustainable, alternative tourism. Large-scale, spatially concentrated tourism may, as it is argued, act as a ‘safety-valve’ syphoning off potential demand for scarce resources elsewhere and it may keep mass tourism firmly in its place - these are debatable. But surely it will not prevent the ‘educated traveller’ continually pursuing, and temporarily satisfying, the desire for pastures new.

There is another disturbing aspect to the question of compatible economic viability. If appropriate tourism development is seen as the answer, or partial answer, to regional regeneration then the weaker the region’s economic base, the weaker its bargaining power in terms of ability responsibly to select the correct, appropriate, type of tourist development. The process can be identified clearly in developing countries under pressure to develop tourism. The weaker the economy and the greater the need for foreign exchange, then generally the weaker is that country’s position in terms of imposing strict controls on the scale and form of tourism development.

Similarly, notions of community-based approaches to tourism decision making seem fine for those communities (however defined) where there is a cohesive, established network based usually on existing economic viability. These communities can perhaps be actively involved in decision making and, operating from a position of relative strength, resist unwanted, inappropriate forms of tourism. They can afford to be selective. But at a macro-level this will not stop ‘unsuitable’ development from taking place.

It will merely transfer it spatially to another area, another community, less able - by dint of economic circumstance - to have a constructive say in its own destiny. From the initial well-intentioned starting point of wishing to maintain and respect a community’s integrity, the most likely result of the ‘community approach’ appears to be that the strongest remain strong and intact, while putting the weaker, more vulnerable communities under increased, deflected pressure. The problem is again passed on to those less able to cope with it.

Responsible tourism is optimistically being seen as a means of sensible planning for tourism. Unfortunately responsible tourism seems to being adopted more as a marketing tool than as a sensitive planning mechanism. There is nothing new in the confusion between the respective roles of tourism planning and tourism marketing. Many previous tourism planning policies have in fact been growth policies.

Let me turn briefly to the UK both to illustrate this and to introduce another related relevant point, ie the confusion between micro- and macro-tourism planning.

Tourist boards and other official organizations point to numerous individual cases of tourist development where sensible planning and management have mitigated negative effects. By careful design, use of local materials, renovation of derelict redundant buildings, adoption of tourist flow regulatory schemes etc, they argue that tourism has actively and positively enhanced the environment and the quality of life at the tourist destination. It is a valid argument - but only up to a point. Examples of positive management of the tourist influx are the exception, not the rule. Despite suggestions to the contrary, such techniques cannot automatically be transferred from one situation and readily adopted at another. They are not universally applicable. It just does not follow that success at the localized level guarantees similar success on the wider, more complicated plane. Moving from the specific to the general is problematic, although recent rhetoric would suggest otherwise.

The process, oiled and manipulated by media interests and the tourism lobby, has become familiar. Individual examples of successful, responsible tourism are acknowledged and cited. An imperceptible shift of perspective is adopted and the transition from the specific to the general rapidly effected. The panacea to tourism problems, has, therefore, been found ('it's true, we now have successful role
models') – and the 'green' light for responsible tourism development shines like a beacon while the actual realities of the situation are conveniently masked over – four easy steps in self justification.

There must be a clear distinction between planning for an individual tourism project and planning for tourism per se. Unfortunately this does not always appear to be the case with the all-encompassing 'planning for tourism' being misleadingly applied to these two distinct scenarios. Inconsistencies in logic and argument arise partly as a result of this confusion. Tourism on a micro-level can perhaps be sensitively planned for but at the macro-level, because of the enormity and complexity of the task, it becomes cumbersome, uncontrollable and 'unplanable'.

This might be considered to be stating the obvious. Yet it is implied by official bodies that tourism can be effectively managed and controlled. Therefore by citing examples of management techniques at the micro-level, the erroneous impression is (deliberately?) given that tourism as a mass phenomenon can similarly be successfully harnessed. It can certainly be influenced but not controlled.

Green policies encourage demand

In this respect, the tourist boards have for years been advocating the spreading of the tourist load in both a seasonal and a spatial sense. This is seen as the panacea to the disbenefits of peak season, honey-pot tourism – avoid the jam, spread the honey. Cynically, one could view the supposed environmental and social benefits from such policies as either smoke-screens or convenient, beneficial spin-offs. The unstated, underlying rationale undoubtedly remains economic. The encouragement and development of second holidays and long weekends taken in the spring and winter months are looked upon as a trend that is spreading the tourist season. These trends, however, may merely be lengthening the season – not spreading it. Tourists are encouraged to come out of season as well as, not instead of, peak times and the demands on the recipient area become all year round rather than seasonal.

Lengthening the season fails to solve many of the disbenefits associated with tourism. True, cash flow may be improved and economic returns may be greater but so too are the costs involved which are incurred by the host areas for a longer period of time. Spreading the tourist season is not a coherent, comprehensive management plan. It is a marketing strategy geared to increase cash flow by generating more tourist and more money income.

Similarly, the policy of spreading tourist demand spatially from congested to underdeveloped areas, supposedly more capable of accepting it, must be viewed with extreme caution and a healthy degree of scepticism. Both of these prerequisites are unfortunately absent from the current wave of overenthusiasm sweeping most 'green' tourism literature. At best it can only be regarded as an interim stop-gap policy. What happens when these areas in turn reach their own saturation thresholds? Are more new areas to be 'discovered' and promoted until eventually everywhere reaches saturation? By advertising a package of alternative attractions (usually in the same vicinity) rather than one honey-pot centre, the likely result will be an increase in overall volume of tourism – again a growth policy.

Spatially spreading tourism is a short-term means of dealing with the fundamental problem of continually encouraging tourism growth and, of course, the policy itself surreptitiously contributes to the problem. In line with responsible tourism, the policies of seasonally and spatially spreading the tourism load are deceptive and misleading. They are in fact growth policies masquerading under the guise of sensitive planning – the ultimate 'double take'.

For years, the tourism industry and the affiliated pro-tourism lobby have welcomed these ‘planning’ policies, knowing, I believe, full well the true implications of seasonal and spatial spread – namely their marketing potential. Similarly, the irony is that responsible tourism’s very ineffective-

*See eg B. Lane, 'Spreading the tourism load', Sunday Observer, 4 February 1990, p 44.
ness is likely to see its overt acceptance as global tourism strategy by an industry eager to foster a better image and keen to be seen to be green. By clothing itself in a green mantle, the industry is being provided with a shield with which it can both deflect valid criticism and improve its own image while, in reality, continuing its familiar short-term commercial march. Perhaps even more than other industries, the tourism industry can now see profit in ostensibly becoming 'green' – the perfect platitude to those of us anxious to formulate policies to rectify tourism’s negative impact.

Responsible tourism is a so-called solution that keeps almost everyone happy. It appeases the guilt of the ‘thinking tourist’ while simultaneously providing the holiday experience they or we want. The industry is happy because the more discerning (and expensive) range of market can be catered for by ‘legitimately’ opening up new areas to tourism, and the overall demand for and growth of tourism, on a global basis, continues unabated. Responsible tourism is a pleasant, agreeable, but dangerously superficial, ephemeral and inadequate escape route for the educated middle classes unable, or unwilling, to appreciate or accept their/our own destructive contribution to the international tourism maelstrom.

Irresponsible tourism might be more apt terminology. The current, in-vogue ‘solutions’ to tourism are, I suggest, actually further fueling the rapid spread of tourism without offering any real, lasting answers. Perhaps all the energies that have been channelled into refining this new ‘good tourism’ might have been better spent actually addressing the real problem of mass tourism – the massive volume and, globally, the growing absolute number of tourists. It seems to me that none of the recent suggestions are actually coming to terms with, or indeed confronting, this fact.

I am not suggesting an answer, indeed I do not think there is, as yet, an answer to tourism’s global impact problems. Accepting this depressing possibility is difficult. Coming to terms with our own hypocrisy might be a start. Meanwhile, I am simply saying that we certainly have not found the answer in responsible tourism. We should not fool ourselves nor others.
Is Progressive Tourism Appropriate? (1992)

Is progressive tourism appropriate?

B. Wheeler

Questioning the validity of recent developments in tourism planning, the author suggests the use of the ambiguous, yet appropriate, term 'progressive tourism' as a suitable nomenclature for these developments. He then argues that visitor management is being lauded, glibly and erroneously, as an answer to tourism impact.

Popular interpretation of international tourism suggests that the general trend has been from the predominance of the individual, aristocratic traveller to mass tourism – from restricted privileged participation to mass involvement across the social structure. To those still excluded from the liberalization and luxury of international travel, and worldwide these of course remain the vast majority, this populist analysis might be surprising. None the less it is fair to assume that the profile of those actually travelling has become progressively less elitist. A widespread rise in the standard of living in the industrialized world has primarily been responsible. Definitions vary, but is usually accepted that this rise incorporates both increased per capita incomes and more leisure time. It thus embodies the two main prerequisites of tourism – money and free time. Tourist numbers in global terms will continue to rise as countries throughout the world industrialize, striving for economic growth and increased standards of living. It seems unreasonable to argue otherwise.

It is, however, highly unlikely that these waves of tourists from the emerging economies will behave in the pseudo-sophisticated manner that some tourism commentators are suggesting should be the new mode of travel/tourist behaviour. I do not believe that established Western tourists, experienced in the culture of going abroad, will adopt new behavioural patterns unless it meets their immediate personal interests to do so. Their/our economic power may enable some discretion of choice (new forms of tourism, though supposedly simpler, mysteriously seem to be simultaneously more expensive) but unless there is a personal pay off the option may remain academic. This may seem cynical but unfortunately there is a close correlation between cynicism and reality.

It seems inconceivable that tourists from countries new to the international tourism scene will behave sensitively and sympathetically. It is naive and unrealistic to expect otherwise. For them it will be a new experience and in the circumstances they will want as much from it as possible at as little cost (to themselves) as possible. Recent behavioural patterns of tourists from Eastern Europe suggest this to be, understandably, the case.

In the West we have evolved from the world of the traveller, through that of the tourist to one of mass tourism. Current media and industry hype, however, suggests we are somehow now moving in the opposite direction, returning to the golden age of travel. A spate of current advertising campaigns for a range of products (including ferrys, hotels, petrol, cars, whisky, even youth hostels) all portray an image of the sophisticated traveller/explorer. None mentions tourism or the tourist. Many who favour the new movement of a supposedly more aware form of travel/tourism are inadvertently endorsing the green media explosion/myth. In practice, the two go hand in hand.

Not only fashionable, the idyllic traveller or rather what he/she represents, is amazingly becoming the basis of the solution to tourism impact problems. The fact that this notion is a million miles away from the realities of mass tourism seems to be conveniently ignored. Indeed, the very fact that it is some considerable distance from the realities of mass tourism probably explains its popularity among its proponents. Rather than there being any return to travel I would argue strongly that the next stage of the traveller/tourist/mass tourist evolutionary process is in fact one of, for want of a better word, megamass tourism. Though there may be short-term hiccups, particularly when viewed from a Western perspective, globally there will be more tourists and more tourist movements.

Tourism development has invariably been accompanied by some negative impacts. Alternative forms of tourism have been proposed to counter these impacts and are currently in vogue – in mind if not in deed. Call it alternative, responsible or sustainable the desired compo-

Brian Wheeler is Lecturer in Tourism, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK.

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Is progressive tourism appropriate?

Tourism is now familiar. The traveller is preferred to the tourist, the individual to the group, specialist operators rather than large firms, indigenous accommodation to multinational hotel chains, small not large – essentially good versus bad. However, this superficial distinction is alarmingly deceptive. Perhaps the true situation is better expressed as the good guise versus the bad guys; or rather, the good guise versus the not too bad (at least you know where you are up to) tourist. Voracious wolf in lamb’s clothing, the sensitive traveller is the real perpetrator of the global spread of tourism and in this capacity must take responsibility for some of tourism’s adverse impact (see ‘Tourism’s troubled times’, B. Wheeler, *Tourism Management*, June 1991). Maybe irresponsible tourism is a more accurate reflection of these supposedly good tourism practices. This terminology seems unlikely to catch on, failing somewhat to convey the requisite attributes of thoughtful concern, considerate behaviour and environmental awareness so necessary for ostentatious display either on a political platform or for appeasing one’s own personal conscience.

Given the unlikely widespread adoption of irresponsible tourism, may I make a move in, and add momentum to the nonsense nomenclature game by suggesting ‘progressive tourism’ as the overall term to encompass this outbreak of optimistic tourism. Progressive tourism sounds good and apparently has all the desired connotations. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary*’s definition for progressive reads ‘moving forward, proceeding step by step’. Progressive tourism then implies considered progress in a sensible, desirable direction. So far so good – or rather so bad. Appropriately, however, just as what is being described is dangerously misleading, so too is this definition. The dictionary provides a second meaning which in my opinion mirrors the true situation. Progressive, it states, is ‘continuously increasing in severity and extent’. I think this speaks for itself. Beneath the surface lies the shark. It is the very duality and ambiguity that makes the nomenclature progressive tourism so apposite and appealing in the context of tourism planning.

Much has been vaunted of this need for a different approach, a new style to tourism. But just how different can this be, given the parameters of the real world? Tourist or traveller, we are simply customers/clients to be targeted, wooed and seduced by industry. Its objective is to persuade us to buy the product – a product which is basically the same irrespective of where you are, or consider yourself to be, on the tourist/traveller spectrum. In many ways it is simply a variation on a theme (or dream). Be it an inclusive package holiday or an exclusive tour the core components are essentially the same – transport, accommodation and trimmings. The primary difference is that exclusive tours are more expensive and thereby live up to their name by being exclusive only in the sense that they shut out the riff-raff tourist. Those travelling independently see themselves as a different category. Maybe they are. However, just what proportion of these latter day travellers are truly independent in their travels? Like it or not clearly they all utilize much of the same infrastructure as the organized tourists and are part of the same system.

Among the tourist industry and media there has, of late, been a disturbing but predictable development: the overt confidence that is being increasingly and unwaveringly placed in that new ubiquitous panacea, ‘visitor management’. This phrase is currently being bandied about by all and sundry as the latest in a series of answers to tourism’s negative effects. Unfortunately, the concept remains just that – a vague, nebulous notion of glib generalization, all things to all people, a ready answer to every problematic situation. It is no surprise that ‘visitor management’ reveals these characteristics as they were the familiar hallmarks of all its predecessors. Presumably the principle of alternative/appropriate/suitable good tourism must be incorporated into, or play a role in visitor management. Perhaps they are synonymous. (Incidentally, Disney is sometimes cited as an example of good visitor management. First California, then Florida, Japan and now Europe; it certainly is progressive, continually increasing in extent if not severity.)

However, what precisely is visitor management? Is it to apply, or be applied (ie are visitors to manage themselves or be managed or both) at attraction level, local level, resort, regional, national, European or global level or what? Perhaps all simultaneously? How exactly is it – whatever it is – to be actually coordinated and implemented and who is to be responsible and accountable for this? Déjà vu? The questions are the same, the response lamentable.

Glaringly, these questions are not being addressed, acknowledged or contemplated by those who glibly advocate the use of ‘good visitor management’ in their press releases, presentations and literature. A deliberate smokescreen of apparent responsibility once again shrouds the reality of just how little can be achieved (certainly at the macrolevel). Satisfactory answers to important questions remain just as elusive, as do existing tangible solutions to tourism impacts. Once again this manoeuvring suits most of those involved. It avoids, by subtle use of sidestepping rhetoric, the unpalatable situation of having to come to terms with the real and as yet insoluble dilemma of tourism.

Despite protestations to the contrary, progressive tourism in any of its forms (visitor management included) resolutely fails to tackle the root cause of the problem – absolute tourist numbers. Globally, these will continue to rise. The concomitant negative impacts will overwhelm and swamp the ill-conceived, ineffective, so-called solutions. Such is progress. Currently what we have at best are small-scale, isolated examples of ‘success’ – micro solutions to what patently remains a macro problem. To me, there is little conclusive evidence to suggest that effective measures are being taken to cope with the real issue of increasing, massive tourist numbers.
Alternative Tourism: A Deceptive Ploy (1992)

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11 Alternative tourism—a deceptive ploy

B. Wheeller

Over the last few years there has been a growing general awareness, and a belated acknowledgement by the tourist industry itself, of the impact problems that have invariably accompanied tourism growth. Tourism clearly brings benefits to the recipient region and of course to the tourists themselves. However, though sometimes the scapegoat for other negative forces, there is a catalogue of impact catastrophes that provide graphic evidence of tourism's destructive power.

Much of the blame for the current situation has (simplistically) been attributed to the demands of mass tourism. A school of thought has developed that appears to be based on the fundamental premise that changing those demands would somehow provide the solution to tourism impacts. Apparent hope lies (an appropriate word here) in the new forms of tourism being lauded by tourist practitioners, the media and many academics. Lane (1989), writing on the effects of mass tourism, believed that 'Perhaps the saddest feature of contemporary tourism is that there is an alternative, but we are ignoring it'. If the alternative was being ignored then, it certainly is not now. Currently, there is no shortage of verbose rhetoric in support of this new alternative as a requisite for tourism planning and development.

To suggest that there is only one alternative might seem to be misleading. Indeed, the bewildering variety of names allocated to the numerous strands of the new tourism movement is somewhat confusing—soft, green, eco, gentle, appropriate, responsible, sustainable, quality, harmonious, community, progressive—the list of names given to this new aware tourism seems endless. Nevertheless, though the nomenclature continually changes to reflect what appears to be little more than fine-tuning, the overall message coming through is roughly the same. What is needed, it is argued by many, is a more caring, aware form of tourism industry—small-scale developments, ecologically sound, local integration with indigenous ownership and control, seasonal and spatial spread of demand, etc.—and a more caring, aware tourist well versed in the ethics of 'travel'. The pace of any tourism development should be slow, controlled, sympathetically planned and managed and, of course, be sustainable.

Although numerous writers have obviously contributed significantly in raising tourism awareness and consciousness, arguably the two seminal pieces of work, both emanating in the mid-1980s, were Krippendorf’s Holidaymakers (1987) and Murphy’s Community Approach (1988). Even
Alternative tourism

so, most of the ideological roots underlying this new aware tourism are, in fact, nothing new. It is however only relatively recently that they have, for a combination of reasons, been applied to tourism and gained acceptability and popularity in that context. Seaton (1992), in a brief, erudite exposition of what he calls ‘Quality Tourism’, highlights the fact that the concept of sustainability has long been associated with development economics although it has only over the last few years become in vogue in tourism. The emphasis has been on the environment with eco-tourism receiving a high profile. However, discussions on sustainability should not be restricted to ecological issues but should also, as Sofield (1991) believes, incorporate the environment as a whole, including culture. He develops this argument in his search for principles of sustainable ethnic tourism.

The surge of support for the movement is now in full flow. Warnings such as ‘Making simplistic and idealised comparisons of hard and soft on mass and green tourism, such that one is obviously undesirable and the other close to perfection is not only inadequate, it is grossly misleading’ (Butler 1990) are being ignored. New tourism is being ecstatically embraced with unbridled enthusiasm by virtually all sections of tourism—the thinking tourist/traveller; the tourism industry (both private and public); the media; and many academics. Apparently there is enough vociferous, vanguard support to endorse it fully as the green way forward. However, such wholehearted and unquestioning acceptance is desperately disturbing, though not at all surprising if one considers the power of vested interest. For the educated tourist/traveller, for instance, it is immediately appealing for it conveniently appeases any guilt while simultaneously providing the increased holiday options and experience desired.

A deluge of material endorsing green sustainable tourism is currently flooding the tourism consciousness. The industry, increasingly sensitive to criticism that it is in the business of destroying the very world it encourages us to see, is desperately trying to appear ecologically responsible’ (Wickers, 1992). It is becoming difficult to find a brochure that does not allude to green tourism. However, Wickers explains,

Much of the noise is marketing babble—another front on which to fight the competition—and many companies are simply slipping the green label on any destination where nature is more rampant than concrete. What will happen to that nature as a result of their promotion of it is not a question they care to address.

The cynicism is well founded. To put into some perspective industry’s support for the new tourism it is worth considering how selective they have been in deciding which components of new tourism to overtly adopt. International tour operators, for example, while ostentatiously (and ostensibly) going green do not seem too keen on relinquishing control to the local community.

In the United Kingdom, recent material from official tourist and related bodies vigorously wave the green flag—witness Tourism in the National Parks. A Guide to Good Practice (ETB, 1990), and the much vaunted The Green Light. A guide to Sustainable Tourism (ETB, 1991). Superficially
both look good. However, do they actually deal with the issue of coping with increasing numbers of mass tourists, the real crux of the problem, or are they just glossy, slick brochures—the public sector equivalent of private sector marketing hype? A similar question mark must also surely hang over the Government Task Force Publication, Tourism and the Environment (ETB, 1991). The Tourism Society (1991) the main professional body in the United Kingdom, has produced a short document on Sustainable Tourism setting out in a straightforward manner some of the considerations and examples of good practice, and suggesting principles to adopt. Tourism Concern (1991), a growing voice in the tourism debate, has also produced material suggesting the way forward. However, there remains the void between words—however genuine and well intentioned—and harsh reality.

There is also a spate of articles and books advocating the ethics of the new tourism and urging tourists to behave correctly, (see, for example, Stevens, 1990; Bramwell, 1991, Ancombe, 1991; Platt, 1991; and Wood and House, 1991). The latter, The Good Tourist described as 'a worldwide guide for the green traveller' is dedicated to all travellers of the next generation. Unfortunately for those believing that 'green behaviour' will solve the problem, it seems highly probable that the next generation will, globally, consist of a large number—the critical mass—of tourists not behaving correctly. Would-be travellers will be vastly outnumbered by mass tourists. It must be doubtful that Western tourists, experienced in the culture of going abroad, will radically change their holiday behaviour patterns unless it meets their immediate personal interest to do so.

It seems unrealistic to believe that all tourists from countries new to the international tourism scene will behave sensitively and sympathetically. For them it is a new experience and in the circumstances they will want as much from it as possible at as little cost (to themselves) as possible. Recent behaviour patterns of tourists from eastern Europe suggest this to be, understandably, the case. (Wheeler, 1992).

We have moved from travel to tourism to mass tourism. Pundits of the green movement advocate a kind of back to travel except the reality is that globally we are moving toward mega tourism. The gap between the solution and the problem is again alarmingly though conveniently forgotten.

Of particular concern to some critics of the new movement is this very gap, some would say chasm, between the appealing though theoretical notions of good tourism and the practical realities of its implementation. Cazes (1989) warns of the danger of 'insidious distortions between the ideological discourse on the one hand, and the effective practices in places of tourism on the other'. In the Third World, he laments, 'there are no examples of significant size that fully meets the requirements of the alternative model'. Pigram (1990) also argues cogently that though worthwhile policy statements may be espoused, they encounter formidable
barriers when attempts are made to translate them into action. The problem is not deciding what should be done, but actually making it happen. His perceptive article on sustainable tourism concludes with the stark prospect that without the development of effective means of translating the ideal into action, sustainable tourism "runs the risk of remaining irrelevant and inert as a feasible policy option for the real world of tourism development'.

The irony here should not be lost. Usually academics are criticized, often with justification, for theoretical ivory tower mentality. In this particular case, however, several academics are arguing that it is the limited practical application of alternative tourism, and the constraints that prevent wider actual adoption, which make the new tourist movement so questionable as a way forward for tourism planning and management.

I have argued previously (Wheeler, 1991) that the practical issues of implementation are being ignored by many advocates of the new movement. Glib, general assertions are frequently incorporated into policy statements without any attention being given to defining in a practical sense such phrases as, for example, the local community, tourism education or good visitor management. Who actually decides what is required/decided? If, for example, authenticity is the objective, then the popular assumption that indigenous ownership and control will automatically ensure its maintenance is, as Soffield (1991) illustrates, sadly misplaced. How are new forms of tourism to be co-ordinated and who is to be responsible and accountable for its success? Difficult questions remain unanswered.

That such criticism is being swamped is not surprising given the concerted support for new tourism—the easy comfortable answer that does not address the central issue. It must be stressed that the main problem with tourism is numbers, the sheer volume and their continued spatial spread—yet the solution identified by many seems to be small-scale, slow, restricted development. Hardly an answer, given the problem. True, recent examples of supposed good tourism practice being cited have included Disney and Centre Parcs (ETB, 1991, Tourism Society, 1991). By citing these honeypots (itself to an extent at odds with the spread the load, spread the jam philosophy), advocates go some way to dealing with numbers. It is, however, going to take a considerable number of 'Centre Parcs' to syphon off mass demand on a global basis. And where, of course, does the ghettoization of tourism fit in with the notion of being at one with the indigenous population, so important to our new code of behaviour for the traveller. Surprise, surprise, it seems the ghettos are for the masses and the undiscovered (and as yet unspoilt) for the sensitive traveller.

However, are these really examples of what is meant by green, sustainable tourism? Are they examples of the mysterious, ubiquitous, good visitor management? Or are these synonymous? Improvements at Benidorm, Ibiza and Magaluf are also being cited as good examples of the new tourism. In reality, are they not all just good examples of attempts at providing a quality product, or upgrading an existing one, for the quality market? (Now, is this what is meant by alternative tourism?) The policy of
up-grading fits perfectly with the tourism industry’s continued obsession with growth. To counterbalance the hackneyed argument of the danger of killing the goose, the equally hackneyed Pavlovian response is that the product must be continually enhanced. Always an emphasis on quality for the discerning quality market. Unfortunately, while there might well be a quality market, all the market is not quality. As the tourist numbers, world-wide, grow are all these new tourists going to be up-market, quality tourists? The uncomfortable answer must certainly be no. If say, Magaluf is successful in changing its 18–30 image and goes up-market, ridding itself of the undesirable, holiday hooligan as it does so, will this solve the problem of tourism? Current thinking would have us believe so. However, although it might solve the problem for Magaluf, it just shifts the problem elsewhere. The lower end of the market will, presumably, go elsewhere for their pleasure—possibly somewhere even less able to cope than Magaluf. A case of passing the buck. A solution, or survival of the fittest?

Although numbers are of critical importance, it is not simply mass tourism that is the problem. So too is the pseudo-sophisticated, sensitive traveller: ‘the vanguard of the package tour, where he or she goes others will, in every increasing numbers, eventually follow. They are forever seeking the new, the exotic, the unspoilt—the vulnerable’ (Wheeler, 1991). Alternative tourism is somewhat vague in dealing with this matter of the desire for the new. Apparently it endorses it and the concomitant opening up and development of new destinations, provided this is undertaken sensibly, sensibly and is appreciated by those travelling. (Read the books before you go, behave with respect, etc. For eco-tourism, read ego-tourism.) If this sensitive development can be achieved, which I doubt, surely this will only encourage more to travel anyway. It seems most likely that destinations will continue to be developed and planning and regulatory standards relaxed under pragmatic pressures, as demand increases. Either way, prospects are bleak. What seems certain, though, is that the traveller/tourist, seeking the new, will continue to fan outwards, one step beyond tourism’s new frontier.

According to Butler (1990), ‘Claiming one form of tourism is all things for all areas is not only pious and naive, it is unfair, unrealistic and unwise’. Alternative tourism is not the answer to the negative impacts of tourism. It must be treated with caution, indeed scepticism, scrutinized and critically analysed from a realistic, practical perspective. Its ineffectiveness is its popularity, enabling the tourist/traveller to enjoy the holiday experience they want with a clear conscience, impunity and no sacrifice: It provides the tourist lobby with the perfect foil to allay fears (superficially) while enabling the industry to continue its growth, spread and development, swathed in a green mantle. Cohen (1989), in an excellent review of alternative tourism argues that as ‘contemporary tourism is an extremely varied and many-sided phenomenon its indiscriminate criticism and total repudiation stand in danger of being rejected as tendentious and inadequate . . . as stale and unconvincing’. Although there is much truth in this, it must surely also be true that this very complexity and heterogeneity render tourism unmanageable. The main protagonists in tourism are now
behaving much as before, although, thanks to alternative tourism, with a renewed vigour borne out of self-righteous virtue.

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Sustaining the Ego

Brian Wheeler
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT

The paper draws on media and marketing material to argue that by combining the myth of the return to 'the golden age of travel' with that of images of a 'return to nature', the 'thinking' tourist is, willingly, being seduced into believing that they/we are in fact sophisticated, eco-sensitive travellers. The corollary of this cosy conspiracy is that tourism products deemed acceptable to this market have come to be regarded (wrongly) as being synonymous with sustainability. The process becomes one of smug satisfaction, of self-justifying growth and of expansion and spread of tourism. The paper examines what is actually being achieved in practice and suggests that examples of tourism 'successes', currently being lauded as role-models of sustainable tourism are at best simply examples of good tourism practice. Despite the industry's protestations to the contrary, these should not automatically be regarded as suitable practices to adopt. It draws the conclusions that the proposed solutions are just about as far away from addressing the realities of the actual problems as the traveller would wish to be from the tourist. This absurd situation, however, satisfies the immediate short-term wishers of many of the main protagonists in tourism's impact debate. That it fails to bridge the gap between tourism theory and practice is hardly surprising given the enormity of what some would say is an unmanageable task.

Influencing the number of visitors to a destination is an integral element of tourism development. Basically in the initial stages it is one of promotion and encouragement then, once the carrying capacity (shouldn't this be caring capacity) threshold is breached, or indeed reached, it becomes a matter of manipulation and control of numbers to achieve and ensure a satisfactory situation. This sounds fine, and it is — provided one ignores the actual implementation of this apparently straightforward process. What has happened in practice is that for years the holistic approach was effectively ignored and exclusive emphasis given to promotion and growth, which were undertaken with vigour and gusto. The longer term consequences of such blinkered actions were almost totally ignored. Now, in the new spirit of our enlightened wisdom, effusive, gushing expressions of concern and the need to mitigate negative tourism impacts are high profile components of all tourism strategies. Ostensibly we have advanced through the stage where planning for tourism was simply synonymous with the marketing and development of tourism. We demand sustainable growth. We require appropriate tourism. We have become responsible. Or have we?

The now familiar call is 'for a more aware, more caring tourism industry, ecologically and environmentally sound, small-scale development, local ownership and control, and tourists (travellers) well versed in the ethics of travel. The pace of development must be slow, and steady; be sympathetically managed and, of course, be sustainable' (Wheeler, 1992a) — the standard 'green formula'.

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121
The 4 S’s should no longer be Sun, Sand, Sea and Sex, rather it seems they are to be replaced by Sensible, Sensitive, Sophisticated and Sustainable. To this, crucially, I would further add Superficial. Or perhaps the 4 ‘I’s’ would be more appropriate — Intelligent, Inquisitive, Independent and Idealistic. New Wave Tourism, (Wheeler, 1992b) seen by many as the antidote to the vulgarities of mass tourism is, however well intentioned, a dangerously deceptive sham.

Sustainable tourism does provide the answer. Unfortunately it is to the wrong question. Rather than effectively addressing the complexities of tourism impact, what it is actually achieving is the considerably easier task of answering the question — ‘How best can we cope with the criticism of tourism impact?’ — as opposed to the impact itself. In essence then, the solution has been the conjuring up of an intellectually appealing concept with little practical application. One that satisfies the immediate short-term wishes of some of the main protagonists in tourism’s impact debate, avoids sacrifices and enables behaviour in much the same way as before — but with the veneer of respectability and from a higher moral platform. For eco-tourism, read ego-tourism. We are more concerned with maintaining our status, massaging our own egos and appeasing our guilt than with addressing the actual issues involved.

Much has been vaunted of the need for a different approach, a new style to tourism. But just how different can this be, given the parameters of the real world? Tourist or traveller, we are simply customers/clients to be targeted, wooed and seduced by industry. Regardless of whether the business is large or small, whether it has ‘customised’ or ‘conveyor belt’ mentality, objectives basically are the same, namely to persuade us to buy the product. Fundamentally, the product also is the same irrespective of where you are, or consider yourself to be, on the tourist/traveller spectrum. In many ways it is simply a variation on a theme (or dream). Be it an inclusive package holiday or an exclusive tour the core components are essentially the same — transport, accommodation and trimmings. The main difference seems to me that exclusive tours are simply more expensive; yet those regarding the package holiday with derision happily enjoy an exclusive tour.

Those with the independent spirit, but without the conviction, are catered for by an industry conveniently offering, for example, ‘The holiday you would arrange for yourself if you had infinite time and resources’ (Independent, 1993) — significantly, the image and illusion of individualists without the inconvenience of the reality. Those travelling independently see themselves as a different category. Maybe they are. However, just what proportion of these latter day travellers are truly independent in their travel? Like it or not, clearly they all utilise much of the same infrastructure as the organised tourist and are part of the same system. Minor considerations like this are either conveniently ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. So too are arguments that there might well be less adverse, environmental impact caused by a package coach tour of say 50 passengers than by 25 independent travellers covering the same route in their cars. Or the evidence suggesting that a good deal of damage to the Sahara is perpetrated by the free spirit, independent traveller roaming in their 4-wheel-drive
jeeps rather than by the organised, packaged, easier to influence, monitor and control tourist in their mini-buses (response from delegate International Seminar on Alternative Tourism, Tamanrasset Algeria, 1989). But this can again be conveniently ignored. (As can the fact that the tourists in the Sahara see themselves as travellers). Again it is image that is everything. Amongst the educated and sophisticated exclusive, independent travel is to be acclaimed while the package product is odiously distasteful.

This status awareness is not lost on the tourism industry — itself partly responsible for the deceptive misapprehensions. In a symbiotic conspiracy, the mature tourism industry in the west is now consciously cultivating, wooing then seducing the pseudo explorer, the adventurer, the careful eco-traveller, those regarded to be the higher echelons of the tourist continuum. This is achieved by first massaging, then, when ripe, milking egos. A glance at some travel agent and tour operator names meets with an impressive array of evocative word mongery — Status Travel (Worcester); Eco-Travel: Special Tours and Travel (London); Alternative Travel Group (Oxford); Exodus (London); Explore Worldwide (Aldershot); The Imaginative Traveller (London) etc., etc.

Numerous adverts highlighting the sentimental, elegant simplicity of travel and portraying the traveller in high esteem ooze nostalgic warmth and traditional values. The logo of the Sunday Times Travel page is an evocative period-piece combination of ocean-liner, 1920s aeroplane, vintage car, light-house, and passport. Only the Orient Express is missing. Trusthouse Forte ran a series of adverts in the spring of 1991 alluding back to the age of travel. Couples in 1920s dress, boulevardring in the park or cycling in style through images of England’s green and pleasant land. P & O Ferries portrayal of ‘the continent’ again harkens back to time long since gone — 1920s swimming costumes, large hats and Oxford bags etc. Shell’s Explore Britain campaign of the 1991 summer had all the trappings of the ‘travel myth’. The ‘Explore Egypt in darkest Buckinghamshire’ with the message ‘Discover part of Britain you never knew existed with Shell Explorers’ says it all. Hats, either cockily sported or clutched possessively to one’s side, feature prominently in nearly all these adverts. (Note — hats and not cloth-caps.) When was it that these were last a part of aristocratic attire? Remarkably, even the recent Youth Hostel campaign referred to its clientele as travellers.

Take a look at an Air Miles voucher. One might expect a contemporary jet-set image for the jet age clientele. But no, it’s the 1920/30s equivalent of suave sophistication, its the ubiquitous sea-plane climbing, slowly and gracefully into the skies. (Incidently where, precisely, does business tourism, and come to think of it those visiting friends and relatives fit into the eco/sustainable tourism models?)

The obvious image appeal of the traveller is being exploited not just by the tourist industry and its related products, for example, the Dunhill Luggage adverts, and the American Express adverts for the Enlightened Traveller, but by other status-conscious products at a farther remove from travel/tourism. Over the last few years the main props in many of the more up-market high-street ‘gentlemen’ outfitters (Blazer, for instance) have been stacks of 1920s leather
suitcases and travel bags, complete with leather travel tags, exotic luggage labels usually with a pair of binoculars (sometimes a telescope) and a box camera prominently displayed nearby. Recent adverts for Safari perfume features an elegant woman holding the obligatory travel bags, about to board an old propeller plane (Dakota?), a sunbathed (not baked) landscape and the words, ‘A world without boundaries. A personal adventure and a way of life.’ Again the elegant woman, this time with a sea-plane backdrop advertises Graham’s Vintage Port. The images reinforces what we already want to believe — namely that the sophisticated, smart, independent, elegant upper-class travel is fine — socially acceptable, indeed ‘de rigueur’.

If we look at contemporary attitudes towards sectors of our domestic market we see a similar status/acceptability parallel. For example, Butlins, despite its recent up-grading, is held almost in contempt by many of the pseudo-sophisticated who, nevertheless regard Center Parcs as a perfectly acceptable, desirable product. Indeed Center Parcs is regarded by many as a first class example of green/suitable tourism having been awarded in 1990 the ETB first ‘England for Excellence Green Tourism Award’ and frequently being cited favourably in official documents. (English Tourist Board, 1991,1992). Center Parcs is an example of excellent business practice. Combining a fine product with first class promotion, it has carefully and successfully cultivated its sophisticated image. In its brochure it quotes favourable reviews from the acceptable, ‘intellectual’ newspaper and magazine. The Observer, The Sunday Times, The Independent on Sunday, Guardian, Times Educational Supplement — there’s no Daily Mirror, Sun or Star quote here. This is all understandable market segmentation. What is equally understandable but to me not at all acceptable is how one form of enclave tourism (Center Parcs) has taken on the mantle of respectability amongst the press, tourist boards and academic literature while another (Butlins) is derided.

Is one considered green and acceptable (and by inference somehow sustainable) simply because it looks good, because money and considerable effort has been spent on honing the product to its market? It must be more than this — and it is. It is, I believe, simply because one is supposedly for the educated middle-class and one isn’t — the domestic equivalent of the exclusive tour versus the mass package holiday syndrome. Surely Center Parcs and Butlins are, in essence, very similar products — both examples of effective enclave tourism. How do they meet some of the yardsticks of green/sustainable tourism? Local ownership? Well, maybe now but how local is local and anyway, wasn’t one originally foreign owned? Do the visitors ‘go ethnic’ and mix well with the locals. Hardly? And which environment are we discussing when we say Center Parcs is environmentally friendly but (by implication) that Butlins isn’t? A proportion of visitors to Butlins arrive by public transport or by organised coach. Those travelling to Center Parcs, I would hazard a guess, prefer the luxury of their own car. Without sinking into the quicksand of the transport debate, it would seem a case could be made that if we were considering the ‘environment’ in a wider sense than the immediate ‘camp’ situation then maybe a different conclusion from the auto-
Sustaining the Ego

matic one might be drawn as to the respective environmentally friendliness of the two camps.

This of course is a point worth raising at a general level in the eco-tourism debate. Are we considering the specific, local, regional or global environment? It is again a question of scale. The eco-tourist (and eco-firm) so concerned to ostentatiously behaving sensitively in the endangered destination environment, are not quite so concerned about the changes to the overall environment he/she causes in actively reaching that destination. Here convenience takes precedence over conscience — a car to the airport and a jumbo jet are hardly paradigms of virtue in the environment stakes yet are so often pre-requisites to that eco-sensitive safari or trek.

These examples may be regarded by some as absurd — the point though is that things in reality are not as clear-cut as marketing and our pseudo-sophisticated inclinations would have us believe. If the incentive is high enough you can fool yourselves all the time — particularly if continually encouraged to do so by the media and your own social peers. You can believe you are the sensitive traveller, immune from guilt and that someone else is the mass tourist, the villain of the 'peace'. Most readers of this article would, I suggest, feel more comfortable with say a trekking holiday in Poland or a trip to Borneo, followed by a winter break at Center Parcs, than by two weeks in Torremolinos or Sousse and then a weekend at Butlins. But just because we, the educated, might prefer one option does not mean to say that is ‘better’ and certainly does not mean that it is automatically ‘better’ in terms of being more sustainable/less damaging to the indigenous population, environment etc. It just means it is more acceptable to us. But aren’t the Sirens calling. Aren’t we all being lured into this seductive trap, the easy option of believing the more up-market the product the better it is in sustainable terms. I am tired of the golden goose myth. Isn’t it time it was well and truly stuffed in much the same way tourism has successive destinations. To counter the hackneyed argument of the danger of killing the goose, the equally, hackneyed, Pavlovian response is that the product must be continually “enhanced”. Always an emphasis in quality for the quality market' (Wheeler, 1992a). While dovetailing perfectly into notions of a quality caring industry that has developed a self-rectifying mechanism, globally, it is patently obvious that the ‘bugger it up and pass it down’ (travellers first, then tourists) philosophy has been employed. It is more a matter of the goose is dead, long live the goose. Rather than the golden egg maybe the curate’s egg would be more appropriate. But can we separate the good from the bad, or is it more of an omelette? Maybe too the industry should adopt a new emblem; no longer the goose but — the cuckoo — living off the fat of the land, voraciously devouring someone else’s resources and efforts, while stifling then jettisoning local interest before, when the time is right, moving on. The irony in this analogy, of course, is that though the tourist industry in many respects behaves like a cuckoo, mysteriously it continually manages to feather its own nest. Are we not behaving in much the same way?

Our egos are further massaged by the messages coming through the travel (never tourist) pages of the ‘quality’ weekend press. Significantly it is not just the
far-flung destinations exposed in the copy that are appealing to our senses — the carefully crafted advertisement of those caring, small-scale, eco-friendly operators play their role too. A cursory glance at say the Independent on Sunday Review reveals, not surprisingly, the following — ‘unspoilt; ‘pure Crete; ‘escape; ‘odyssey; ‘travellers’ way; ‘individual Spain; ‘off the beaten track; ‘simply Crete; ‘explore beyond the tourist fringe; ‘holidays for the discerning; ‘connoisseurs; ‘for adventurers’, etc., etc. (Independent on Sunday Review, 1993).

This back to nature word imagery is deliberately enhanced and reinforced by visual effects. Respectable Sunday Times readers are soothed by the sight of seals, puffins, gulls and badgers selling country cottages; herons and kingfishers adorning boating holiday adverts while butterflies and flowers help sell lodge/chalet holidays. For the more exotic, parrots have joined the standard elephants, kangaroos and giraffes as marketable images of those far away places (Sunday Times Travel, 1993).

Center Parcs’ brochure features an abundance of flora and fauna and makes specific reference to the grey heron, the nightjar, tree creeper, pochard and the protected bat. The brochure quotes (Center Parcs Ltd, 1993) the Independent on Sunday’s comments — ‘outside you find streams, lakes and ponds, waterfalls, wild flower glades, fallow deer thickets and heaths where Nightjars whirl’ and the Mail on Sunday’s ‘Birds of Paradise, plants, purple bougainvillea, and weeping fig trees glisten in the spray of a cascading waterfall. Yet, just yards away tower the tall trees of Sherwood — once England’s most favoured Royal hunting forest’. This gives a new dimension to my understanding of Cohen’s ‘environmental bubble’ (Cohen, 1992).

Meanwhile, British Airways are using the manatee to lure visitors to Florida (Independent on Sunday, 1993). Of course we the discerning, we the eco/ego aficionados can see through all of this, through this glass menagerie. We know it’s a game of ‘selective sell’ or in some cases of selling selective game. We are all aware that it must have slipped British Airways mind when they failed to mention the tourist boats that maim and kill the gentle sea cow. We are clever enough to see the irony of tourism using the imagery of the predator in the form of the kingfisher, heron and puffin to portray the soft, gentle idyll. We, of course, see through the veneer of respectability to the dark side. Beneath the surface lies the shark.

When it comes to the growth and the predicted nature of tourism, common sense is surely telling us one thing while marketing, the media and our egos are leading us in another (up the garden path?). We are not of course, returning to the golden age of travel, to the days of the ocean leviathans, the sea-planes and trilby hats. Globally we are heading towards mega-mass tourism as all countries in the world strive for economic growth, increased standard of living and the corollary of desire and ability to travel and, hence, tourism. So too the diametrically opposed and widening divergence that exists between the slow, steady, selfless, cosy, back to nature, sustainable, eco-friendly, controlled small-scale solution to tourism problems and the realities of globally, a capitalist society with inbuilt growth dynamics and a ‘get it while you can’, grab mentality. The solution
and the reality are just about as far apart as the traveller would wish to be from the tourist.

For years in tourism any ‘planning’ there has been has tended to be drastically under-resourced, reactive and inadequate. Suddenly there is now a boundless over-supply of that well known panacea to all tourism problems — rhetoric, the essential ingredient of green tourism. Perhaps those of us with an interest and involvement in the current debate are the personification of this and of general sustainable principles — we seem to be continuously recycling our old papers and ideas. Yet the chasm between words and practice remain as wide as ever. Examples of sustainable, eco-tourism are being cited. They are, it is argued, bridging this gap. But surely these are just straight forward examples of good business practice. Or are we to believe that the two are synonymous? In any case they tend to be at the micro, not macro level and, naturally, one swallow doesn’t make a summer.

The feeling now is that the debate has progressed (been prolonged?) enough and what we want is something ‘concrete’ — a wonderfully inappropriate word if ever there was one. Brick wall seems more likely. At the recent conference on Tourism and the Environment, Krippendorf, after embracing the recommendation and codes of practice of recent UK official publications (English Tourist Board, 1992) advocated their immediate implementation and stirring called for ‘Action, action, action’ (Krippendorf, 1992). Delegates enthusiastically greeted Dower’s plea to the government to help fund positive action (Dower, 1992). The response? Almost to the day, the government was announcing cut-backs in tourism management support. Here’s the rub — who pays? Not the government, not the industry and not the traveller — well at leastways not in terms of limited destination choice. Maybe they/we may have to pay more for the pleasure but isn’t it worth it to get there before the tourists spoil it. Brackenbury, at the Royal Geographical Society Seminar on Eco-tourism believed that whatever the solution, it must not be elitist (Brackenbury, 1992). Fine words but missing the point that anything to do with tourism is elitist if, as we all seem to be so concerned about, we are looking at the phenomenon from a global perspective. The point has been made previously. To those still excluded from the liberalisation and luxury of international travel and worldwide these of course remain the vast majority, this populists analysis might seem surprising’ (Wheeler, 1992c). Perhaps there is nothing wrong with elitism — to an extent, isn’t everything — but to ignore its pervasive presence and particularly its ramifications in terms of the traveller/tourist/mass-tourism continuum seems absurd. If a ‘solution’ to the problems is found and implemented we can be damn sure that it will not be one that restricts the destination choice of our would-be traveller.

If there has been confusion of terminology and slipperiness of definition in this article then I make few apologies for that. Like it or not while academics may wish to be precise about terminology, in the practical world of business such niceties are ignored. For most practitioners there is little confusion — if it can be used to sell the product, use it. ‘Sustainability’ is being used to sustain business
— a predictable, understandable ruse, but perhaps not quite what the purists had in mind.

How can we argue that spreading the tourist load spatially is solving the problem when one of the problems is the spatial spread of tourism? That restriction of numbers at one destination is evidence of success when this diverts the problem elsewhere? That small-scale solutions are the answer when the problem is large-scale? Or that slow harmonious growth is what’s needed when rapid expansion is the reality? The problem is numbers — rapidly expanding, massive numbers on a global scale. Whatever disaggregation is employed, whatever sophisticated nomenclature chosen — be it explorer, traveller, tourist — we are all part of that mass and consequently I believe all part of the problem, part of the mass movement. Is sustainable tourism actually addressing this problem and if not why not? If it is, then it doesn’t seem to me to be being very successful; if it isn’t then what is all the fuss about as, I repeat, again and again numbers are the root of the problem.

The growing popularity and, in certain sectors of society, the ready acceptance of sustainability, of green awareness, of eco-tourism, are I believe, based not so much on philanthropic concern for the environment, or for ‘the good of mankind’ but on vested interest — and immediate vested interest at that. It is not so much a matter of ‘for our children’s children’, its more a question of ‘what’s in it for me, now’. It’s a little like giving to charity — it makes us feel better. Our donations buy us relief. We give but we avert our eyes from the real problem. We rarely sacrifice so much as to cause any adverse effect on ourselves. There are some exceptions to this but on the whole the utility derived (by us) usually outweighs the cost of that sacrifice. So too, it is argued here, with expressed support for the sustainable tourist.

Holiday Inns’ disturbing advert of a ‘native’ porter struggling beneath the weight of 16 pieces of luggage states ‘17% of travellers will forget something anyway’. Leaving aside the unpleasantness of the advert, my comment would be that the entire 100% of travellers forget they are tourists. In the Independent a recent advert enquired ‘Do you know the discerning traveller’s best kept secret?’ Isn’t the real answer to this pretentious nonsense that we/they are all tourist and mass tourists at that. The only thing we are sustaining and enhancing in the current debate is our egos. Again, for eco-tourist, read ego-tourist. Or should that be ego-traveller?

References


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Willing Victims of the Ego-trap
(1993)

Tourism in Focus, No 9, 1993
p.14
Willing victims of the ego-trap

BRIAN WHEELER, lecturer in tourism at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham, a founder member of Tourism Concern and a member of its Council, has long been one of the foremost agitators questioning tourists and the tourism industry – especially eco-tourism.

Three years ago in an early Tourism Concern newsletter, I rather depressingly expressed some of my fears about ‘responsible tourism’. Though others disagree, this nomenclature, to most intents and purposes, seems to me to be synonymous with sustainable/eco-tourism. In turn I believe the latter to be, generally speaking, synonymous with ego-tourism. These concerns were reiterated at Tourism Concern’s 1991 AGM (in Focus No.1). As far as I can see, little has occurred in the interim period to penetrate that gloom except, that is, the warm glow from our snug, smug halos. The basic questions remain unaddressed while the gloss, shining brighter than ever, hardens on the marketing hype of eco-tourism.

OK, we have had the prestigious ‘industry’ awards for politically correct, sustainable eco-tourism; the plethora of appropriate publications – The Green Light, Beyond The Green Horizon, the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, etc.; the appropriate conferences, at national and international level; we had pleas for a brick in the cistern (should that by system?) and been encouraged to use only one hotel towel (presumably until it turns green); and, of course, the micro-examples of success usually, however, based on control and restriction. But have we really had any satisfactory answers to the fundamental problem of globally increasing tourist numbers?

Whatever the disaggregation, whether it be adventurer, traveller or tourist – we are all part of the mass and consequently all part of the problem. Is eco-tourism actually confronting the numbers issue? If not, why not? If it is, then it does not seem to be too successful; if it is not, then what is all the fuss about? As I repeat, again and again, numbers are the root of the global tourism problem.

Perhaps my worries are unfounded and my arguments stale. But the risk of becoming even more repetitive and boring, can I yet again ask how small-scale solutions are to be the answer, when the problem is one of large-scale proportions? Or how slow harmonious growth can be seriously expected when rapid expansion is the reality, etc. etc. etc.?

Globally, despite recession, terrorism, virtual reality and claims that it is better to stay at home than to travel (invariably from those who have travelled, have a ‘nice’ home and therefore know) – this expansion, this desire to travel, to go on holiday, to go abroad is here to stay.

I really don’t think it’s a question of concern for our children’s children (or anybody else’s)

I reckon one of the basic reasons for this stems from jealousy and envy. It is here where we show our true colours – or rather colour, green, of course. It is this intrinsic green trait, rather than an environmentally based one, that will continue to have the most powerful global influence on consumer holiday choice. Conspicuous consumption, window to the west, keeping up with the Joneses – call it what you will – it remains pretty obvious that with the ‘good’ things in life we usually want what others have, only ‘better’. So the green-eyed tourist uncoils as we continually try to ‘better’ ourselves holiday-wise. Obvious too (if we are forced to think about it) that ‘better’ for the tourist isn’t always ‘better’ for the host. Now throw in here the timescale factor. I really don’t think it’s a question of concern for our children’s children (or anybody else’s). No, the main motivation – worldwide – remains what’s in it for me, now. Paraphrasing here – it’s no good telling everyone that we’ll all benefit in the long-run, because in the words of the great Lord Keynes, in the long-run we are all dead.

All these concerns, all these worries. Never mind, now we have eco-tourism. What a ruse, what a jolly jape. Now we, the thinking tourists, can behave much as before with a clear (well, opaque) conscience – the blame still essentially with the mass tourists. Too cynical? Maybe. But aren’t we falling into the trap of automatically assuming that the more alternative, more custom-designed, more up-market (and by this I mean ‘up-above’ the tourist), the product is, or is assumed to be, then the ‘better’ it is in sustainable terms. To me this is the ego-trap – ‘products deemed acceptably correct for the traveller are, naturally, acceptably correct for the environment for as we all know the traveller is one with nature’ (see Sustaining the Ego, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, forthcoming).

The industry and the media might seduce us with (in)appropriate imagery. But need they bother? In a few years’ time I suspect many of us, enmeshed in the ego-trap and inextricably ensnared in its ramifications, may well be looking back and pondering – well, were we pushed or did we jump?
Tourism and the Environment. A Symbiotic, Symbolic or Shambolic Relationship (1994)

A recent Financial Times ‘Survey’ claims that ‘Broadly environmental management means managing a business with an eye to its impact on the environment’ (Maddox, 1993). This does not seem a very broad interpretation to me. Not surprisingly the underlying assumption, not only of Maddox’s article but of the entire feature on ‘environmental management’, appears to suggest that the environment should be viewed, and treated, solely from a business perspective. Furthermore, though no definition is given, the distinct impression is that the environment is strictly physical in dimension and scope. I would suggest that in most situations this is too narrow, too blinkered a perspective. Certainly in the present context of the relationship between tourism and the environment I am convinced that this is so.

A provocative slant on environmental issues is provided by The Economist’s brief on ‘Aid and the environment. The greening of giving’. The main thrust of the argument is that while everyone appears to agree there is a need for sustainable development, just what this actually entails, and the means of achieving it, remain somewhat vague. ‘In principle, this idea is clear enough: development, not merely economic growth should be the target and it should lead to enduring improvements in welfare’ (The Economist, 1993). Easier said than done. And a statement all-too-familiar to those, who over the last few years, have been following the ecotourism debate/debacle.

For this paper, initially, I too was inclined to emulate the Financial Times example and avoid a definition of the environment. However, aware of the title of this conference I was drawn to the definition given by the rather grandly named World Travel and Tourism Environment Research Centre (WTTERC) (no shrinking violet this). Their second annual review presents ‘the current “State of the Art” of specifying and achieving environmentally compatible growth through commercial operations in worldwide Travel and Tourism’ (WTTERC, 1993). Again the commercial perspective, again not surprising given the centre’s high-profile sponsorship.

They state ‘we interpret environment in the broad sense as “earth’s resources” and in a narrower context of Travel and Tourism as “natural and built resources” (in places where visitors are received, accommodated, transported or organised by tourism business)’ (WTTERC, 1993).

Since being a lad I have had great difficulty differentiating between natural and man-made environments. Middle age hasn’t provided the answer to this (or any other problems). If we believe in Darwinism then through the evolutionary process man is part of nature and therefore anything that man does, creates or destroys is surely also part of the evolutionary process and therefore part of nature as well.

So where’s the distinction? Too simplistic? Semantics? We don’t talk of mammal-made environments, fish-made environments or animal-made environments. Yet presumably to some extent these exist. But nature and man are somehow separated, hence man-made environments. In the evaluation stakes nature becomes the paradigm of virtue, man vilified for desecrating the environment (shades of the ‘traveller good/tourist bad’ syndrome here).

Gunn, in his worthy text Tourism Planning, explains how Sargent had argued that mankind is dramatically different from other organisms, how people have control of their own and other organisms’ destiny—‘In organisms other than man, the natural ecosystem’s organic detritus is fed back into the environment and recycled (Sargent, 1974). But this is not so with mankind’ (Gunn, 1994).

Unesco, however, to some extent recognise the fusion between nature and man. In 1972 it adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. According to the Director-General, ‘The Convention covers the cultural and the natural heritage, which have traditionally been considered as separate entities, and makes the bold assumption that there are monuments and sites that belong to the whole of humanity’ (Mayor, 1991). Unesco’s emblem apparently symbolises the interdependence of cultural and natural
properties: the central square is a form created by man and the circle represents nature, the two, according to Unesco, being intimately linked.

The environment in a tourism context, in addition to the traditional natural/physical perspective, must have a cultural and social dimension. Sofield (1991) develops this argument in his search for principles of sustainable ethnic tourism. (Anyway, if we are to believe the current promotion campaign for Sicily, ‘Tourism is Culture’.) It is everything that affects, or is affected by tourism. Providing an actual working definition is a somewhat daunting task and it is, therefore, hardly surprising that the relationships between the environment and tourism appear so shambolic. This is further compounded when one acknowledges that, despite an excess of definitions, nobody is certain what tourism itself actually is. Whilst many profess individually to know, no two perceptions will be precisely the same.

Over the years, Middleton has expressed strong views that the tourism industry has become ‘misrepresented and crudely caricatured as a major environmental predator’ (Middleton, 1993). Not surprisingly this echoes ‘too often, around the world, Travel and Tourism is misunderstood as an activity mainly concerned with the mass movement of packaged tourism to fragile environment a periphery of pleasure. This review stresses that the world’s largest industry is based on visits for all purposes including business travel, visits to friends and relatives, holidays and other social, cultural and leisure travel’ (WTTERC, 1992). There can be no doubt that Middleton’s views are valid and should be respected.

This confusion of definitions is not of course restricted to tourism, but vagueness and liberal interpretations have always accompanied tourism development debates. Ecotourism is no exception. I am always perplexed by the term ‘ecotourist’. My doubts were fuelled a couple of years ago when our guide on a trip to Mongolia described Genghis Khan as the original ‘green-man’, the first ecotourist’. I couldn’t determine whether this was because, again according to our guide, Genghis had apparently established the first National Park (for hunting) outside Ulan Bator or because he ‘lived off the land while travelling’. Either way it seems an interesting interpretation. Dirks, in ‘A new breed of traveler’, believes ‘anyone can be an eco-traveller. All eco-travel takes is sensitivity, respect and an innate sense of curiosity about other cultures and environments’ (Dirks, 1993). To an extent, any desire for a definitive definition of ecotourism, or of sustainable tourism is redundant. People will interpret the notion as they will, as best suits them and their circumstances. No international decree will disperse the convenient clouds of confusion that have enveloped eco/sustainable tourism.

The popular argument is that we are destroying our environment and that this is not natural. Tourism is of course seen as part of this destruction. I suggest that this process does seem perfectly natural—human, if inhumane. There does not seem anything inconsistent in destroying our environment because to many ‘our environment’ is, or at least is perceived to be, synonymous with someone else’s environment. Western society is inextricably linked with the growth mentality.

Amazingly (or understandably depending on one’s perspective), other societies seem to want to ape our ‘success’. All growth has costs and benefits. We are out for ourselves. It is a question of what is best for me and if someone, or somewhere, else pays the cost, then too bad as long as I get the benefits. Doesn’t this ‘devil take the hindmost’ mentality realistically reflect mainstream consciousness? And isn’t this Darwin’s survival of the fittest?

So, despite agreeing with many aspects of Middleton’s arguments, I nevertheless feel that, however broad, however sweeping one’s compass of ‘tourism’, tourism will always include an element of ‘exploitation’. This isn’t meant as a criticism of tourism per se, more an emotive threnody on human behaviour. This observation seems appropriate since we are continually being told tourism is a human activity. Let us theoretically attempt (I know it’s simplistic, even naive) to split tourism into three sectors—the commercial provider, the tourists and the ‘host’ population (not included in the providers). The commercial sector is profit-orientated and inevitably, it seems to me, there will be ‘exploitation’ in some form here. So too, with the tourists—while not motivated by profit they are by self-interest, the ‘what’s in it for me attitude’. Similarly, the host community wants to extract something from the tourist. Assuming it’s not money, it might be an opportunity to learn a foreign language, a gift, a sexual conquest—whatever. It’s often a matter of ‘taking’. Too cynical? Dream on. Unfortunately, this seems a far more realistic view of how things are, and will continue to be, than the wishful, wistful, whimsical, Goody-two-shoes, green approach.

The notion of a ‘global village’, of ‘think global, act local’ belongs in the same realms of fantasy as Major’s ‘classless society’. Maybe some in the ‘first’ world are moving towards a supposedly more environmentally sensitive, sustainable consumption pattern. This generally seems to be one of substitution rather than reduction. We are not actively giving up anything. But if globally our overall consumption rate is increasing, as surely it is, I wonder just what the net benefits of our marginal
EGOTOURISM, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

shenanigans actually are. It's a classic case of the 'haves' and the 'have nots', the image conscious 'haves' fine-tuning their/our privileged lifestyle for status (not breadthline self-preservation) purposes, while the 'have-nots' strive by any means, fair or foul, to catch up or simply survive.

Recent developments in tourism seem to mirror this general pattern of consumption.

The growing popularity and, in certain sectors of society, the acceptance of sustainability, of green awareness, of ecotourism are based not so much on philanthropic concern for the environment, or for the good of mankind, but on vested interest—and immediate vested interest at that. It's a little like giving to charity: it makes us feel better. We rarely sacrifice so much as to cause any adverse effect on ourselves. The utility derived (by us) usually outweighs the cost of that sacrifice. So too . . .

Most of the ideological roots of new aware tourism have been around for years. However, though the concept of sustainability has long been associated with development economics, it has only recently been in vogue in tourism (Seaton, 1991). Seminal works by Murphy (1985) and Krippendorf (1987) raised awareness and these were followed by a deluge of material endorsing green tourism and its 'sophisticated spin-off' ecotourism. Sober warnings contained in first-rate articles by, for example, Cohen (1989), Cazes (1989), Butler (1990) and Pigram (1990) were to all intents and purposes ignored, swamped in an excess of green rhetoric. De Kadt too pointed out that alternative tourism has meant many things, all of which run counter to mainstream development in western civilisation (Nash and Butler, 1990).

There are journals on sustainability, a specialist journal on sustainable tourism, a journal for the eco-traveller, editions of established journals dedicated to ecotourism, a wide range of related articles in these and other journals, magazines and newspapers, together with a welter of government and official publications. There are books, books in press, chapters in books, and book reviews; conference proceedings and conference reports; television documentaries on ecotourism, slots in the TV travel shows and programmes on the wireless. Sustainable tourism has stimulated a flood of student dissertations, from undergraduate through to doctorate. Existing tourism consultants take on a green hue, while new ecotourism specialists enter the consultancy market. Organisations concerned with tourism impact have spawned and multiplied.

The Journal of Sustainable Tourism was launched last year and on the evidence of the first two editions is proving a useful addition to the relevant literature. In the inaugural article, the editors (Bramwell and Lane, 1993), provide a succinct overview of the evolution of sustainable tourism plus a somewhat up-beat brief of the journal's objectives. Most of the subsequent articles have good references and these, together with the conference reports (e.g. Godfrey, 1993) and book reviews provide excellent source material. The editors too have, by allowing the Jonas and Doubling Thomas an opportunity to fully air their views, elevated the journal to a forum for debate.

The first-class Tourism Management has increasingly given considerable space to tourism and environmental issues. Recently there was a special issue on ecotourism (Tourism Management, 1993) and there have been numerous relevant articles and reviews (see, for example, May (1991), Cooper and Ozill (1992), Owen et al. (1993)). The last article, in particular, adopts a positive approach to sustainable tourism, arguing, and through case studies 'proving', that sustainable tourism can be achieved in practice. While personally I would question some of their conclusions—for example, regarding the Conway Project (it relies on 'upgrading' and 'spreading the load' which I believe are not necessarily sustainable prerequisites (Wheelere, 1993a))—articles such as these are part of the important growing trend citing examples of 'successful' sustainable/ecotourism projects. The bullish confidence evident in this development cannot be ignored and reflects the belief that many academics and practitioners have in the concept of sustainable tourism—"Success in achieving sustainable tourism development can be realised" (Owen et al., 1993).

Tourism in Focus from Tourism Concern is an excellent source of material for those interested in impacts of tourism. Given its shoestring budget this publication is, I believe, a great credit to its editor, Tricia Barnett. Issue No. 9 (Tourism Concern, 1993) is specifically on ecotourism, though all editions contain useful information, as does its predecessor, The Newsletter.

The same cannot be said of Tourism Concern's publication Beyond the Green Horizon (1992): a discussion paper on 'principles for sustainable tourism' produced in conjunction with the World-Wide Fund for Nature. Though a committee member of Tourism Concern I always had strong reservations about any attempts to provide a code of ethics or principles and was particularly reticent about supporting this document. My views are best summed up by Ashcroft's stinging review:

Reading each principle in turn I found myself increasingly asking the questions, Why? How? When? With what? It soon became very tiresome ploughing through so many platitudinous points, which sounded like the converted and over-virtuous boy scout promise. Indeed it is questionable just how much effort should be put into definition of
principles for sustainable tourism when so little effort seems to be put into practical action to achieve them. (Ashcroft, 1993)

To be fair to Tourism Concern this was meant as a first step. According to Bramwell and Lane (1993) it was noted by Waldstein (1991) that all politicians and all large corporations claim to be pursuing pro-environmental policies. He warns of the 'limousine environmentalism' where lip-service masks a lack of positive actions. 'It is easy to discuss sustainability—implementation is the problem. . . . The time has come 'to walk the talk' (Bramwell and Lane, 1993). As Bramwell and Lane somewhat understatingly observe, 'It will be no easy walk'. But just how many first steps are required before one can in reality 'walk the talk'?

A plethora of articles have appeared in the other main tourism journals (see, for example, Stevens (1990), Green (1990), Bramwell (1991) and Wight (1993)) and in a variety of other journals/magazines/newspapers etc. (see Lane (1989), Ancombe (1991), Platt (1991), M. Wheeler (1992) and Hutchings (1993)).

Tourism planning texts that set the current debate on eco/sustainable tourism in a wider context include Pearce (1989), Inskemp (1991), Smith and Eadington (1992) and Gunn (1994).

The above is a selected review of some of the conventional sources of the relationship between tourism management, the environment and ecotourism. I apologise for any omissions. Brevity precludes an analysis of wider source material. I would, however, like to make a couple of exceptions and draw attention to a superb novel—Day Trips to the Desert (Nicholson, 1993) 'a sort of travel book'. In addition to some interesting reflections, and contradictions, in the traveller/tourist relationships, he writes evocatively of the impact of the environment on himself, and a spiritualism similarly referred to by Ryan (1994). Also, I strongly recommend a short story, 'American dreams' (Carey, 1988)—a quirky parable of tourism impact on a small, rural town(ship).

Most people in the world don't 'go on holiday'. All tourism and not just the notion of eco-sustainable tourism is, in a sense, elitist. However, global tourist numbers will continue to rise as countries industrialise. 'But it seems inconceivable that tourists from these emerging economies will behave in the pseudo-sophisticated manner that some tourism commentators are suggesting should be the new mode of travel/tourist behaviour. It is naïve and unrealistic to expect otherwise' (Wheeler, 1992). These tourists will want as much as possible and at the least cost (to them) as possible—a philosophy (despite a smug smokescreen of self-righteousness) not a million miles away from that of our contemporary caring traveller.

Hypocrisy is probably one of our finest qualities, allowing a multitude of sins to pass by undetected and unpunished. It is a glib-edged, guilt-free passport to inconsistent behaviour. Let me use a couple of examples to illustrate our hypocrisy towards the 'environment'. A boy is on holiday, fishing off a pier, say at Blackpool. All morning he has had no luck—piscatorial-wise (though the fish are counting their blessings). Tired of the jovial 'caught anything yet?' enquiries of the strolling day-trippers, he decides to have his dinner—sandwiches. Whilst munching, it occurs to him to change his bait and, discarding the worm, he pinches some bread, from the sandwich, onto his hook. Again no luck—but still the friendly queries. He then decides on a significantly different tack, to keep the same bait but to change quarry. Rather than cast into the sea he allows his line to settle on the pier. Instant success—he hooks a seagull and reaps it in. Pandemonium ensues amongst the 'pier-group' onlooking deck-chair crew who, in disgust, run off instead for the police/RSPCA with a view to immediate retribution.

Now was the boy an ecotourist when he was fishing for fish? Yes, because he wasn't catching any! But what about the worm? (Incidentally the flippant advice to tourists to take only photographs, leave only footprints doesn't seem too eco-friendly if you happen to be a worm up for a little fresh air.) If he had caught fish would he have been eco-friendly? Does it depend on the species he caught, whether they are rare or plentiful, or whether his catch is eaten to sustain his family, thrown back (often, damaged, to die), given to his cat—which then dies—or what? Why don't the same criteria apply to catching the seagull as to fish and why the public outcry? Why does the Labour Party tacitly support angling but not 'blood sports'? We eat cows but not horses. Other nationalities eat dogs etc. etc. I don't know what the answers are but there are glaring inconsistencies in attitude and behaviour.

You decide to visit friends in the country. Driving at night a rabbit or hedgehog jumps out into the headlights (not that too many hedgehogs jump). If safe, you take evasive, 'eco'-action—you slow down to avoid the animal. In such circumstances few would deliberately kill. You continue your journey. Everyone is happy. And yet, take off the radiator grill or, even more apparent, simply check the windscreen and you see the thousand spattered insects that you have killed. You know you are doing this but have the capacity to ignore it; you don't take evasive 'eco'-action with this species, you don't slow down or cancel your journey. You modify your behaviour only when it suits, but not sufficiently to seriously inconvenience
EGOTOURISM, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

...travellers; codes of ethics for tourists, for government, and for tourism businesses. Codes for all—or, more likely, codeine for all. Codes and 'advice' have emanated from almost every conceivable source—from religious zealots, from professional and commercial organisations, from government bodies (see, for example, O'Grady (1981), Tourism Society (1991), WTTERC (1993), Tourism Concern (1991, 1992), Ecotourism Society (1993) and Center for Responsible Tourism (1993 etc.). But who really believes these codes are effective? I am pretty wary of platitudinous phrases like 'we are monitoring progress'. Has there been any progress—indeed, has there been any monitoring? Perhaps I am missing it and the answer itself is actually in code. Maybe, in appropriate parlance, I can't see the wood for the trees. The futility of these codes was best summed up by a friend's recent visit to Las Vegas—city of ten million lights. There was a sign in his brightly lit hotel bathroom that read, 'In the interests of energy conservation please switch off the light before leaving'.

Maybe my cynicism is misplaced. At the 'Tourism and the Environment Conference (1992, London) luminaries of the calibre of Krippendorf evidently felt that codes of practice were an essential, functional element in tourism management. His embracing of the codes of practice and recommendations given in recent UK official documentation—Tourism in the National Parks, A Guide to Good Practice (ETB, 1990), The Green Light (ETB, 1991a), Tourism and the Environment—Maintaining the Balance (ETB, 1991b)—was little short of euphoric. He strongly advocated their adoption worldwide (Krippendorf, 1993).

The belief seems to be that doing something in terms of furthering the ecotourism cause is better than doing nothing, that if we each do our bit then things will be better. 'Every step, no matter how small, adds to the sum of the overall responsible tourism effect' (Wood and House, 1991). I do not necessarily hold with this argument. It assumes, of course, that the step is in the right direction—that 'responsible' tourism effort is indeed the current way forward). Also, the trouble is that while, in our tourism activities, we are doing our little 'bit', in a supposedly correct direction, we are simultaneously (and it would appear inevitably) doing a 'lot' not quite so correctly—witness the rabbit/insect example.

A number of the supposedly eco-friendly holidays seem to be two-centre destinations with, in the case of photo-safaris one week being eco-friendly in the bush then one week recovering afterwards in pampered luxury on the beach—a sort of 'let us spoil you in unspoil Africa' (The Times, 1994) attitude. No doubt, for image purposes, the package as a whole would be deemed ec-friendly and statistically categorised under nature tourism.
of mammal voyeurism is going to replace the traditional industry? (I suppose if we are to believe that urban tourism is the answer to urban unemployment then we just might.) Isn't there a real danger that too many ecotourists eager to witness the whales off New Zealand, Chile or wherever are disrupting the mammals mating behaviour? Presumably this form of tourism must be 'managed correctly'—but then shouldn't all tourism be 'managed correctly'? Perhaps it should be; but I don't think it can be. Given the imbalance in world economies the ideals of sustainable principles (and of sustainable tourism) in a global arena are impossible to achieve.

Realistically I'm afraid it's more likely to be a case of 'we'll manage', as in 'we'll make do' rather than in the conventional management sense of 'managing', a pragmatic, ad hoc approach for what is essentially a fragmented ad hoc industry. I really don't see how we can have a tourism policy for such a diverse phenomenon as tourism—apart from, as I've suggested before, something along the lines of 'all those involved in tourism should behave nicely'.

The WITTERC differentiated between ecotourism and sustainable tourism potential, seeing, it would appear, ecotourism as a (possible) form of sustainable tourism. They argue though that ecotourism is not the only logical, sustainable response to the environmental impacts of travel and tourism. 'In fact ecotourism can only make a marginal, though important, contribution because of the limited nature of its market' (WITTERC, 1993). They believe that 'without careful management it is no more sustainable than other forms of tourism development and may cause more problems than it solves' (1993:11). With this I agree, though I have reservations about the concept of 'careful management'. Quite rightly they argue that the 'true target for better performance and a globally relevant contribution must be the core 95% of the world's Travel and Tourism' (1993:11). I am, however, amazed by their assertion that 'the hackneyed and insulting concept of mass tourism, as used in the 1960s and 1970s, has no relevance for growth in the next decade' (1993:10).

To me it has every relevance as we move towards, not away from, megamass tourism. Changing fashion in tanning terms and fears of melanoma may have a significant impact on patterns of tourism, but not I suspect on the volume. Similarly with anti-tourist terrorism: rather than forgo their holiday, tourists will just go to more friendly, more suitable places. Anyway isn't this pattern of dispersal reminiscent of spreading the tourist load that we have (mistakenly) been told is the answer to honeypot tourism?

I do not see why the onslaught of virtual reality should have the devastating effects on demand and tourism.
destinations that some predict (Gerken, 1993). The argument seems to be that, as a result of virtual reality, people will not bother going to places any more. Supposedly they will have ‘experienced it’ and therefore satisfied that element of the seen it/done it mentality without ever, physically, being in the destination. To me in the early 1950s the images of the National Geographic Magazine were the (then) equivalent of virtual reality. Later Zoo Quest, The Komodo Dragon, Hans and Lotte Hass, Armand and Michaela Dennis and Cousteau’s exploits in the Calypso were virtually virtual reality. Cinemascope, Surroundsound etc. were further stages in this continuum, as indeed, I suppose, are the current television travel programmes. But doesn’t each of these advances, as it reaches a wider and wider audience, further stimulate and encourage travel to these destinations rather than satisfying a desire from a ‘sedentary stance’. As far as I can see, without my head-set on, virtual reality will heighten the desire to travel rather than temper it.

Aren’t numbers of all tourist set to escalate—business, VFR, holiday, whatever? Ecotourism is not immune from this explosion, that, of course, estimates vary. On the contrary, according to Ryan, reporting on the paradoxical effects of green tourism in County Clare, Ireland ‘tourism is expected to double in size by the year 2000 and ecotourism is the fastest growing sector’ (Ryan, 1994). Spectacular growth is also predicted by Dirks in the new Journal, Eco-Traveler, ‘8 million people have subscribed to this mode of travel (i.e. eco-travel) and an additional 35 million are expected to do so in the next three years’ (Dirks, 1993).

There are no indications of where Dirks’ figures are from and how they were derived. Even so, they raise one of the conundrums of ecotourism. On the one hand, if, as the WTTREC suggest, ecotourism is a peripheral, marginal phenomenon, then what is all the fuss about? Against this, if it does have sufficient substance and volume to make a significant contribution to ‘tourism planning and management’ then how on earth (and where on earth?) is it to avoid the inherent problems associated with volume?

Actually to refer to this apparent dilemma as a conundrum is misleading as the ‘solution’ seems pretty straightforward. The fuss, the attention ecotourism is receiving is, in my opinion, totally out of proportion to its effectiveness as a salutary management tool. This, of course, is the precise reason for that attention—ecotourism’s impotence is its main attraction. The perfect political fob, it soothes consciences, demands no sacrifices and allows extended holiday choice while providing an ideal shield, doubling as a marketing ploy, for the tourism industry. Lurking behind a ‘management’ façade, green ecotourism is simply a policy of growth: witness ‘more people than ever before are beating a path to the Burren as green tourism takes a hold in the West of Ireland’ (Independent on Sunday, 18-9-1991).

Currently ecotourism seems to be neatly, and conveniently, sidestepping the critical issues of volume, of mass. As projections for increased participation in tourism, including ecotourism, are realised then the futility of eco/sustainable tourism will, I believe, become painfully apparent.

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Ecotourism. A Ruse by any Other Name (1994)

Progress in Tourism, Recreation and Hospitality Management.
Vol.6, 1994, pp.1-11
1 Ecotourism: a ruse by any other name

B. Wheeler

In a fascinatingly revealing article, Kaiser (1987) argued that those of us who have witnessed the evolution of ecological awareness in Europe over the last twenty years now acknowledge that American Indians, more than any other group of people, are seen and presented as models of an exemplary ecological attitude. They are regarded as the patron saints of a close relationship between man and the natural environment. One of the reasons for this seems to be

the widespread dissemination of a text that is regarded as a manifesto of ecological feeling and thinking – a speech, sometimes referred to as a letter, by Chief Seattle. While American Indians are seen by some to be ecological by birth, Chief Seattle is hailed as the prophet of ecological sentiment that is said to be lacking in Western industrialised nations (Kaiser 1987).

It would appear, however, that Chief Seattle's reputation as a great ecologist is, to say the least, somewhat exaggerated. So, too, I am convinced, is the enormous confidence now being lavished on ecotourism – surely tourism's biggest 'con-trick' yet. (Given what has happened in tourism over the years, this certainly is some accolade.) The plaudits being showered on eco/sustainable tourism emanate from sources that are either distressingly naive or disturbingly devious. In my opinion those naive but sincere advocates, speaking and acting with integrity, command respect even if their beliefs are misplaced. They enthusiastically gulp from the poisoned chalice of ecotourism. However, the majority, and overwhelming influential, players in the ecotourism game have a far more cunning, calculating 'bent'.

Though Seattle did give a speech in 1854, it was apparently bereft of ecological sentiment. According to Kaiser, the Seattle speech that captured the imagination of millions of latent environmentalists was not, in fact, written or delivered by Seattle in 1854 but was prepared, in 1970, as a film script for an environmental documentary, Home. The script was written by Perry, a lecturer at the University of Texas. Having read Seattle's original speech, Perry decided to prepare a new version. Using, by way of introduction, only very brief portions of the original speech, Perry then wrote his own ecological text. However, 'the actual film failed to give credit to Perry for his part in the script but gave credit to Seattle for what in fact he had never said or written' (Kaiser 1987). When shown nation-wide, the film had a significant impact. Viewers wrote in for
transcripts and these were sent out without making it clear that it was Perry's work, not Seattle's.

Some of the arguments lucidly and evocatively developed by Kaiser were reiterated in a later article with the (hardly original) title 'White man speaks with forked tongue.' This pointed out the 'environmental oratory of Chief Seattle of the Dwanish Indian tribe - anticipating the green movement by more than a century - has achieved in two decades the status of a kind of ecological Gettysburg address' (Lichfield 1992). It, too, argued that the Chief's best-known and best-loved sayings are bogus.

Some regard the authenticity of the speech as being, in a sense, irrelevant. If Seattle did not actually deliver the words, then, the argument goes, he should have done: 'If it wasn't written it should have been' (Lindholm 1975). As long as somebody did, and the message gets through and ecological awareness is growing then the minuita of source can be ignored. Lichfield's example of the American best-selling children's book, Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: a message from Chief Seattle (Jeffreys 1992), is testimony to this. Here debate about authenticity has not deflected from the (assumed) positive effect of bringing the green message to a young audience.

However, there is now a danger that this same reasoning will be used to justify the commercial tourism sector's use of ecotourism and the accompanying evocative, persuasive use of environmental images. While I can see the logic in this - that the industry might well be raising current environmental awareness - on the whole, this justification does not seem acceptable. This is simply because this procedure is, through massaging demand, simultaneously part of the process that is damaging the environment. The tourism industry is primarily concerned with its own interests - which essentially remain profit - and, despite protestation to the contrary, these are chiefly regarded as short-term. New destinations (often ecological havens) are continually being opened up and the spatial spread of tourism to vulnerable areas encouraged. The argument that, for its own survival, the industry must maintain the quality of its product is dubious and the supposed symbiosis between tourism and the environment is, I believe, on the whole, a fabrication (see Wheeler 1991; 1992; 1993a, b).

According to Lichfield (1992), the saga of Chief Seattle is not a literary fraud. 'It is a classic canard, the product of an error of attribution 20 years ago which has achieved near mythical status through the eagerness of environmentalists to embrace a romantic vision'. The distortion of ecotourism by the tourism industry - the deliberate, conscious marketing manipulation - cannot, I feel, be seen in such a generous light. No romantic vision this, rather it is a flagrant case of the big sell (Wheeler 1994). Such orchestration is not, of course, restricted to tourism. However, ecotourism's apparent concern, and claims for preserving the product (interpreted loosely as the environment), clearly make it particularly prone to, vulnerable to, and (in the case of Savognin) ripe for such marketing ploys.

While most companies and destinations involved in the marketing exploitation of the environment have carefully selected an array of suitable, acceptable natural images and well-chosen soft text in all their advertising material, Savognin, in Switzerland, has taken the opposite tack and (though still a variation on a theme) deliberately set out to shock. In its very own 'back to basics' campaign, in order to emphasise its ecofriendly credentials, they resort to a photograph of a cowpat, with the accompanying message, 'We want to make it clear that our holiday resort has remained a true real village' (Gmuir 1993). The ensuing furor and the spin-off attention it has received (witness a mention here) have, to many, deemed the campaign a success.

By design this is, not of course, typical of the tourism ecocardiogent genre. Much more common are the mushrooming examples such as the 'Natural Habitat' strategy for Bermuda (The Times 1994) and the 'Heritage, wildlife and vegetation are zealously preserved' approach of the television advertisement for Turkey (shown on Channel Four on 15 January 1994). Doubt raised by this genre are symptomatic of wider ethical issues that riddle tourism in general and ecotourism in particular.

In the sphere of ecotourism much immanent debate is likely to revolve around the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the glut of codes of ethics held in such high esteem by many advocates of ecotourism principles. These codes of good practice and behaviour are continually being championed as proof of progress (see, for example, Krippendorf 1992). Wheeler (Chapter 5, this volume) cites them as evidence of an organisation appreciating that ethical considerations are part of business decision-making. Wild, too (Chapter 2, this volume), briefly mentions codes of ethics. However, without the means to enforce guidelines, surely they are only literally paying lip-service to the problem? To be honest, it seems a little absurd to argue, as Wheeler seems to suggest, that to be truly effective we need further guidelines to enforce guidelines. Is guidelines not merely a euphemism for prevarication and procrastination, a substitute for effective action?

The same anxieties of image, prestige and status that bedevil ecotourism are, I believe, endemic to the notion of sustainable tourism in general. There is the ubiquitous desire to be politically correct in rhetoric if not in deed. Bramwell and Lane, editors of the new Journal of Sustainable Tourism are aware, but nevertheless appear rather cavalier and somewhat dismissive, of the danger: 'Waldstein (1991) noted that all politicians (and all large corporations) now claim to be passing pro-environment policies. He warns of the "limousine environmentalism" increasingly common in the USA where lip-service masks a lack of positive actions' (Bramwell and Lane 1993). I say 'somewhat dismissive' because, despite acknowledging this fundamental problem - 'it is easy to discuss sustainability. Implementation is the problem' - (Bramwell and Lane 1993) - the overall impression is that they are extremely optimistic that these flaws in sustainable tourism can be rectified.

A similar vein runs through urban tourism. Just as egotourism is a more appropriate nomenclature for ecotourism, so urbane tourism is surely a more appropriate terminology for urban tourism. High-profile, elegant, suave and sophisticated in their grandeur (for example, opera houses,
We are familiar with the use of derogatory terminology deriding mass tourism – herds, flocks, hordes, invasion, etc. – and with its counterpart, the soft, ego-boosting linguistic licence that warmly embraces ecotourism. Unintentionally however, the title of Mackay’s article ‘The eco-tourists take over’, might be a watershed. Inadvertently it perhaps bears (bears?) a portent – that the mantle of invader should perhaps be passed on to the ecotourist. Maybe future headlines will read ‘Ecotourists are on the march’ or ‘An array of ecotourists about to embark’. Such military imagery brings to mind Butler’s brilliant paper ‘Alternative tourism: pious hope or Trojan horse?’ (Butler 1990). His warnings appear to have gone unheeded. Tourism, often in the guise of ecotourism, has invaded previously impregnable areas. The ecotourists are now well and truly out from the confines of the horse’s belly and are up and running – with predictable results. Recent warnings to local councils over ‘starry-eyed, simplistic sustainability’ (Ridley 1994) will no doubt also be ignored in the rush for a politically correct, immediate sustainability fix.

As government bodies, the tourism industry and the ‘concerned’ pseudo-traveller search for an acceptable type of tourism, the apparent gift horse of ecotourism seems ideal. Certainly, it is not one that is being looked in the mouth. Unable, or unwilling, to resist, to them ecotourism might well be a boon. ‘Transparent’ might be more appropriate, for though ecotourism suits these parties’ short-term objectives, the true consequences of ecotourism are being ignored. Although so much depends on the interpretation of ‘acceptable’, it is a case of Troy, Troy again.

The seemingly immutable conundrum of numbers, of the craving for status/prestige and the concomitant dilemma of access or excess, continues to be the bane of tourism, tourism impact and tourism policy. To an extent, the mixed emotions generated by the recent ascents of Everest serve as both testament and litmus paper to this. Boardman described Everest as the ‘amphitheatre of the ego’ (Shackley 1993). The craving for adventure and achievement expressed through the desire to conquer Everest has led to increased pressure, with obvious results. According to Beaumont (1993):

The last four decades have not been kind to poor old Everest. The gentlemen climbers who courted her so vigorously – but respectfully – for the three decades before the first ascent on 29 May 1953 have given way to suitors who have dealt more rudely with her reputation.

Another commentator contends that ‘Climbers are becoming increasingly competitive as the number of “firsts” is reduced and often exhibit a single minded determination to get to the summit whatever the cost, whether to the environment or to accompanying people’ (Shackley 1993). Ironically, Bonington has pointed out that the image of Everest as a giant litter dump has had some positive financial implications. ‘Expeditions are now seeking sponsorship on “clean-and-climb” tickets utilizing the environment as a fund raising gimmick’ (Shackley 1993).
No less than 38 mountaineers reached the summit of the peak on the same day – 12 May 1993. The predictable reaction from commentators is that the experience has been diluted, debased by becoming 'popular'. The degree to which the cache of Everest has apparently been eroded can be measured by the following UK football report: 'The top of the First Division is beginning to resemble Everest, so many teams have visited the summit this season' (Bradfield 1994). Nevertheless, this 'deterioration' of the experience, of the product, has not (apparently) diminished the actual demand for 'adventurers' to go there. According to experts, there is a need for codes of practice to be implemented, restriction of permits and a fee structure to be adopted in order to ameliorate the problem (see Shackley 1993).

Now here is where I have another problem with eco/sustainable tourism. When we are looking at sustainability just what exactly is it we are (hoping) to sustain? Are we just maintaining the status quo and fossilising the situation, or are we really aiming for that nebulous (h)eaven - sustainable growth? We are repeatedly being told that the 'product' must be upgraded or at least maintained in quality, otherwise 'the visitor experience' deteriorates so it will lose its market. Simultaneously we are also being informed that increasing pressure is continuously deteriorating the product. It seems that as the quality of the product fails, demand nevertheless remains buoyant, albeit from a different market.

That this new market is somehow deemed inferior seems to be at the heart of this 'quality' debate. But surely, is this not simply what works such as Veblen (1970), Turner and Ash (1975) and Pearce (1983) have been telling us for years?

Veblen's conspicuous consumption is at the hub of the eco/sustainable debate:

... this expression, this desire to travel, to go on holiday, to go abroad is here to stay. I reckon one of the basic reasons stems from snobbery. It is here where we show our true colours – or rather colour, green. It is this intrinsic green trait, rather than an environmentally-induced one, that will continue to have the most powerful influence on consumer holiday choice. Conspicuous consumption, winnowed out of the world, keeps the green-eyed serpent uncoiled as we continually try to better ourselves holiday wise (Wheeler 1993b).

For the ensuing chapters in this section the editors have selected a range of contributions on ecotourism. Gilbert and Penda provide a brief background to the concepts of sustainability before adopting a case-study approach. Wild, too, looks at some of the issues raised by Gilbert and Penda, while also probing wider, related issues of concern. Her arguments are backed up by a splendid bibliography. Wheeler, in her contribution, explores some of these ethical aspects of tourism. She raises the question of 'ethical dissonance' – the conflict between what managers believe and what they actually practice. She also refers to Hall's (1989) point that money, ego, information and ignorance often prevent people acting ethically. (So does this account for the hypocrisy of sustainable ecotourism?) Education is seen by many as the way forward for nurturing a 'better' tourism. Dream on. While Wheeler's article casts a brighter glow on this, my intuitive view is that 'ethics' still plays very little part in tourism training (which encompasses the majority of tourism courses) and is only present, if varying degrees, in tourism education.

Norris and Wall contribute a thoughtful, stimulating assessment of gender issues in tourism. With an informative contextual setting which relates gender to development and leisure issues, they explore a range of current gender issues in tourism. If, they argue, gender issues are not an integral part of tourism impact investigations, then such studies are incomplete. If we are seriously discussing notions of cultural sustainability, then surely gender issues have to be fully explored? They also point out, correctly, that:

A drawback of much of the literature is that many generalisations have been made concerning tourism and its effects, without a clear specification of the type and stage of tourism, and overlooking the importance of regional specificity and the dynamics of culture.

However, while this statement refers to impacts the same, of course, is true of the 'solutions' in the form of eco/sustainable tourism. Their comments reinforce the obvious disparity between what should be and what actually is while side-stepping how the dilemma can be effectively resolved.

Rom and his highly commendable, balanced chapter, clearly has considerably more faith and provides not only salient positive points but also an excellent review and bibliography for those wishing to take this debate further. He does, however, recognise the need for a quantum change of attitude among the main protagonists in the economic growth/sustainability/tourism and lifestyle debate. Furthermore, he sees success only if tourism can modify its obsession with expansionist growth (some tail order this). When Romer does confront reality he points out that Brazil and Agenda 21 mean little, if anything, and terms such as 'sustainability' mean all things to all people. He makes the excellent point of the danger of being caught in the quagmire of jargon and debate – 'surely it is the philosophy and not the semantics that is important'. Unfortunately the philosophy is itself somewhat flexible – again all things to all people.

Wheeler, in her chapter on ethics, also discusses, though hardly confronts, the same stumbling block of 'what is' rather than the ideal of 'what should be'. She talks in terms of an ethical approach 'that applies the theoretical concepts to business realities'. I am still at a loss to see how this will be achieved – though Weier's example of Australian nature-based tour operators, quoted in Wild (Chapter 2, this volume), does offer hope. Similarly Gilbert and Penda believe that 'Responsible tourism is an easier option to implement than alternative tourism'. We will see.

These authors do not share, and are not saddened by, my despondency as regards ecotourism issues. They write from a more positive stance.
While I cannot wholly support their ideas, the best I can manage is to hope that I am wrong and they are right in their considered optimism.

The parameters of what precisely ecotourism is have never been clear. They are becoming increasingly blurred as it becomes basically little more than a marketing vehicle, a green light for development. Ecotourism is just another form of tourism – a ruse by any other name. These surely are the realities of ecotourism – an altruistic, even noble, concept hijacked for commercial and material purposes (Wheeler 1994). Currently on board a bandwagon, many proponents of ego-eco/sustainable tourism will soon discover – if they do not already know it – that they have been taken for a ride by a stampeding white elephant.

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UK FOCUS

Should barriers to tourism's growth be put up or taken down? This is a long-running debate that has been picked up by Virginia Bottomley in her new role as Heritage Secretary. She wants nothing to stand in the way of the free market. BRIAN WHEELER, Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham, questions this non-interventionist approach, a belief she shares with British tourism industry leaders.

Last November, for the first time, the CBI included tourism as a topic of debate at their annual conference. Actually, debate proved to be a misnomer, a somewhat misleading euphemism for political dogma – particularly from the main speaker, Virginia Bottomley. Her emphasis was unashamedly one of expansion and growth for tourism, with minimum government interference to hinder this – “we must remove all possible barriers to tourism growth.” She, naturally, extolled the virtues of the tourism industry – jobs, income, opportunities for all (the usual suspects, my words not hers) then, promising to champion the industry in Whitehall she, tellingly, launched into a vitriolic attack on the Social Chapter.

“Our opposition to the Social Chapter and minimum wage is part of our general campaign against regulation and unnecessary burdens on business, burdens that weigh particularly heavily on the small firm that largely make up the tourism and hospitality industry. We need to remove the barriers to tourism growth. Just consider what the Social Chapter would entail. The Part-Time Work Directive, the Parental Leave Directive, the Works Council Directive, all guaranteed to increase costs, reduce competitiveness and destroy jobs. These threaten to cost companies £2 billion every year when the tourist industry is seeking to recapture market share. The Social Chapter, as sure as night follows day, would reduce that share and give our jobs to others” (News Release, Department of National Heritage 14/11/95). Just who these others are was not specified. But if we are to follow Mrs Bottomley’s logic they couldn’t possibly be our competitors who, by adopting the Social Chapter have presumably already increased their costs, reduced their competiveness, destroyed their jobs and priced themselves out of the market.

Mrs Bottomley acknowledged the need for measures to combat poverty, and for those on low pay to have a chance to increase their earning power. But she argued, “you don’t achieve that by specifying wages employers cannot afford, and workers won’t receive, without their jobs or those of their colleagues being sacrificed.” Just how it is actually achieved was, again, not specified.

The document CBI National Conference Session Papers provided background information to contextualise the tourism debate. Five questions for debate were highlighted.

- How can the British tourism industry achieve a higher growth rate than the European average?
- What can be done to grow Britain’s tourism product (sic)?
- Are there unnecessarily regularity and tax handicaps facing tourism businesses?
- What more can be done to improve skills levels in the industry?
- How can standards of quality and performance be improved to bring more business up to the level of the best?

Initially, I thought the phrase ‘to grow Britain’s product’ was a misprint, but no, on page 20 the document states ‘the CBI is working together with other bodies such as the Department of National Heritage and the British Tourist Authority/English Tourist Board to grow the tourism industry and enhance its competitive position’.

As far as I can see the environment is mentioned only once in this background data. Significantly, and more damningly, it is the context in which it is raised that I find disturbing. The CBI’s Tourism Action Group has also made a major input to the European Commission’s Green Paper on Tourism arguing that the sector needs a supportive environment in which to prosper, and that, to date, the Commission has not given adequate attention to the impact of regulation on tourism. My understanding of this is that it is the business environment rather than the wider perception of the environment – physical, cultural, social, economic etc. that is being adopted here. Maybe I am wrong, and the quality of British attractions mentioned earlier in the document incorporates environmental issues into it, I don’t know. Nevertheless, the overall impression is given by the literature and by the conference debate that as far as the government and the CBI are concerned the main priority is for development and growth of tourism. The social well-being of those employed in the sector is apparently of less importance. At least they have a job – and the approach is, any job’s better than none. While there might be...
some credece in this, there are obvious, worrying connotations.

If the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTCC) initiative - the Green Globe - is anything to go by, minimum restrictive legislation is also the name of the game in the wider arena of international tourism. Here, business interests appear to be advocating the same message, 'no outside regulation, we can regulate ourselves'. Paraphrasing the immortal Mandy Rice Davies: "they would say that wouldn't they". This isn't meant to be a diatribe railing at the WTCC. What they do, they do very well, indeed excellently. The quality of their high profile publicity is what one would expect from such a professional body. Expertly co-ordinated to get their message across to their target market, they are extremely successful. But is there really any need to have another world organisation encouraging more tourism growth? Whose interest are they acting in when fostering expansion of tourism? Are they acting altruistically for, say, emerging countries who supposedly gain so much from tourism, I think not. For the tourist? Well hardly, unless they also happen to be share holders. For themselves and their immediate interests? We're just a little nearer the mark here.

We must now all be familiar with the long running, 'long-run' arguments, emanating from the industry that the tourism product is the environment; tourism depends on the environment for its continuing success; therefore, it is in tourism's interest to preserve and enhance the environment. Easy, long-run self-interest and eloquently expressed by Martin Brackenbury, a director of Thomson's: 'it's nothing to do with altruism...it's entirely to do with self-interest'. (Financial Times, 24.8.92)

Most seem to accept this line of reasoning, the debate increasingly focusing on the optimum means of preserving/enhancing the venerated Golden Goose - the product, the environment. As usual, fundamental questions remain unanswered. What is successful? What is the long-run? Is the environment all embracing? I am not convinced that the tourism product is synonymous with environment, certainly not just the physical environment. I'm not even so sure of the apparently straight forward logic of tourism's self interest in preserving its product in the long run. Isn't London still our top tourism attraction, with increasing numbers of visitors, despite recent rises in crime figures (mugging) suggesting that aspects of the environment there might be deteriorating, and isn't Blackpool, hardly the most salubrious nor sustainable of resorts in some green-eyed observers opinions, sustaining its position as one of our top resorts. In fact as Andy Lyon of the Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Arts so rightly points out, "the Goose is alive and well and living in Blackpool".

Meanwhile the means to an end - the regulation or self-regulation debate - has reached something as an impasse. Entrenched in the philosophy of (relatively) free-market forces, those in favour of self-regulation rely on old arguments. The resort from advocates of a more interventionist approach, equally entrenched in their/or their own views, are also in danger of taking on a rather jaded hue. Old chestnuts like "in the long run we are all dead", "the proof of the pudding etc." and "so far so bad" are all employed. It is unlikely, despite dialogue, that these fundamentally opposed tenets can be brought together. A Herculean task, indeed. The basic difference comes down to one of philosophy. Personally I just don't happen to share the tourism industry and their formal representation's aversion to increased government involvement and legislation as regards business ethics and enforced environmental control. As global tourism continues to grow, the impasse clearly favours the non-interventionist approach.

It is easy for critics such as myself to point an accusing finger at the industry, claiming it is using sustainability to its own ends. However, we must always remember that we are also far from above reproach. Our own actions are, in their own way, open to similar accusations. Are we using sustainability to further our own interests too? Is it simply a matter of convenience that our interests happen to coincide with what we think is "just"?

We apologise for omitting the name of the author, Lisa Eales, Wiltshire Downs Project Officer, from the last issue's UK Focus article on the Surrey Hills Visitor Project.
Here We Go, Here We Go, Here We Go Eco (1997)

In: Tourism and Sustainability, Principles to Practice, Stabler, M (ed) CAB Information, Wallingford, 1997, pp.39-51
Here We Go, Here We Go, Here We Go Eco
Brian Wheeler
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK

Perhaps, first, the title should be explained. Originally it had been Here We Go, Here We Go Eco, Here We Go Echo. This was on the basis that the day the abstract was being written, the author received a letter from a Turkish student asking to be informed of all that was known about echotourism, which caused confusion, until it was noticed that it was addressed to Brian Wheeler. However, it was then thought that maybe echo might be inappropriate, not because of any cuddly animal connotations of Echo and the Bunnymen, but because it would be echoing the same points made five years ago. This, it was considered, might put a lot of people off, which led to the dropping of the echo. However, since the paper was submitted the author is not so sure. Simply, and the word is used deliberately, because issues raised by critics of ecotourism over five years ago have yet to be actually addressed. Some claim that since then the debate has now moved on. Well, maybe it has but in so doing it has avoided, rather than answered, the basic problems and dilemmas of ecotourism, in particular the conundrum of numbers and the ego trap (Wheeler, 1993a). Echoes of the past should come back to haunt, but do not appear to.

These diversionary tactics were brought home at a recent sustainable tourism weekend forum held for Voluntary Service Overseas delegates, where the author was asked to speak, ably partnered by Melvyn Pryer from the Birmingham College of Food Tourism and Creative Studies, against sustainable tourism and against Bernard Lane, well respected proponent of sustainability and sustainable tourism. Bernard, in an uncharacteristically dismissive phrase, described critical views of sustainable tourism as being 'simplistic' and, by inference, worthless. As a critic, this very simplicity, far
from being a damning indictment, can be seen as a virtue. Simple commonsense surely screams that sustainability is a completely futile exercise.

The possibility of achieving sustainability in general, and sustainable tourism in particular, is as close, or likely, as the UK is to becoming John Major’s classless society. There are no sensible moves (the People’s Charter laughingly springs to mind here) towards the latter, though maybe it is, in fact, being approached but only in the sense of a society lacking class or style. Attempts to achieve the former are little more than platitudes.

During a paper on biodiversity at the 1995 World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism (Bahamas), it was, as usual, graphically pointed out how many species were being eradicated, man being the culprit. Then, as the clincher, the speaker cited an example where (paraphrasing) ‘only last week we had a sad case when a turtle choked to death on a plastic bag that had carelessly been thrown into the sea. The poor turtle had mistaken it for a jellyfish’. Among the delegates there were audible sighs of grief and, maybe, even a few tears – an appalling response. Do not be misled, the author is not insensitive to the plight of these creatures, their depletion, nor the frightening speed of events; far from it. It is just that one abhors and rails against the age-old fact that if something is nice and attractive it is nurtured, while those of an ugly appearance never get equal attention. Beauty is only skin deep. There is much to be gleaned here in the eco-mass tourism debate and the superficial conclusions often drawn. It always depends on how one looks at the situation/problem, from what perspective and to what depth of analysis. Had the delegates themselves been jellyfish out for an afternoon sojourn round the bay, they would be pretty pleased that the turtle had, in fact, eaten the bag rather than themselves. They would have gratefully thanked their new, man-made camouflage, and also noted that, in future, only to go out for a cruise round when there were plastic bags about. The incident could be seen as symbiotic relationship: man and jellyfish together outsmarting the turtle. This is not just a jocular irrelevance, it is a serious consideration – as was the absurdity of the ‘dolphin debate’, also witnessed at the conference (see Wheeler, 1996a).

Two incidents on recent trips to the Amazon make one question further just what ‘being at one with nature’ actually means. The author can draw here on an unpublished paper, ‘Eco/ecotourism. A muddled model’ prepared for the Tourism Down Under Conference in New Zealand, 1994. Whilst in Brazil, the author had the privilege of being taken out by caboclos, night fishing – the ‘noble savage’ poised, spear in hand hanging on the bow, with the alien being (the author) ensconced in (it must be said in a rather fetching red) life-jacket, apprehensive, to the rear. With deft, graceful expertise fish were speared and hoisted, flapping and wheezing (the fish not the fisherman) into the canoe. In the midst of this wonderful, humbling experience the mood was somewhat broken when one of the numerous flying fish, flitting harmlessly over the surface around the canoe, apparently chose to change direction and, in the complete blackness, hit the alien squarely between the eyes. He was, to say the least, alarmed at this unexpected juncture. Having recovered his composure, his first reaction was to find the unfortunate fish, which was still floundering where it had fallen between his feet, and to return it alive to the water. As he was attempting this rescue mission, the torch revealed the other spearred, dead fish to the front of the boat. The irony of his futile attempt of being ‘kind to animals’ again hit him straight between the eyes.

The second event occurred on returning to the hut one night. There was an intruder present, a huge, white spider on the wall. It was ignored until the first sound of it scurrying along the wall proved too much: the guide’s assistance was sought. Being on an eco-friendly holiday one was reassured when the guide casually picked up a brush and returned to the hut. On spying the said dinner plate on the wall he proceeded to clot and flatten the unfortunate insect with one blow. It was then realized that the spider’s white appearance had in fact been the result of a sack which, ripped open by the blow, disgorged a hoard of very much alive baby spiders that cascaded around the room. It was a seminal moment: doubtless a sign, but one is still not at all sure quite what of.

An important point made recently was one raised by Buhalis and Fletcher who stated:

The environmental damage so often discussed in articles relates only to the direct and indirect impacts of tourism. The full environmental cost of tourism development like the full economic activity can only be truly estimated if the direct and indirect impacts are assessed. If tourism development is ‘sold’ to destinations on the basis of its strong backward linkage with other sectors of the economy then the environmental damage emanating from their supporting industries, as a result of tourism activity must also be brought into the equation.

(Buhalis and Fletcher, 1995, p. 3)

The authors are referring to physical perspectives of ‘environment’. If environmental is taken to be all embracing, incorporating social, cultural, physical, etc., and if, where appropriate, one adds ‘induced’ into their statement, then surely Buhalis and Fletcher highlight an absolutely crucial point in the sustainability debate. It is not tenable to argue that the benefits (usually economic) of tourism are derived from direct, indirect and induced linkages without acknowledging the corollary that is: too are the costs. They go on to recognize that the principles (of sustainability) should also be applied to those enterprises indirectly related to tourism which support and supply the tourism sector (Buhalis and Fletcher, 1995, p. 17).

This is an obvious line of reasoning that is often, conveniently, overlooked by both hard line tourism industry practitioners and indeed by many advocates of sustainable tourism. Why is this so? The mainline tourism industry might argue that it would be impossible to expect all aspects of the tourism industry to demonstrate exemplary green sustainable credentials and...
therefore, in a sense, irrelevant to what they can be expected to achieve as an attempt to put their own house in order. Fair enough until this is looked at in a little more depth: doing so quickly exposes the flaws of sustainability.

British Airways (BA) continues to be heralded as a worthy example of a company endeavouring to achieve green respectability. To their credit, they have appointed a scientist of the calibre of Hugh Somerville rather than a public relations person to lead their environmental unit—a point which was overlooked in the clamour to criticize BA at the Commonwealth Institute Conference on Sustainability in November 1995. Under Dr Somerville positive action has been attempted. To debate the pros and cons of this here is not appropriate. British Airways is taken as a convenient example in a wider context to try to make a point.

According to recent press reports, British Airways has joined up with Disney as the number one airline for EuroDisney (Times, 15th February 1996). Nothing wrong with this, making, it would appear, economic sense. No doubt some of the profits generated can be ploughed back into the environmental unit. But just a minute. Are not Disney being criticized (rightly or wrongly) for culturally undermining France's heritage—first with EuroDisney itself and now more recently with their sugary version of Hugó's Hunchback of Notre Dame? (Also, there is the question of course of Pocahontas.) Is not cultural integrity part of the sustainability gambit, one of the codes of practice often cited? Therefore, how can British Airways, now in cahoots with Disney, presumably for economic reasons, be deemed sustainable? Observe reasoning it may be, but reasoning which is important in the sustainable tourism argument has any credence—which, of course, it has not. If sustainability does not cover all aspects of a tourism operation it cannot be sustainable in the true sense of the word, and as seems obvious, it cannot possibly cover all aspects. Or is one only considering the physical environment and, therefore, excluding cultural heritage from the tourism product?

Some of the proponents of sustainability, it is suspected, recognize that this all embracing approach would be expecting too much. Choosing, by default, not to enter into the fray, they ignore it. But is it expecting too much? Not if sustainable tourism is the supposed goal. If this notional dream is what is desired then all tourism, inclusive of its wide web of linkage, must fully adhere to the nebulous principle of sustainable tourism. If it does not then, significantly, it cannot be aiming for sustainable tourism. This same selective, rather than comprehensive, interpretation of sustainability is also evident if the subject is approached from a spatial perspective.

Exhortations are heard to consider the world as a global village, to think global, act local. An issue of concern with eco/egotourism then is which particular environment is being considered—the global, the local or both.

The ecotourist (and the supposedly eco-friendly firm), so concerned to ostentatiously behave sensitively in the vulnerable destination environment is not generally so concerned about the danger to the overall environment they cause in actually reaching that destination. Here convenience takes precedence over conscience—a car to the airport and a jumbo jet are hardly paradigms of virtue in the environmental stakes.

(Wheeler 1993a, p. 125)

Even at the loosely defined 'destination' this dichotomy over when, and where, the tour and the tourist can be deemed eco-friendly remains vague, a vexed issue. Take a trip to Cuba—'The Green Lizard' for example. On arriving in Havana, from the pampered luxury of the Hotel Nacional or the Ingletarre, the concerned ecotourist can book a trip to the eco-resort of Guama, then, as part of the package, travel on to the culturally appealing Trinidad, a World Heritage Site recently restored to its former glory with UNESCO funding, followed by 'R & R' on the sands of Varadero, before returning refreshed, to the capital. Back in Havana, one can then reflect on just which part of the completed internal trip through the island one actually was the mythical ecotourist. Maybe ecotourists can fool themselves that it was while strolling through the splendid streets of Trinidad, taking in the cultural wonders, careful to be sensitive 'travellers', at one with the 'natives', while their coach was parked literally inches from someone's open front window, the noisy engine (left on to ensure air-conditioned comfort on return to their cocooned transport) incessantly belching out toxic fumes. Incidentally at Varadero, in their high-rise beach hotel (which, of course, is 'naturally' out of bounds to Cubans—employees apart), they can switch on their TV, and be a little confused by the promotion video on the tourism channel, Sol, extolling the virtues of Cuba as a haven, a sanctuary for wildlife, while simultaneously and somewhat alarmingly also actively promoting it as a prolific venue for game fishing and hunters.

The example of Cuba is, certainly, not an isolated one. The problem of just which part of the holiday can be deemed eco-friendly is, if anybody cares to think about it, a common one. Perhaps the difficulties are most apparent and transparent with the growing trend towards two centre holidays.

A number of the supposedly eco-friendly holidays seem to be two-centre destinations with, in the case of photo-safaris one week in the bush being supposedly eco-friendly followed by one week recovering afterwards in pampered luxury on the beach—a sort of 'let us spoil you in unspoilt Africa'. No doubt, for image purposes, the package as a whole would be deemed eco-friendly and statistically categorised under nature tourism (always a safe bet, politically).

(Wheeler, 1994, p. 65)

Take another example. A recent advertisement for Iberian Airways highlights the unsullied nature of the venue, the Amazon, while stressing the luxury the traveller can expect getting to and from the destination. The caption reads 'Totally unsullied in Latin America, totally spoilt on Iberia'. The
advent then includes 'The outstanding natural beauty of the towering Andes ... the magnificence of the mighty Amazon ... the enigmatic Aztec carvings', phrases which are juxtaposed with the 'unashamed luxury of First Class Business Class'. In Amazonia itself there is a proliferation, a mushrooming of ecotourism offerings, etc. Visitors from Europe often recover from 'roughing it' with a week in the rapidly developing resort of the North East Coast, or stretched out on Copacabana for a few 'daze'. Even those tourists flying direct to the Amazon from the States will usually have several days acclimatising in a luxury hotel in Manaus, the Tropicana, for example. Here they can be picked up and dropped off, at their convenience, before or after their jungle jaunt.

Cohn's 'environmental bubble' has been well-developed elsewhere (Cohen, 1972). However, an interesting slant on it was given during discussions with an extremely helpful and interesting Mr Mameud of the Anavilhanas Creek Lodge, Amazonia, on the Brazilian stand at the World Travel Market 1994. She firmly believed that for travellers really to appreciate the beauty of the Amazon they had to be in 'good health and safety'. To this end, the argument was that they had to be accommodated in accommodation where they were comfortable and 'at one with their own nature' (i.e. feeling at home) before they could venture out into the jungle, to be one with nature there. Initially, these observations were dismissed as the usual smokescreen to disguise the 'big sell' but, on reflection, perhaps the arguments were genuinely valid and there is some truth in this after all. Certainly they were given further credibility when the same reasoning was evident, in a similar eco-context, in a recent television programme highlighting the filming of both brown and white bears in the Canadian wilderness. The film crew 'had hot showers, a cooking tent and lived in relative luxury in remote spots. We needed the comfort so we could work well' (Turner, 1994). And we know the significance of travel to tourism (Boorstin, 1962).

Returning to the exhortations to 'think global, act local'. Is there any real substance in this as a solution to tourism's problems? The phrase is somewhat easier on the ear than 'think macro, act micro' but is nevertheless just as clichéd, futile and flawed. The problem with this 'look after your pennies and the pounds will look after themselves' mentality, leaving aside the suspicion that the actual currency is being continually devalued, is that in tourism planning it is not feasible automatically to transfer policies applicable at a local level to the wider arena. This is simply because successful ecotourism policies seem inevitably to be based on the restriction of numbers at the local level. At the macro level the number of tourists is rapidly escalating and doubtless will continue to do so. So how can we act local, in essence applying restrictions, be the solution to the burgeoning macro problem?

Also at a micro level, examples of supposed sustainable tourism are being highlighted. This is taken as being a plus factor, even though this is not the case on a global scale. For every 'good' sustainable project and practice (if such a thing exists) there may be as many as 30 examples of 'bad' sustainable tourism, created under the auspices and patronage of sustainable tourism. Therefore, the overall effect of sustainable tourism is negative not positive. The response to this, of course, is exhortation to eliminate any rogue practices. As if this were possible.

The crux of the issue lies in selfishness and incessant demand for 'more', aptly summed up in an understatement from 'Mr Personality', Graham Kelly, Chief Executive of the Football Association - 'There is a problem of impatience in our culture at all levels' (Kelly, 1995, p. 25). It is this desire for more - now, immediately, if not sooner - that completely dominates contemporary society, and, specifically here, tourism demand. Two examples illustrate this assertion.

According to a recent article on game fishing, there is a new dawn that is not driven by superpower overuse and politics. Now, all anglers, whether American, British, German or Japanese are coming together. There is nothing now to stop progress towards a new and infinitely more exciting horizon. Bhutan, Ladakh, Nepal and Tibet are now open for the game fisher, burning with the spirit of adventure (Bailey, 1994).

There are obvious strong parallels here with the spread of ecotourism. It is this overwhelming desire for more, for new horizons and the equal determination on the part of the tourist industry to satisfy and further fuel this demand (as long there is enough money to be made from it), which means ecotourism is never going to succeed in being anything other than a niche market based on the standard business motive of short term profit. Bailey's idea of 'all' is, irrespective of his caveat, narrowly limited to a superpower perspective and their anglers' immediate interests. His view that there is nothing to stop their progress is so heavily laden with a value judgement. So, too, can it be contended, are the ecotourists, who, when it really comes down to it, adopt a similar 'What is it for me now' attitude.

Under the appropriate banner 'Sign of the Times' a biting, dry article highlights the superficiality of the 'do gooder' factor in aspects of contemporary youth travel. After outlining some of the realities of the hedonistic 'new Grand Tour', Llewellyn Smith (1996) succinctly exposes the 'bogus' claims that 'it is to help those less fortunate than oneself and in the process to become a better and wiser person'. She continues 'strangely, one seldom hears of 18 year olds, finding themselves by helping out in a home for battered wives in the suburbs of Leicester' and concludes by quoting 'most of my friends could tell you everything about Guatemala City ... but none of them has a clue what's going on in a council estate in Hull'. The sentiments of her article are readily transferable to the superficiality of eco-/sustainable tourism, where philanthropic aspirations mask hard-nosed, immediate self-interest (Wheeler, 1993b).

This brings to mind an excellent quotation that captures the true spirit of
the eco-/sustainability sham. 'Anyone can sign up for sustainable development so long as it requires no specific commitment to do anything that will threaten their material interests' (Blowers, 1994, p. 2). One might also wish to question just what precisely sustainability actually is. There is obviously room for considerable variation in its interpretation (and hence manoeuvre) here. Another quotation, this time from a US Military spokesperson, sums it all up: 'in introducing a new computerized, digital helmet, he said 'This one is more lethal, more sustainable' (CNN, 1994).

The ostentatious need for travellers to go ethnic is apparent in their desires, when abroad, to patronize local restaurants and use local transport. It is not strange at home they eschew public transport and have probably never ventured into a transport cafe? They are not travellers: they, like most visitors, are tourists. Similarly the advertising showing the less adventurous, but equally self-deluding, intrepid explorer, settling out on a railcard trip of Europe, being given a mobile phone by her father, reinforces Boorstin's assertion that when the traveller's risks are insurable he or she has become a tourist (Boorstin, 1962).

Despite glaring counterforces, there are continual exhortations on the need to adopt a holistic approach to the subject of tourism development, planning and sustainability. The spell, and spelling, of this national ideal has always been intriguing. Would not 'wholeistic', all incorporating, be more suitable? The holistic argument championed in support of sustainability ways, as the spelling may suggest, seems to have a gaping (black?) hole in it, down which that so insignificant dimension, reality, invariably seems to disappear. The dream of sustainability and sustainable tourism will remain just that so long as, to all intents and purposes, it continues effectively to ignore the rather powerful pressures generated by short term materialistic desires of a large proportion of the world's ever increasing population. Some advocates of sustainable tourism recognize this as the root cause of the problem. Yet they choose to ignore it in their search for the Holy Grail. Holy? A truly holistic approach would be one that embraces realism. Sustainable tourism unfortunately fails, at the practical level, even to acknowledge it.

Brief mention has been made here of just how Utopian tourism sustainability is to be reached. As pointed out in a recent short paper ('Wheeler, 1996b) business interests appear to be advocating the message 'No outside regulation, we can regulate ourselves'. Paraphrasing the immortal Andy Rice Davies 'they would say that wouldn't they'.

Those who study it must now all be familiar with the long running 'long run' arguments, emanating from the industry that: the tourism product is the environment, tourism depends on the environment for its continuing success and it is in tourism's interest to preserve and enhance the environment. Easy, the industry means to ensure its long run self interest. Most seem to accept this line of reasoning, the debate increasingly focusing on the optimum means of preserving/enhancing the venerated Golden Goose - the product, the environment. As usual, fundamental questions remain unanswered. What is successful? What is the long long run? Is the environment all embracing? It is not convincing that the tourism product is synonymous with environment, certainly not just the physical environment. One cannot even be so sure of the apparently straightforward logic of tourism's self interest in preserving its product in the long run. Is not London still the UK's top tourism attraction, with increasing numbers of visitors, despite recent rises in crime figures, suggesting that aspects of the environment there might be deteriorating, and is not Blackpool, hardly the most salubrious or sustainable of resorts in some green-eyed observers' opinions, sustaining its position as one of Britain's top resorts? In fact as Andy Lyon, a former student of the author's, once so rightly said: 'the Goose is alive and well and living in Blackpool'. On the Golden Mile?

The spring 1996 television advertising campaign for France had a raucous background chorus of 'here we don't go, here we don't go.' As visions of beautiful French landscapes unfold before the eyes, the 'boys' are faded out to be replaced by the little sparrow, Edith Piaf. Then there is the comforting voice-over saying something along the lines of its nice to go where others do not, or words to that effect. But where does this tie in with the 'fact', if statistics are to be believed, that France is the world's number one tourist destination (Elliott, 1996)?

Incidentally, on the subject of Blackpool, and in the context of evolving destinations, a 'must' for all those interested in sustainable tourism planning is a brilliant, succinct piece 'There'll Always Be A Blackpool' by I. Brown. Originaly written for the Observer, 13th May 1945, it was reprinted in Tourism, Summer 1995. Fifty years ahead of its time the original article contains the classic line 'The sublimity of such Beauty Spots may eventually become their ruin ... all Spot and no Beauty.' Is this a new dimension for those planners who enjoy squeezing spots?

Meanwhile the means to an end, the regulation or self-regulation debate, has reached something of an impasse. Entrenched in the philosophy of relatively free-market forces, those in favour of self-regulation rely on old arguments. The resort from advocates of a more interventionist approach, equally entrenched in their own views, is also in danger of taking on a rather jaded hue. Old chestnuts such as 'in the long run we are all dead', 'the proof of the pudding' and 'so far, so bad' are all employed. It is unlikely, despite dialogue, that these fundamentally opposed tenets can be brought together; a Herculean task, indeed. The basic difference comes down to one of philosophy. The author does not happen to share the tourism industry's aversion to increased government involvement and legislation as regards business ethics and enforced environmental control. As global tourism continues to grow, the impasse clearly favours the non-interventionist approach.
Ecotourism must surely be seen as nothing more than astute short term business practice, part of the conventional tourism industry which utilizes the same infrastructure, is driven by the same motivation, namely profit, and that 'everybody's doin' it, doin' it, doin' it'. Predictably, the white elephant of ecotourism has metamorphosed into the equally deceptive oxymoron of mass ecotourism, a mythical beast of mammoth proportions. Displaying, beneath a woolly coat, all the familiar, inherent characteristics lurks the same old monster - mass tourism. It has been driven into the circus of the ecocrene. On its back, dressed appropriately for the occasion, is the Emperor, in his new clothes.

The author's nihilistic views on sustainable tourism have been recorded elsewhere. At best, what can perhaps be aimed for is merely something better than currently exists. This has led to do with the concept of sustainability, except in terms of its vagueness. Rather surprisingly there is, however, hope. A recent Times article, headed reassuringly: 'Miserable people make more sense', stated 'research by a team of eminent psychologists has shown that happy people cannot think straight. The glum do much better' (Leake and Lawrence, 1995). Couple this with the old maxim: 'Cheer up, chum: Don't be glum: We all know there's worse to come,' then maybe, if everyone is a clear-thinking, gloomy pessimist, something positive will materialize. Now there's real (eco) logic.

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ECO/EGO/SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: THE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE TRICK

by Brian Wheeller

The rhetoric of sustainability, the clamour of so called eco-tourism, the relentless demand for short-term industry profits and the ubiquitous ‘what’s in it for me, now’ attitude of tourists, are all depressingly familiar – their growth matched only, and rather perversely, by the rapidly expanding numbers of tourists. The same familiar arguments (and supposed solutions) are regurgitated over and over again, yet, it would appear, globally negative tourism impacts continue to increase as the situation deteriorates. Tourist numbers remain the essential problem, eco-tourism/sustainable tourism the enduring canard, the ever elusive answer. High on rhetoric low on implementation eco sustainable tourism promises so much but delivers so little.

For present purposes I make little distinction between sustainability, sustainable tourism and eco tourism. While I recognise that some differences do exist, to explore them here would be diversionary and academic. Rather, I believe it is legitimate to tar them all with the same brush. Certainly from a tourism practitioners point of view, overwhelming evidence suggests that fine tuning of definition is irrelevant. Whatever nomenclature is adopted to suggest (rather than actually deliver) a green approach, then it will be heartily adopted by the practitioners to sell their product. Whether the product in question is remotely ‘green’ or not appears to be totally irrelevant. For verification, ten minutes in either the World Travel Market, London or the ITB Berlin would surely suffice. Pertinently too, across the broad church of adjectives used to describe and embrace green tourism, be it ‘soft’, ‘alternative’ ‘kind’ ad infinitum, they all suffer from fundamental flaws in application/implementation. It is this common foible that this short paper wishes to highlight.

I draw no distinction here either between the would-be traveller and the tourist, driven as they are by self interest and utilising, to a large degree, essentially the same infrastructure. For example in terms of reaching any far flung destination, be they mass package tourists to
Greece or ‘adventure travellers’ to Peru, the plane seems the most likely mode of transport. Much has been written about this elsewhere. I see the central issue as being one of class and prestige, preferring to regard eco tourists as ego tourists and, anyway, all travellers as tourists (Wheeller, 1993).

Furthermore, eschewing theory, I draw on anecdotal support from the ‘real world’ to try to illustrate the absurdities of the green tourism approach. ‘Evidence’ might be more apposite, as it is the capriciousness of reality that make notions of green behaviour so irrelevant and futile. While this approach might be dismissed as somewhat ad hoc, piecemeal and highly subjective, I nevertheless firmly believe that writing on sustainability and eco tourism should always focus on the real world. We should refrain from the nebulous wanderings of academic theory, so prevalent at the welter of conferences on tourism impact and development. At such gatherings the seductively straightforward (but unfortunately spurious) logic used to underpin arguments in favour of eco-tourism/sustainability is always present. Delegates are told, repeatedly, that according to World Tourism Organisation figures, one in nine jobs world-wide are created by tourism; therefore tourism is a proven job creator; that tourism is, and for the foreseeable future is likely to remain, the world’s fastest growing industry, therefore employment prospects are good; that there are problems with tourism impact but (you’ve guessed it) these are caused by mass, package tourism – the ‘other’. Therefore by avoiding, in every sense of the word, mass tourism and by promoting eco/sustainable tourism we can have all the benefits of tourism without any of the costs. Wonderful.

Just taking one fundamental flaw in this routine. It seems completely lost on virtually all speakers and many delegates that even if this miraculous figure of one in nine jobs continually bandied about is ‘correct’ then these jobs have been created by, and are dependent on, the economics of mass tourism. If we are looking for a comparable figure on which to base estimates of job creation by small-scale, harmonious eco-tourism projects then perhaps a ratio of say 1 in 10,000 world-wide may be a more accurate, but somewhat less appealing, indicator.

At a World Eco Tourism conference held in Manaus, 1994, speakers, often themselves tour operators, expressed their passionate belief that the indigenous ‘natives’ should not be exploited by tourism but must have control of their own destiny; that the local populations should not be dictated to by outside pressures, etc. Yet this seemed strangely at odds with their own business practice. A number of speakers
and delegates were in Amazonia not only to attend the conference but to sample, on behalf of their prospective clients, the various alternative (or more likely alter native) jungle lodges in the vicinity. The criteria being applied were not from any theoretical eco-audit manual (for sale at the conference bookstall) but from a more-prosaic ‘keep the (ie my) customer satisfied’ school of thought.

The pattern was understandably familiar — those lodges that were considered appropriate got the business; those which were not up to standard (ie meeting the requirements of the clientele) did not — and would not unless they responded accordingly and made ‘appropriate’ changes. While this is perfectly reasonable from a commercial point of view, it is nevertheless difficult to marry with the ethical arguments of indigenous control being advocated from the conference platform. It suggests that, despite all the fine rhetoric, once again the tourists, and tour operators, are calling the shots in these so-called havens of eco-tourism.

We must now all be familiar with the long standing, ‘long-run’ arguments, emanating from the industry that the tourism product is the environment; tourism depends on the environment for its continuing success; therefore, it is in tourism’s interest to preserve and enhance the environment. This appears to be the basis of the industry’s ‘self regulation rather than be regulated’ stance. The industry’s argument is that the environment and the tourist product are synonymous; that by maintaining/enhancing the environment then simultaneously the tourist product is being ensured, and the interests of the tourism industry secured. Further, the industry itself is best placed for this task. This line of reasoning is open to interpretation. Nevertheless the debate itself is increasingly focusing on the optimum means of preserving/enhancing the venerated Golden Goose – the product, the environment. As usual, fundamental questions remain unanswered. What is successful? What is the long-run? Is the environment all embracing? I am not convinced that the tourism product is synonymous with environment, certainly not just the physical environment. It must also encompass social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. I’m not even so sure of the apparently straight forward logic of tourism’s self interest in preserving its product in the long-run. Isn’t London still our top tourism attraction, with increasing numbers of visitors? This, despite the recent rises in crime figures and concern over poor air quality which suggest that aspects of the environment there might be deteriorating. And isn’t Blackpool, hardly the most salubrious nor sustainable of UK resorts in some green-eyed observers view sustaining its position as one of our top
destinations as tourists flood there in increasing numbers? The eco in eco-tourism is surely driven by eco-nomics rather than eco-logy.

An important point has been raised recently by Buhalis and Fletcher who stated: "The environmental damage so often discussed in articles relates only to the direct environmental damage. The full environmental cost of tourism development like the full economic activity can only be truly estimated if the direct and indirect impacts are assessed. If tourism development is ‘sold’ to destinations on the basis of its strong backward linkage with other sectors of the economy, then the environmental damage emanating from their supporting industries, as a result of tourism activity must also be brought into the equation" (Buhalis and Fletcher, 1995, p. 3). The authors are referring to physical perspectives of ‘environment’. If environmental is taken to be all embracing, incorporating social, cultural, physical, etc., and if, where appropriate, one adds ‘induced’ into their statement, then surely Buhalis and Fletcher highlight an absolutely crucial point in the sustainability debate. It just is not tenable to argue that the benefits (usually economic) of tourism are derived from direct, indirect and induced linkages without acknowledging the corollary that so too are the costs. They go on to recognise that the principles of sustainability “should also be applied to those enterprises indirectly related to tourism which support and supply the tourism sector” (Buhalis and Fletcher, 1995, p. 17).

Such reasoning must also have a spatial dimension too. Just as the economic effects of tourism are not confined to the more obvious sectors of the ‘tourism industry’, nor are impacts restricted spatially to the tourism destination area. The eco-tourist (and the supposedly eco-friendly firm), so concerned to ostentiously behave sensitively in the vulnerable destination environment, is not generally so concerned about the danger to the overall environment they cause in actually reaching that destination. Here convenience takes precedence over conscience. A car to the airport and a jumbo jet are hardly paradigms of virtue in the environmental stakes (Wheeller, 1993).

A world driven by the demand for more, for ‘better’, for the immediate, for instant gratification, makes the bleatings of ‘travellers’ like Rivers (1979) not to travel but to stay at home, pale into insignificance. There is a far stronger incentive to travel sooner, rather than later, further and more frequently – before the beauty and tranquillity of the destination is irredeemably ruined by someone else. To see for yourself and spoil. While it might well be good to live in a pastoral rural idyll where images are conjured up by “What is life if full
of care/We have no time to stand and stare/No time to stand beneath the
dews/And stare as long as sheep or cows/A poor life this if full of
care/We have no time to stand and stare” (Davies, 1996) – the realities of
capitalism command a somewhat more hurried pace. The nauseatingly
sugary ‘for our children’s children’s children’ is frequently heralded,
giving a false semblance of temporal framework to the short-run and
long-run. But, paraphrasing the great, late Lord Keynes ‘its no good
telling everyone that they’ll benefit in the long run, because in the long
run we’re all dead’. He should know. It would appear that an ‘instant
success/life in the fast lane’ mentality controls western society.

It’s all about growth and self-gratification, epitomised by… “We
want to make Britain the number one destination, not just for domestic
tourism but for Europeans and the rest of the world. We want to extend
the season and develop areas away from places such as London, Oxford
and Stratford and there is no limit in sight to the increase in visitors we
can accommodate” (Bottomley, Heritage Secretary, 1997). According to
Elliot, however, there were alarming flaws in the Success through
Partnership publication that the above quotation refers to. ‘But in a
document aimed at finding ways of turning the policy into reality, there
is no mention of any limit to the growth in the number of foreign tourists
and little mention of how the ever rising number of visitors is to be
managed’ (Elliot, 1997).

The government has since changed and so to, supposedly, has
government policy.

There is always the danger though that while politicians change,
sentiments remain essentially the same. Seeing is believing. Undoubtedly,
the ‘growth versus environment’ debate does remain a
contentious issue. Although keen to be seen to be ‘achieving’ on the
green front, the assertion by Prescott, the UKs spokesperson at the recent
Kyoto Environment Conference on Energy Conservation, that “we will
not do anything to damage the competitiveness of our industry”,
(Prescott, 1997) does not auger well. That the failure of the Kyoto
conference, ending as it did in near farce, its recommendations riddled
with as many holes as a Swiss cheese, should be of any surprise is surely
a surprise in itself. The 1997 New York conference, the follow up
conference to Rio, didn’t seem to achieve much, except confirm the
inadequacies of the Rio conference. The pressure for economic growth,
for development, for progress is all pervasive – overwhelming any
considered attempts at controlling situations in a measured, reasonable
manner.
An analogy with football might help. Ten years ago if a leading club from the first division bought, at a reasonable price, an up-and-coming player from a lower division that player would usually be put into the reserves to acclimatise, to adjust to the change of pace. Then, after a suitable period of adjustment, he would be put into the first team. Nowadays as football has become much more a business than a sport, commercial pressures have concertinaed the process. The new signing now goes straight into the first team in the higher division. Where he often falters. Ideals become swamped by pragmatism. Angell, Stockport County’s centre forward believes that it is the pernicious effect of money that is ripping the game apart. “Nowadays if a player costs £1 million, he has to go straight into the team because everything is instant. Money demands instant success” (Angell, 1997). Parallels can be drawn with eco sustainable tourism; green sustainable planning strategies call for slow steady harmonious development – for any adjustments to be suitably steady; commercial pressures demand, and get, swift immediate, uncontrolled growth.

Commendable exhortations are always included in any sustainable tourism plan. Among them, invariably, are words to the effect that the host community must be involved in all negotiations, at each successive planning stage, and further that all jobs created in the new forms of tourism must be worthwhile, command respect, be well paid, have career structures, etc. Ideals – or glib platitudes? Either way, however well meant, such laudable intentions are fraught with (insurmountable?) difficulties in practice.

Though some critics of tourism might disagree, all tourists are, in fact, human and not alien beings from another planet. Consequently all perform bodily functions. Now, just where in the world – or for that matter in space – does anyone physically employed in cleaning out toilets or involved in sewage disposal command respect, high wages, a career structure, etc. Is this situation likely to change – no. Will tourist numbers increase – yes. Will tourists use the toilet (if there is one) – yes. Will all sustainable tourism planners demand jobs with respect, etc. yes. Is the alarming inconsistency apparent? I hope so.

A recent exploratory trip to Guyana to identify the probable impact of impending tourism amongst the Wai-Wai Indians at Gunn Strip on the Guyana/Brazilian boarder painfully, I believe, revealed the inadequacies and frailties of our thought process on sustainable/eco-tourism. The ‘lost tribe’ of the Wai-Wai had, of course, been ‘found’ by Western religion, colonised and corralled, in the early 1950s. When
asked what they wanted from tourism, the elders of the tribe (the village representatives), after consulting with one another, decided on nine inch nails as one of the top priorities from tourism. The central beam of the church - the biggest, domineering edifice in the village at Gunn Strip - was falling apart. The nails were needed to support it. Leaving aside the biblical symbolism of nails, etc. - their request was somewhat at odds with the priority expressed by one of the village youths. When asked the same question - what would you most want from tourism? - he looked in disbelief as if the answer was so patently obvious - and calmly, but with clarity of mind and purpose, replied "girls, of course". If the host community is to be taken into account is it represented by the opinions afforded by the leaders of the community, the elders - often themselves immune and cushioned from the effects of their own decisions? Are they democratically elected? Should democracy be a consideration? Should we respect the existing political hierarchy? Or is it to be the views of the teenagers who probably represent the future. Current conventional wisdom would probably opt for the elders. Yet the church is such a relatively recent introduction and, though strongly supported by the elders, its popularity, certainly amongst the youth, is on the wane. So too it would appear is the influence of the elders as the village, no longer cocooned from the world, reacts to outside pressures. Are we planning tourism for yesterday or for tomorrow?

If the purpose of the new forms of tourism is to respect the customs of the locals, what happens when their customs don't fit the moral, political agenda of the tourism planners? Some would argue that tourism shouldn't change local customs, that it shouldn't impinge on, or undermine, traditional ways of life. However, we are perfectly happy to musemise another society while we ourselves reap the benefits of our own continued growth. Furthermore, in addition to problems inherent in such fossilisation, there is an underlining lack of logic in approach. If, as is frequently purported, tourism shouldn't change an indigenous society, then when, or indeed why, is it acceptable to use tourism as an economic/political weapon to discourage tourists to go to places considered 'unethical' or politically incorrect, for example Myanmar? And therefore, by default, undermine and attempt to alter the status quo. 

Tourists bring (some) money which will inevitably influence/change a vulnerable recipient society. So by introducing, or by default denying, tourism we are automatically using our economic power to influence a situation. Surely this is an overt attempt to change the political structure of a country using tourism as an integral part of that strategy. By discouraging tourists the economic viability of the region is, it is argued, undermined. The point attempting to be made here is not
one of passing moral judgement on the rights or wrongs of
democracy/dictatorship in Myanmar. It is on the flexible, I would argue
dubiously inconsistent, interpretation of just when it is acceptable, or not
acceptable, for tourism to influence local communities and just who
should be the arbitrator, the judge and jury of that extremely complex set
of decisions. As always its a selective process. When it suits us to argue
that tourism should not alter an indigenous culture we will; when it suits
us to argue that tourism should alter an indigenous culture we will just as
readily do this too.

Often, as sensitive tourists we are encouraged to act as the locals
do. To go ethnic. But what does this entail in practice and just how
‘native’ are tourists prepared to go? Does this actually mean that if a
foreign tourist in London gets mugged while wandering along Oxford
Street should they adhere to such advice? In other words, does that
same tourist promptly follow the example of the locals, go ethnic and
mug someone else? When in Rome, etc. Of course not. ‘Going ethnic’ is
merely a sop to our consciences. As indeed is so-called eco/sustainable
tourism in general. Isn’t it strange how, while we are so ostensibly keen
to be ‘at one’ with the natives, to behave as they do, that we as ego
tourists nevertheless take the precautions of prophylactic medicine –
vaccinations, tablets, what ever – the very same precautions that most
indigenous people at the tourist destination are excluded from? Do we
drink the same water or is ours purified? We are only at ‘one on’ our
own terms. Probably the situation where we as tourists attempt to go
ethnic with most conviction, to merge with the indigenous culture, is not
in some distant, isolated, virgin eco Nirvana but in an urban city
environment, like New York. Here we hide our cameras, our wealth, our
‘demonstration effect’, not to shield the locals from the danger of
corruption but to protect body soul and wallet. Our own, of course. We
are not driven by consideration of others but by the usual motive of
looking after number one. Once again, when it suits us to ethnic we will;
when it doesn’t we wont. Fickle? One suspects just a little.

Sustainable tourism seems something of an oxymoron.
‘Sustainable’ conjures up images of caring, selfless behaviour,
undertaken with a harmonious spirit, at one with nature and showing
concern for scarce resources while tourism, to all intents and practical
purposes, is about ‘taking’. Words usually associated with sustainable
tend to be diametrically opposed to words associated with our own
behaviour as tourists or those associated with standard (accepted)
tourism business/commercial practice – essentially that of looking after
number one, now. The commercial sector is primarily concerned with
profit and, therefore it could be argued, with some form of exploitation; a tourist generally acts on the principal of ‘I’ve paid for it so I’ll take what I want’ and the host community – once Doxey’s (1975) initial, touching but tragically naïve stages are rapaciously overtaken – feel they too should take something, whether it be money or perhaps sexual conquests.

Another quotation, this time from a US Military spokesperson, gives a disturbing, but nevertheless intriguing, slant on sustainability. In introducing a new computerised, digital helmet, he said “This one is more lethal, more sustainable” (CNN, 1994). Those of us of a delicate disposition who had previously considered sustainability in the realms of preserving rather than destroying might be affronted by this. However, the logic of the military makes chillingly effective sense. If you want to sustain (preserve?) something, kill anything that threatens it. Anyway, in many facets of our behaviour, we actually operate on the basis of this logic. Often we kill any bugs/animals that threaten, or are perceived to threaten, us. On a recent trip to Amazonia, staying at the Ariau Jungle Tower, animals from the surrounding forest came down to the lodge to feed, providing a source of pleasure and entertainment to the tourists ensconced in the eco lodge. Any attempt to stamp on a monkeys head, or throttle a macaw would have been considered, let us say, inappropriate. However, crushing a cockroach in the dining room was de rigour and, one suspects, any potentially dangerous snake slithering in the vicinity would have been despatched with similar alacrity.

The ramifications of such encounters/examples can; and usually are, dismissed as irrelevant by many advocates of the green approach. However, to me they are central to a critique of sustainable planning. The chasm between rhetoric and reality is palpable – the void to be avoided at all costs, in all discussions, because it simply cannot be bridged. Instead what do we continually get? Discussions that postulate on theoretical possibilities, always on the potential of ‘eco tourism as a sustainable way forward’. Or case studies invariable of small scale eco successes. Always at a micro level, examples of supposed sustainable tourism are being highlighted. This is taken as being a plus factor, even though this may not be the case on a global scale. For every ‘good’ sustainable project and practice (if such a thing exists) there may be as many as, say, 30 examples of ‘bad’ sustainable tourism, created under the auspices and patronage of sustainable tourism. Therefore, the overall effect of sustainable tourism in its many guises, could be negative not positive. The response to this, of course, is a plea to eliminate any rogue practices. As if this were possible. There is very little on macro level implementation of sustainable, eco tourism ideals. The approach seems
to be generally one of ‘let's just discuss the theory and worry about the practicalities later’. Always full of potential and little else.

There doesn’t appear to be too much hope. We are, I believe, driven by short-term, selfish, self-interest – genuine philanthropy subsumed by vested, usually material, immediate concerns. Nothing necessarily wrong with this. However, what is unacceptable is to ignore this trait in our behaviour, this near universal, materialistic characteristic and suggest idealistic notions of sustainability which so obviously are diametrically opposed to what is going on in the dominant West. Mutual harmony and co-operation are at a premium. A piece in the Observer pointed out that an O.E.C.D. agreement “will give wealthy Western firms the right to lower their environmental and health standards when they invest in developing countries”. According to Harrison “It will liberalise international investment” (Harrison, 1997). But a different interpretation of the same document by the W.W.F. suggests “It will leave poor countries wide open to exploitation and have a severe effect on the flora and fauna. It is the ultimate betrayal of the Rio Earth Summit” (W.W.F., 1997). A later editorial forlornly pleads “We need a new spirit of global co-operation” is less than optimistic as to the direction of international spirit and good will... “International relations are becoming poisoned by nationalism and an unwillingness even to pay lip service to the global interest” (Observer, 3.11.97).

Perversely the overwhelming desire amongst the developed countries to maintain their economies and sustain their economic growth is, in a round about sort of way, sustaining tourism by providing the donor market for tourism. Presumably without (sustained) economic growth in the (advanced?) economies there wouldn’t be tourists to be ego-tourists in the Third World or developing countries. Sustainable tourism (here used in the sense of tourism that is sustained) will only prosper if there are tourists and the basic pre-requisites for tourists – money, discretionary time and desire for holidays – would be absent without sustained economic growth.

Promotional material for the WatchTower Bible (1997) asked (begged ?), the question – “will all people ever love one another?” In a Utopian world maybe. Unfortunately, and contrary to the articles laudable beliefs, I am afraid the answer, on earth if not in heaven, is a resounding no. Parallels with eco/sustainable tourism are again surely obvious. In the real world any hope of effective eco/sustainable tourism, at the macro level is, barring Divine intervention, futile – mistaken and
dangerously misleading. Despite this, the myth of eco-tourism is still being perpetrated – by those who should perhaps know better.

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(inédit, 1998)

The Truth? The Hole Truth. Everything but the Truth. Tourism and Knowledge: A Septic Sceptic’s Perspective

Brian Wheeler
Visiting Professor of Tourism, NHTV, Breda, Holland

A question to start with. Which way round does a Ferris wheel turn? Clockwise or anticlockwise? I’ll leave that teaser with you for now and return to it a little later.

Are we to believe, as has been said, that while ‘travel broadens the mind, tourism broadens the bottom’? To me, both travel and tourism broaden a broad mind but narrow a narrow one. So, too, in the wider arena – some minds are more receptive to new ideas than are others. I would dispute, though, that such categorisation, and castigation, be based on the implied class assumptions of the traveller/tourist divide. But just how liberal are we in taking on board ‘new’ information/experiences in our own realm of travel and tourism?

Later, I will call for a far more personalised, overtly subjective approach to our work than is evidenced currently. In the meantime – and it is a mean time – I will practise what I preach, drawing on a number, and range, of anecdotal and personal experiences to illustrate some of my thoughts. And it needs to be borne in mind that they are only thoughts, accepting that a detailed, comprehensive account of ‘knowledge’ is far beyond the reach of a paper. Certainly this one.

These days, when rather sad characters of my generation are off out for an evening’s entertainment it might well be to witness a re-formed band from yesteryear – all trying to rekindle youth in a symbiotic, ultimately futile attempt to relive the 60s. If the artists don’t perform the old well-worn numbers with which we are familiar, with which we associate them, the audience is muted, disappointed. New material is met, and treated with, indifference, even hostility and antagonism. What we want is familiarity; safe nostalgia. To suspend thought. To forget about today until tomorrow. Max Miller, a 1940s British comedian, apparently always told the same jokes. The audience expected it. He was renowned for it. Maybe it’s true – it’s not the joke but the way you tell them. John Cooper Clarke, a (much underrated) 1980s punk-poet, perfected the art of performing, in pretty much the same combination, his own unique material of poems, vocals and jokes – keeping, and relying for years on the same tried, tested and trusted format to his act. Still in very much the same mode, he continues today. To an extent, I now feel in a similar position. Not, I hasten to add in the sense of being a star turn with concomitant fan base, but rather that my take on tourism in general, and eco/ego/sustainable tourism in particular, has an ominously familiar format to it – remaining, as it has, roughly the same over the last 15 years or so. Now there’s sustainability for you.

The same material is repeated (some would say regurgitated) with genuine
conviction but, unfortunately without the panache of a Cooper Clarke. The very real danger being, as John Cooper Clarke himself would so eloquently put it, 'I used to be in the groove, but now I'm in a rut.' I am aware (and sometimes reassured) that my views are likened to a dirge. Perhaps, for all the good it will do, reiterating my concerns on eco/sustainable tourism is as futile as the concept itself. Time to move on? Unfortunately, with so many fundamental issues still unresolved, I find this difficult to do. Actually, over the last decade, my concerns and worries have deepened—and festered. I have become a septic sceptic. And it is this that bothers me now.

So, in this paper on 'knowledge', I will attempt a compromise, albeit half-heartedly. While emphasising the significance of the 'personal', I will continue with my own established views on eco/sustainable tourism as a (rather than the) reference point, setting them within a wider general context that embraces, but is not exclusive to, tourism.

Years ago the songsmith troubadour Harry Chapin (1976a) wrote 'And though my brain is still a virgin / the rest of me's well done'. The lines affected me then, and have had a profound resonance with me ever since...believing, as I did, that the time would never come when the doors of my own imagination finally closed. But, disturbingly, now I'm not so sure. Have these very same doors mutated into the Gates of Hell? Have I become entrenched? Or can my mind still accept new ideas? Maybe. But perhaps only when triggered by a significant change of personal circumstances, sufficient to jar my perspective. Perhaps, for example, if I had children then reference to 'our children's children' would have more immediate significance, more meaning than it currently does. And I would then probably be forced to be more optimistic. The more 'immediate' the problem - both personally and temporally - the greater its import. Shades of Adam Smith's little finger. Conversely, and somewhat worryingly, it surely follows that, as Galahad's adage claimed, 'Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem' (quoted in Metcalf, 1986: 20).

I'm interested in how we see - or rather don't see - things. Not just how information is gathered and disseminated but in how we 'read' it. In how, and why, we interpret what we 'see' in the ways that we do. And, in particular, how our (changing) personal circumstances can affect/determine our interpretations. In how information is filtered and our 'knowledge' gleaned.

Back to my formative years. With one shoulder hot, the other cold, perched uncomfortably on the plug - I was 21 before I realised I was sitting in the bath the wrong way round. And why? Well, up until the age of eight I'd always have a bath with my sister, elder by three years. By the time Sue was 11, bath night with Brian clearly no longer held the appeal it once had, so separate baths was the order of the evening. My response? Even when on my own, conditioned, I stayed in the end my mother had put me in because...well, because my mother had put me there. Even though it was wrong, I'd assumed it was 'right'. What is more, I never even thought about the alternative, more attractive choice. Assuming my sister should have the best end of the bath in the first place, it took me 13 years to discover the 'truth'. Now, at 55, I think that maybe for the subsequent 34 years I have continued to do, or believe in, something equally stupid - but it just hasn't dawned on me yet. Or perhaps never will. And, as we negotiate our own life
Tourism and Knowledge: A Sceptic Sceptic's Perspective

cycle, is it always best to know the ‘truth’, anyway? And, if so, precisely when? My mother is 91. Do I now choose to question her lifetime values and, by doing so, further undermine her increasing frailty?

But, at any age, we do, of course, change our moods and this affects our perspectives. Take, for example, the mood swings of a doomed love affair. Something once sweet becomes bitter. Our very own personal Doxey’s Irridex of Failed Relationships. ‘It’s the same old song / But a different meaning since you’ve been gone’ (Holland et al., 1965) or Crabbe’s wonderfully evocative poem, Lover’s Journey, ‘It is the Soul that sees: the outward eyes / present the object, but the Mind describes . . . ’ (Crabbe, 1990: 639).

Everything we are presented with (and, of course we are not presented with everything) is filtered through our own value/emotional system. Even what you ‘see’ of another’s point of view is your perception of their perception and not necessarily their perception. And then there is the machiavellian ‘spin’ that riddles not just our politics and politicians, but I believe, all walks and aspects of life . . . including our own. And having ‘acquired’ the knowledge, what do we then do with it? In today’s spinning world, which is really nearer the mark, ‘The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’ or ‘Lies, damn lies and statistics’? Inevitably ‘the truth’ is subjective. Our thinking and our research on tourism should always bear this in mind. But although we are aware of this, do we consider, and incorporate, this awareness sufficiently into our work? Or even accept our role in the subterfuge, by recognising how we use ‘knowledge’ for our own ends? Or do we adopt the more comfortable, reassuring ‘acknowledge, ignore and proceed as before’ mentality? My impression is the latter. For a salutary fictional account, I suggest a read of the aptly titled The Information (Amis, 1995). . . dark, subversive and disturbing. But is it salutary enough? In our everyday real lives we demonstrate our own vulnerability, compliance and culpability. Do we publish our ‘information’ where we believe our work will have the greatest good, or where it will most benefit our own CVs / careers? So to all intents and purposes, although we are ‘aware’ we choose not to be. Because it suits. And reminding ourselves of this (crucially at the very moments we should be drawing attention to our hypocrisy) we, of course, refrain. No uncomfortable reminders of our own foibles, thank you very much. Certainly not now, maybe later. When it is more appropriate . . . by which we mean, of course, less appropriate but more convenient. So it is not just the information. Nor the knowledge. It is as much a question as to what we do (or don’t do) with this information/knowledge. Or, probably given our circumstances, what we can, or can’t do. Nothing particularly new in what’s being said here . . . though usually it is couched in a far more academic manner. But then, perhaps we sometimes try to be a touch too academic.

By way of illustration, I feel we can legitimately draw parallels with film noir, a term used to describe the genre of dark, brooding, doom-laden films that emerged in the late 1940s. These films

... weren’t trying to lull you or sell you or reassure you. They insisted that you wake up to the reality of a corrupt world. Quit kidding yourself. Stand up and open your eyes. They were bleak, depressing, nihilistic but they
were the only movies that offered bracing respite from sugar-coated
dogma, Hollywood style. (Muller, 1998: 10)

Disney, saccharine sustainability, the dream-factory: noir, a more cruel, disorien-
tated, heartless anti-dote... reality. Does either our acquisition, or application, of
our tourism knowledge adequately take this distinction (between real and the
ideal) into account? I would argue not.

The political arena is a dangerously contentious theatre... The question of
corruption and the degrees of intensity to which it is practised are conve-
niently ignored in the supposedly 'holistic', yet somewhat arbitrary,
sustainable tourism vacuum. The assertion that 'The world has the worry
that corruption is now spreading throughout politics. One can almost say
that corruption has now become the global norm' (Rees-Mogg 1999: 18)
must be constantly borne in mind - but, of course, isn't. Much of tourism's
literature on planning chooses to ignore the uncomfortable reality, seem-
ingly oblivious to the fact that the best intended plans may not be carried
out in practice simply because they are way-laid by corrupt officials. Even
case study material, one assumes on the grounds of expediency, tends to
omit mention to this very real consideration... as do many PhDs presented
by students studying abroad but empirically based on their own countries,
who for very pragmatic, prudent reasons feel it judicious not to draw atten-
tion to corruption of their own governments, prior to their return home.

(Wheeler, forthcoming)

On the latter point many of us, as supervisors, are again culpable. Expedient,
pragmatic maybe: but nevertheless guilty in being part of the process that
censors what we know / believe to be 'the truth'. In this case for the well-being/
protection of an individual with whom we are familiar. Does the same reasoning
apply when information is withheld 'in the public interest'? Are the ethical prob-
lems compounded?

Deception is, of course, nothing new in travel and tourism. Did Marco Polo
actually venture to China or are his writings just the figment of (admittedly
fertile) imagination? In fact, fiction conjured up from second-hand sources while
the man himself was incarcerated in Constantinople? (Hamilton, 1995). Did
Milton's preparation for Paradise Lost - if nothing else, the source of so many
undergraduate tourism dissertation titles - take him to Vallombrosa? Or was he,
too, imagining things from afar? Had Coleridge been to sea (see?) before the epic
journey of The Ancient Mariner? In real life, was Jack Kerouac, for many the icon of
the 'beat' generation, quite the wandering Bohemian On the Road suggested?
Had Cooper Clarke actually been to the Balearic islands when he penned the
immortal lines 'I got drunk with another fella / who'd just brought up a previous
paella / wanted a fight / said they were yella / in Majorca' (Cooper Clarke, 1983:
98).

Does it matter? Is the necessity of the first-hand, authentic experience a
prerequisite for 'telling it like it is'. Possibly. But there are situations too when,
on the contrary, knowing the truth, the facts, apparently provides firm founda-
tions in the shifting sands of deceit, enabling perpetrators to deliberately
mislead... for legitimising 'telling it like it isn't'. Or, when convenient, not
Tourism and Knowledge: A Septic Sceptic’s Perspective

471
telling it at all. In literature, there is the duplicity of the tourist establishment being economic/downright deceptive with the truth. In such apparently diverse works as Mann’s _Death in Venice_ and Benchley’s _Jaws_ devious, culpable ‘governance’ is a theme common in both works – embodied in the form of the local authority connivance with the tourism industry. To safeguard the tourist lira/dollar, those in authority deliberately cover up threats to the local tourism business – from, respectively, the plague and the shark. The cover to _Jaws_ (Benchley, 1975) reads ‘. . . one man against a town that won’t face the truth’. Those with a vested interest to maintain the status quo suppress information, deliberately keeping both the public in general, and the tourist in particular, in the dark. Then there are Crichton’s _Jurassic Park_ and _The Lost World_. And the Hiaasen novels of (tourism) development and corruption in Florida – notably _Tourist Season_ and _Native Tongue_. All deal with the dark side, the subterfuge underlying tourism development. Fiction revealing fact.

But it’s a far wider issue, and it gets worse. At every level the ‘truth’ is obfuscated. . . a trend that is becoming ubiquitous, pervading society from the institutional to the personal. It is in us all. We know things but choose to repress them . . . from our own personal secrets, which we are aware of, and keep to ourselves . . . to broader issues of society. Take, for example, our ‘awareness’ of famine and starvation. We are touched by graphic images. Of, for example, a withered, painfully thin and pathetic, black child’s fingers clutching, and contrasted against, a plump white hand. But not sufficiently to prevent us from doing much about it. Certainly not in changing our own consumption patterns. If anything, it’s the reverse. Much wants more. Fat chance of having images of starving children as a backdrop to conference dinners, then. True, in our presentations and papers attention might very well be drawn to inequalities, to uneven and unequal development . . . but only in the dry, removed and anodyne confines of the lecture room.

If, as we are led to believe, tourism is the world’s largest industry, then we should remember it is a world driven largely by avarice, greed, self-interest. ‘A much wants more, what’s in it for me, now mentality’. These traits are in us. And these forces drive tourism just as they drive everything else. And yes, tourism reflects this. Tourism is not only part of, but is also symptomatic of, society. We need, therefore, to look first at ourselves and then at society in general when we address tourism. But do we?

We know it is a corrupt, cruel world – yet are surprised when it is graphically revealed as such. Surely, the surprise is that we are surprised. Or maybe we are now past the stage of being shocked . . . when even drastic tactics no longer have the required effect. Two recent articles by Humphrys (2003) and Marsh (2004) are relevant here. In the latter, ‘Are We Becoming Immune to Shock Tactics?’ it is suggested that the public has become inured and desensitised to disturbing images. The more extreme the images in advertising, for example, then the easier it is to dismiss – compartmentalised as a mini-movie or fiction. The blurring of boundaries. Fact becomes fiction.

What then, very briefly, of the visual image? Hockney’s ‘Secret Knowledge’ (2001) is not just about the Old Masters and the past. Analysing how we see, treat and make images today, in an age of computer manipulation, it is also about the present and the future. And what of other images? As for ‘the camera never lies’
well, dream on, it does. Two recent works shed differing light onto the relationships between travel, tourism and photography. To me, Parr’s (1998) awe-inspiring images of the British on holiday are, in their own way, sublime; and they serve as a brutal counterpoint to de Botton’s sophisticated, philosophical approach as portrayed in his cultured The Art of Travel (2002).

Our ability to selectively ignore information is astounding. As the song says, ‘A man hears what he wants to hear / And disregards the rest’ (Simon, 1969). It seems reasonable to assume this trait isn’t gender specific but is universal, endemic to us all. Replete as it is with my own hypocrisy and selective vision, this paper isn’t the exception that proves the rule.

Deception in tourism, both deliberate and inadvertent, has, over the years, been a central theme of my work. Attention has been drawn to the actual hole-istic, as opposed to the delusionary whole-istic, approach with which we tend to research tourism: namely, difficult questions are despatched down the handy black hole… and forgotten. But it is not just at the institutional or industry level that this phenomenon occurs – it is at the societal and individual. While we are all no doubt aware of the multilayered complexities of tourism in our respective works we seem to ignore, or skirt around, this. Basically, once again ‘an acknowledge, ignore and proceed’ approach.

In society as a whole, we are experiencing an ever-increasing concertinaing of time and space. Harvey (1989), with his notion of ‘time-space compression’, drew attention to this, though, if I understood him correctly, more in terms of a focus on capital accumulation. Here I believe a more simplistic approach to our ‘immediate’ personal perspectives is called for, through a travel and tourism looking-glass. Back in the 1950s, as a kid I can clearly remember specific moments that, I believe, first made me want to travel. The images in my Auntie Norah’s National Geographic magazine, watching Zoo Quest: The Komodo Dragon, Hans and Lotte Hass, Armand and Michaela Dennis and Cousteau’s adventures in the Calypso. When I started teaching tourism in 1979, I asked early cohorts for their first recollections of where their travel bug came from. And they had some idea; they could remember. Over subsequent years, with successive cohorts, this ability to recall and identify such moments has decreased dramatically. Try it with your students now. If your experience is anything like mine you’ll find they haven’t a clue. There are, of course, a number of variables but I reckon one reason is that growing up, my generation tended to receive information (relatively) slowly and discretely. Contrast that to the increasingly quick-fire bombardment of today’s world. The acceleration of just about everything (see Gleik’s Faster (1999)). While much might be gained by these changes, something is also lost.

According to the back cover of Stille’s (2002) book The Future of the Past. The Loss of Knowledge in the Age of Information ‘… the rate of development has increased exponentially and inventions such as the telegraph, radio, television and, most recently, the Internet, have revolutionised our access to information, fundamentally altering our understanding of the world in the process.’ But not necessarily for the better. Stille uncovers the darker side of technological change. Maybe technology in itself is neither good nor bad: the trouble begins with its application… in his case to preservation and restoration. Stille’s work is essentially concerned with the past, in the context of the present. But while the means
of generating information and communicating it have improved, have the ethics of disseminating it changed accordingly? Stille concludes that, 'While technologies have changed dramatically ... human nature is relatively constant' (Stille, 2002: 339). One suspects, too, human nature is in many ways also similar, irrespective of the system. (What's the difference between capitalism and communism? Capitalism is a 'dog eat dog' world. And communism? Well, it's the other way round).

It seems apposite here, particularly in the context of the past and present, to again remind ourselves of the undercurrents of the noir genre. Film noir pointed towards the black core of corruption in our society and to our primitive instincts. Of all Hollywood genres, noir has proved the most prescient (Muller, 1998: 11). Scratch the surface of respectability and invariably you'll find dirt. Dig deeper and you plummet into the mire. As academics looking at tourism, particularly sustainable tourism, we tend to prefer to keep our keyboards clean. However, though few on the ground, there are some exceptions in contemporary tourism literature that do at least go some way in attempting to contextualise tourism in this mire ... an excellent recent addition to the canon being Mowforth and Munt's (2003) second edition of Tourism and Sustainability: Development and New Tourism in the Third World. They demonstrate a welcomed, healthy scepticism at all levels of their considered analysis of the interwoven relationships of tourism, globalisation, sustainability and development, admirably critiquing the crucial role power plays in the processes. And then there are the financial institutions. There are probably more sharks active in the boardrooms and financial centres of the world than there are lurking in the Pacific. But where does this feature in current work on tourism?

Even here, though, we have problems of perception. It is not straightforward. It is all very well saying (as I firmly believe) that tourism must be contextualised in the real world. But 'the real world'? What precisely is this? Again quoting Chapin (1976b), 'Reality is just another word'. With any area of research, words in the form of definitions cause considerable difficulties - for, as we know, although definitions should reflect 'reality', they don't always do so. Tourism is no exception. Possibly, our problems are indeed exacerbated by the additional confusion between, on the one hand, the academic language and sophisticated niceties we often employ and, on the other, the more prosaic nature of our subject - at least, as it is certainly perceived by the layperson.

It is argued by Papageorgiou (2004) that the terminology (together with the approach) with which we look at, and discuss any subject, is a direct reflection of how we perceive and consequently treat that topic. Similarly, according to Smith (1994: 40), 'Definitions not only guide data collection but also shape how analysts and policy-makers conceptualise tourism'. So what about all our dodgy tourism definitions? Not surprising, then, that tourism is riddled with inconsistencies and misconceptions. All along we have known how our definitions are 'flexible', interpreted liberally and differently as and when it suits. But this hasn't stopped us from using them. Or from 'quantifying'. We've always had questionable statistics ... and continued to use them nevertheless. Mowforth and Munt's aforementioned text offers caution as to the reliability of data provided by official bodies, notably the World Tourism Organisation. We urge all users of World Tourism Organisation data to treat their statistics with considerable caution and
apply a high degree of scepticism to their interpretation' (p. 303). They base their
advocacy on personal experience and other sources, for example, Pleumarom
whom they quote at some length:

The World Tourism Organisation also exercises its power through its
pervasive control over data collection, economic impact studies and
market research in the field of tourism. Member governments, private tour-
ism companies, consulting firms, universities and the media all recognise
WTO as the world's most complete and reliable source of global tourism
statistics and forecasts,' it claims. In contrast, independent statistics experts
and economists have argued that WTO statistics, forecasts and technical
analysis are highly suspect and directed to hoodwink everyone about the
supposed benefits of tourism. (Pleumarom, 2001: 7, in Mowforth & Munt,
2003)

Of course, like all of us, the 'independent' experts also have their own
agendas. But draw your own conclusions. And keep these in mind next time you
encounter statistics. Echoing earlier comments, personally, I suggest a suitable
philosophy to adopt when looking, not just at tourism, but also life in general, to
be: 'Don't believe everything you are told. But believe you are not told every-
thing'.

Definitions of 'new' tourism are equally fallible. Just who actually is an
ecotourist? Take, for example, a visit to a waterfall. If I go to Kaieteur or Iguazu,
I'm an eco-traveller exploring South America. But what if I go to play the tables at
Niagara and glance at the Falls on my way to the surrounding casinos: am I an
ecotourist then? Does it actually depend on my purpose of visit, or on the predic-
tions of those 'compiling' the figures? And what, then, if my main purpose of
visiting South America is as a sex tourist, and the falls are little more than a diver-
sion? Am I still an eco-tourist?

This leads on to another (tangential) observation. Looking through much of
the tourism academic literature, our 'knowledge' seems to lead us to assume that
(un-paid for) casual sex on holiday is the exclusive preserve of the 45 mass
package tourists, regarded by many 'educated' observers as mindless riff-raff,
the 'fuckit and spade brigade' (my words, though not my opinion). That
somehow, eco/sustainable tourists are not only cerebral, but also celibate.
Nonsense. For confirmation have a word with a safari tour guide. Or maybe,
Margaret Cook, ex-wife of the former British Foreign Secretary who - while on
holiday - (allegedly) sought solace with Carlos, a 38-year-old Ecuadorian tour
guide (Honigsbam, 1999). The real jungle experience?

So, anyway, it isn't only the accuracy of the data, the knowledge, that needs
scrutinising, it is the value filters through which they are seen and screened - be
they individual, societal, cultural. We all have our agendas (personal, cultural,
work-related, whatever) that further influence/confine us. So when we are
addressing the question of 'knowledge in tourism' it is the wider issues - of who
we are / what society has become - that need to be continually foremost in our
minds. All this is obvious too. So obvious that it is taken for granted and so easily
forgotten when we research/teach our subject.

I guess I'm arguing for a more up-front, personal, subjective approach - but
with overt recognition of this for what it is. On the whole, aren't we generally
encouraged to detach the personal from our work and to claim dispassionate objectivity? But can we really achieve this? We should make our agenda clear, our position transparent. And I don’t think we would necessarily lose our professional integrity in the process. Quite the reverse. In fact, by combining, rather than divorcing the ‘professional’ with the ‘personal’ in each of us, our output would perhaps be ‘better’, more sincere.

Sitting waiting in the doctor’s surgery the other week, of the many health posters that plastered the opposite wall, one in particular caught my attention. Taking closer order, under the arching headline, ‘Depression: the warning signs’ it showed 12 red triangular road signs each depicting a symptom of personal distress: insomnia, anxiety, restlessness etc. Below, in lower case, the text read, ‘If you, or someone you know, experiences four of these symptoms, over a number of weeks, seek professional advice immediately’. Needless to say I scored heavily – on all 12. (And, so might you.) Intrigued, I asked at reception for further information. (About the impressive poster, rather than my state of mind.) It transpires that it was issued by the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust. Apparently, at the age of 28, Charlie Waller, successful in the world of advertising, with everything to live for, chose to take his own life. The commemorative trust was set up to ensure his suicide was not in vain. And the reason why the poster was so impressive/effective? Born out of death, it combined professional expertise in equal measure with love, compassion and devotion for a lost friend. It wasn’t totally cold, detached, impartial and objective, but from the heart. A sobering cause, and yet here I may appear to be using it frivolously. I hope not. It is, though, another example where information gleaned in one context is adopted and adapted according to one’s purposes, rather than employed in the context for which it was originally intended.

To return now full circle to the eco/sustainable tourism debate. And the question as to which way round the big wheel turns? The answer, surprisingly, is it depends which side of the wheel you are on when you are looking at it (at least, it is surprising to me. I’d assumed clockwise… and took some convincing otherwise). So, too, I suggest with sustainability… on the one side the optimists, on the other the pessimists. Dreamland versus reality. Now, as the old maxim says, ‘where you stand on a subject very much depends on where you sit’. But on the academic big wheel of eco/sustainable tourism we all sit down while standing still. Once on the wheel we travel by going round and round in circles while effectively remaining motionless, rooted to the same spot… going nowhere. Travelling but never arriving. Very much, I would suggest, where we are in the eco/ego/sustainable tourism debate. And have been for some time. Endless, circular debates… revolving rather than evolving. Maybe, as academics, we are all OK with this and, cocooned in our own world, it is better to travel than arrive—thereby avoiding the fundamental problem of bridging the gulf between theory and practice.

In the early 1990s, I was critical, indeed vitriolic of eco/sustainable tourism—scathing of its diversionary tactics, its green mantle of respectability, its empty promises (Wheeler, 1991, 1993). I see nothing that has emerged in the interim years to suggest that such damming views were misplaced. Indeed, if anything, those same arguments have even more contemporary currency today. Others, though, view the situation differently, reaching pretty much diametrically
opposite conclusions – from the same information available. Summing up the 'progress' of sustainable tourism over the last decade or so, the editors of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism state: 'Ten years on the worst predictions have been proved wrong. Sorry Mr Wheelier!' (Channel Views, 2002: 4).

So there you have it – the optimistic see it one way; those of a more cynical disposition, another. Is it ever thus? However reliable and comprehensive the information, will it ever be any other way? The Wheel of Knowledge turns, but do we ever learn? So, perspective is all-important. We see things differently; read what we want to read into situations. Is the glass half full or half empty? Some have a belief in the 'goodness of spirit', the benevolent qualities of human nature. To me, such generosity is, I'm afraid, unfortunately misplaced. Isn't it time we saw ourselves for the selfish bastards we really are? And then, perhaps, we would all find it easier to come to terms with what tourism is all about – or, at least, how we perceive and report it.

Correspondence

Any correspondence should be directed to Brian Wheelier, Visiting Professor, NHTV, Mgr. Honamnstraat 1, PO Box 3917, 4800 DX Breda, The Netherlands (wheelier.b@nhtv.nl).

References

Tourism and Knowledge: A Septic Sceptic's Perspective 477


Ecotourism/Egotourism and Development (2005)

Chapter 17

Ecotourism/Egotourism and Development

BRIAN WHEELLER

As early as 1990, Pigram cogently argued that without the effective means of translating ideas into action, sustainable tourism 'runs the risk of remaining irrelevant and inert as a feasible policy option for the real world of tourism development' (Pigram, 1990: 20). Authors such as Butler (1990), in his visionary article ‘Pious Hope or Trojan Horse’, and Cazes (1989) were similarly sceptical. So too, my own writings around that time were scathing of the 'new' forms of tourism – and of the fawning plaudits and laurels being garlanded on them (Wheeler, 1991, 1993). One of my main criticisms was that while ecotourism (or, indeed, sustainable tourism in its many, many guises) may, as a planning 'control', be fine in theory, it is useless in practice – primarily because it does not, and cannot, confront the unfortunate harsh realities of human behaviour. Although actually acknowledging these traits as part of the problem, I argued, completely failed to address or incorporate them in the so-called solutions. A decade later, the concerns of the dissenting voices are as valid now as they were then, if not more so. But, just as before; it comes as no surprise that they are still being ignored.

For ecotourism to have real, practical credibility we must exit fantasy-land and contextualise the ecosustainability debate within the wider arena of power, economics, greed, racism and hypocrisy – a 'whole-istic' not 'hole-istic' approach. That is, one where all the relevant issues are tackled and addressed head on, rather than a partial, selective, cherry-picking attitude in which the difficult issues are conveniently dispatched into a black hole and quietly forgotten. It is this biting realism that is totally lacking in most writing on ecotourism and sustainability. What we have instead is the continued preaching, the perpetual goody-two-shoes mantra of sustainability ('Green is Good/God') being peddled by the tourism industry, planners, politicians and many academics. When will we ever learn? Well, probably never. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to achieve ‘the truth’... or even get an inkling of it... when the
powerful, dominant forces of society dictate otherwise – namely, obfuscation, duplicity and deception. Forget the genteel ‘being economical with the truth’: here, in a welter of cases, we are talking downright lies. We need to ask ourselves some difficult – and I suggest unpalatable – questions. Are we ready to wholeheartedly embrace the fundamentals of sustainability? Are we, for example, really prepared to put long-term interests before short-term immediacy: to adopt a philanthropic, rather than vested interest, approach to life: to really ‘care’? I doubt it very much. While sustainability is supposed to be concerned with the long term, just about everything else in our society and our lives (certainly in the West) is geared to the short term: to the immediate, quick returns. Perhaps even more disturbing, this proclivity appears to be increasingly accompanied by an overriding selfishness, to getting our licks in now. The obvious connotations of the ‘Come to Bangladesh before the Tourists get here’ campaign reveal, and illuminate further, the true motivations of the supposedly selfless ‘traveller’. In the wider arena, two quotes from the movies spring to mind that perhaps best reflect this. In Pirates of the Caribbean (Sparrow, 2003), (Captain) Jack Sparrow’s counsel to ‘Take as much as you can. Put nothing back’ mirrors the earlier advice given by Dennis Hope, the band’s manager to his touring acolytes. Lightwater, in Almost Famous (Hope, 2000) ‘You’ve got to take what you can, when you can, and you’ve got to take it now’. Now compare these examples with the (too) oft-quoted Brundtland Report’s (1987) sins of compromising the interests of future generations and the concomitant eulogy to our children’s children. And ask yourself which most accurately reflects actual contemporary behaviour and lifestyle, be it your own, or society’s in general. Then ponder whether there is anything whatsoever in the eco/sustainable tourism package that is really going to radically alter and reverse this situation? Or anything that will, in reality, come remotely close to being a solution, other than in terms of palliative empty words, easy platitudes. Surely, any tourism planning that chooses to ignore contemporary trends and fails to incorporate them in its underlying philosophy must be fundamentally flawed. And, in practical terms, have a built-in obsolescence. This, it seems to me, is a charge that can, and should, be laid at eco/sustainable tourism.

To most liberal minds, sustainability conjures up images of gentleness, of care, compassion and of preservation. However, a statement from the US military gives a more disturbing, but nevertheless revealing, slant on sustainability. In introducing a new computerised, digital helmet, the spokesman revealed ‘This one is more lethal, more sustainable’ (CNN, 1994 quoted in Wheeller, 1998: 53). Those of us of a delicate disposition who had previously foolishly considered sustainability more in the realms of preserving rather than destroying might be affronted by this.
However, the logic of the military makes chillingly effective sense. If you want to sustain/preserve something, kill anything and everything that threatens it. Simple. Anyway, in many facets of our ‘environmental’ behaviour, we do just that.

We should (but choose not to) be aware of our vagaries when it comes to just what precisely we mean by ‘sustainability’. We are, of course, flexible in our interpretation of ‘sustainability’. When it suits us we are pragmatic and selective, particularly when it comes to sustaining flora and fauna. On holiday, be it mass package or a custom designed eco-itinerary, there is no crisis of conscience when it comes to killing mosquitoes. And back home, in the garden, aphids are eradicated with similar relish and unwelcome weeds unceremoniously dispatched off. Even at the environmental/sustainable paradigm, The Eden Project – ‘the Living Theatre of Plants and People’ – there are no apparent qualms at how best to deal with this potential dilemma. Keen to attract the tourist but deter the unwanted visitors (plant pests), an on-site information sign reads:

Within our biomes we use many techniques to control plant pests. One example is the UV-light trap which produces light at night, attracting moths and mosquitoes. Many moth caterpillars damage plants and mosquitoes damage humans. They are trapped on sticky board in the traps, then we can identify and count the captured creatures.

Is not this simply a reassuring, marketing euphemism, echoing the military dictate?

While on a trip to Amazonia, staying at the Ariau Jungle Tower, I witnessed animals from the surrounding forest coming down each evening, onto the terrace to feed … so providing pleasure and entertainment to the tourist cosily ensconced in the luxury ecododge. Should the mood have taken me, any attempt to stamp on a monkeys head, or throttle a macaw would have been considered, let us say, inappropriate. However, crushing a cockroach underfoot in the dining room was de rigueur. Similarly, one suspects, any unsightly spider, or potentially dangerous snake slithering in the vicinity, would have been dispatched of with equal alacrity.

Alarming inconsistency is apparent too when fish, caught for sport, are strung up and displayed as trophies – always accompanied in suitable triumphant pose by the conquering hero/heroine. Why no universal outrage at this appalling spectacle? I guess because most see nothing wrong with this conduct. But take a closer look at a page from The Times Travel Section on holidays in the Seychelles: ‘Hooked on Big Game Fishing in the Sun’ (Herbert, 1996). The lead photo shows the proud tourist and bloodied sail fish, the latter prone, vanquished on the boat.
deck. A smaller picture, top left, depicts Esmerelda, the world’s heaviest tortoise, weighing in at 600lbs, being admired, tenderly and lovingly. All perfectly civilised and acceptable. Now imagine the situation reversed, the fish swimming happily, unhindered and at peace, and the tortoise upturned, skewered, tangled up with hook and tackle, at death’s door. Wild animal as trophy. Outrage. Similarly, if it were a lion or, taking examples from further afield, say a polar bear or a tiger or, heaven forbid, a panda that had been strung up then, undoubtedly, there would have been an almighty outcry. But a fish? Well no, after all is said and done, it’s only a fish.

A further dimension to this irrationality is reflected by a seemingly throwaway, yet succint, line from the Director General of the Wildlife Trust who, in response to the ‘cult of the cuddly’ sardonically mused: ‘We get lots of sponsorship for otters and red squirrels but none for the narrow-headed ant’ (Lyster, 1998: 4). Beauty may indeed only be skin deep but in our society many creatures are in this respect, unfortunately, ‘thick skinned’.

But it is not only with animals and plants where the superficial seems to suffice. If the one of the pillars of the new forms of tourism is to respect the wishes and customs of the locals, what happens when their customs fail to meet the existing, prevailing moral and/or political agenda of the outside, eco/sustainable tourists? Some say tourism should only change the indigenous culture for the better – but are rather circumspect as to delineating what precisely constitutes ‘better’. Others argue that tourism should not change local customs, that it shouldn’t impinge on, or undermine, traditional ways of life. Yet, as has been well documented in the broader ramifications of the enclave tourist debate, we are perfectly happy to musemuse another society while we continue to reap the benefits of our own continued growth. More fundamentally, in addition to problems inherent in such fossilisation, there is a disturbing lack of consistency and logic in approach. If, as frequently purposed, tourism shouldn’t change an indigenous society then when, or indeed why, is it acceptable to use tourism as an economic/political weapon to discourage tourists to go to places considered unethical or politically incorrect – for example Myanmar? And therefore, by default, undermine and attempt to alter the (perceived unsavoury) status quo at the destination?

Undoubtedly tourists bring (some) money, which will inevitably influence/change a vulnerable recipient society. So by introducing, or denying, tourism we are automatically using our ‘outside’ power to influence an internal situation economically. By discouraging tourists, the economic viability of the region is undermined: surely an overt attempt to change the political structure of a country using tourism as an integral part of that strategy. The point here is not one of passing moral
judgement on such sensitive issues as the rights or wrongs of democracy/dictatorship in, say, Myanmar. Rather it is on the flexible, I would argue dubiously inconsistent, interpretation of when exactly it is considered acceptable, or conversely, unacceptable for tourism to influence local (or national) communities. And then there is the question of who should be the arbitrator, the judge and jury of that extremely complex set of decisions... tour operators, tourists, human rights groups? When it suits us (as academics/members of politically correct pressure groups) to affirm that tourism should not alter an indigenous culture we will follow that line of 'logic'. Yet, when it appears apposite to argue that tourism should be used (by boycott/default) to alter an indigenous culture, we will just as readily do this too.

As always, it is a selective, manipulative process. While tourists are discouraged by some organisations to go to Myanmar on socio/political grounds, they are encouraged to go to other destinations, for example, say to Tibet on more or less the same socio/political grounds, the argument appearing to be that, in the latter case, tourists should go, see for themselves the political situation and spread the (negative) word on their return home.

The political arena is a dangerously contentious theatre. But not one that should be shied away from if so-called sustainable tourism is to have credence in its supposed holistic approach to the physical, social, cultural, economic and political environment. The fact is that the actual development of tourism – the necessary wheeling and dealing – takes place in the real world, warts and all. Whereas elaborate academic tourism planning discussions, and discourse on sustainability, still remain essentially confined to, and cocooned in, the protected dream world of textbook theory... immune to the pressures and vicissitudes of actuality. The question of corruption and the levels of intensity to which it is practised are conveniently ignored in the supposedly 'holistic', yet somewhat arbitrary, sustainable tourism vacuum. The assertion that 'the world has the worry that corruption is now spreading throughout politics. One can almost say that corruption has now become the global norm' (Rees-Mogg, 1999: 18) must be continually borne in mind – but, of course, it is not. With only a few notable exceptions (see, for example, Hall, 1994; Brown, 1997) much of tourism’s literature on planning chooses to ignore the uncomfortable reality, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the best intended plans may not be carried out in practice simply because they are waylaid by corrupt officials. Even case study material, often one assumes on grounds of expediency, tends to omit mention to this very real consideration, as do many Ph.D.’s presented by students studying abroad but empirically based on their own countries, who for very pragmatic, prudent reasons feel it judicious not to draw attention to corruption of their own governments, prior to their return home.
There are contradictory signals and policies, on the part of various
governments in the emerging world, which, on the one hand expound
green rhetoric while simultaneously pursuing policies that would seem
to be resource destructive. Similar ambiguity is reflected in advanced
economies with our reluctance, or refusal, to curb excessive consumption,
while giving lip service to green lifestyles.

Another point on corruption: In the days of Marcos, the sensitive traveller
was counselled not to visit the Philippines, which, because of the
political situation, was deemed an inappropriate destination. However,
did anyone contemplate that the boycott should (logically) also encompass America – the prime supporter of the Marcos regime? That consequently we should be discouraged from going to the United States for our holidays in order to undermine the democracy that supported the corrupt dictatorial regime?

The degree to which we are prepared to take our principles is a moot
point. Usually just so far as to not have to give up anything we really
want. Witness the sham of going ethnic, to act as the locals do. But here,
as elsewhere, we are selective, superimposing our own values as and
when it suits. ‘Going ethnic’ is merely a sop to our consciences as, indeed,
is ecosustainability in general. While we are ostensibly keen to be ‘at one’ with the locals, to behave as they do, we as egotourists nevertheless take the precautions afforded to us by prophylactic medicine – vaccinations, tablets, whatever. We are only ‘at one’ on our own terms. So, for example, at the ecotodge, the jungle adventure is experienced from the safety of the environmental bubble:

Even at the edge, as tourist/travellers in the most ‘authentic’
ecododge we don’t experience the ‘true’ experience of the wild. We
are protected, cocooned. We have the safety (and mosquito) net of
Mosquito and malaria tablets. We have our tampons and suntan
lotion. And our indefatigable illusion/delusion of being at one with
nature. (Wheeller, forthcoming)

And, if there is air-conditioning, then so much the better. Furthermore,
those espousing immersion into the social fabric of destinations by expe-
rencing the use of local transport, consuming indigenous food and
meeting the ‘locals’ while on their travels are reluctant to practise what
they preach at home. I would suggest they are the least likely to be seen
on buses or in a corner fish and chip shop. Living the local, ordinary
lifestyle seems to be a trait evident only when they themselves are
‘abroad’.

McKercher, in a first-class article advocating a Chaos Theory approach
to tourism, justifiably claims that: ‘If the traditional models explained
tourism fully, then they should also offer insights into controlling
tourism. But none does. The reason is that tourism is simply too complex
to be captured effectively in a deterministic model' (McKercher, 1999: 426). Similarly, it is an illusion to see sustainability, which begs for a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary approach, in isolation (see Mowfort & Munt, 2003). Or restrict it with nomenclature such as sustainable transport or sustainable tourism, thereby suggesting that it can somehow be ring-fenced (for academic study). Sustainability is also far too complex to separate and isolate. Like tourism planning, it too must be contextualised in the chaos of contemporary culture and behaviour. If this is indeed a fair reflection of reality, then to automatically assume that there is a solution (or indeed, a phalanx of palliatives that combined would constitute the 'solution') to the negative aspects of tourism seems overtly optimistic. Especially when it does not even appear too clear precisely what it is that we are actually trying to sustain in the first place? And over what time frame: the hardly definitive 'long term'?

Assuming here (for brevity and convenience, those expeditious 'catch-alls') that ecotourism actually exists, and that we can define, 'isolate' and identify ecotourists, then continuing with the awkward questions, we might well ask how do ecotourists actually get to those destinations where they can indulge ecotourism? Rightly or wrongly, most academic writing on eco/sustainable tourism infers an international dimension and a concomitant use of transport. To reach those 'off the beaten track' destinations (oh so appealing to the discerning ecotourist) invariably necessitates air travel, 'a car to the airport and a jumbo jet hardly paradigms of virtue in the environmentally friendly stakes' (Wheeler, 1993: 125). So does not this raise the question as to whether international eco/sustainable tourism is, by its very nature, an oxymoron in itself? This question is generally dismissed – unanswered, of course – as 'old hat' and 'boring' by believers.

True, some do respond, tangentially, by reasoning that it is better to believe in something (ecotourism) than have faith in nothing at all, retorting that ecotourism is at least a step in the right direction. But is it? For every 'good' ecotourism project there may be as many as say 30 'bad' projects created under the auspices and patronage of sustainability, and masquerading beneath the ecotourism banner. Maybe it is worth once again reminding everyone here that the eco in ecotourism is the eco in economics, not the eco in ecology and, as the song says, money makes the world go round.

If, as we are led to believe, tourism is the world's largest industry (and personally I do not believe for a moment it is . . . what, for example, about the food industry?) then it can only be so if its interlinkages with other industries are taken into consideration. When it comes to justifying more tourism development, this angle is always staunchly pointed to by the pro-tourism lobby. So, in the realms of the tourism multiplier we have the familiar direct, indirect and induced effects of tourism. But
this type of analysis is often restricted to an interpretation of positive tourism impacts. The same must apply to the negative impacts too, and not just the economic. If the claim is made that tourism can be sustainable then, surely, this can only be valid if all the industries that tourism is linked to are also 'sustainable'. Is this really feasible? (See Buhalis & Fletcher, 1995; Wheeller, 1998.)

In similar vein, while it may be accepted here that the immediate, more tangible, major problems that accompany tourism growth can be identified – whether they can be measured is another matter. Whether all the more subtle, and longer term, ramifications of tourism development have as yet been recognised is also debatable. And just how these might manifest remains a mystery.

Or maybe I'm wrong and things have changed. And for the better. Certainly, the editors of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism see the last ten years or so in a far more positive light. With justification, they point to the Journal's undoubted success as a publication: 'it goes from strength to strength'. (Channel Views, 2002). While this may well adhere to the Journal itself, is it true for ecosustainability? Well, yes, and no. Where you stand on the issue very much depends on where your perspective. And on one's interpretation of 'success'. Those with a positive, jaunty outlook see ecosustainability as a 'success' – with far more to offer, while those of us detractors, with a somewhat more jaundiced outlook see it from a somewhat different perspective. It is here that the divergent views are most apparent. So when we look to 'judge' ecotourism's success then, even assuming we are looking at the same thing – which, given the nature of the multi-faceted beast is doubtful – hardly surprisingly, we see things differently.

In terms of status, eco/sustainable tourism has, appropriately enough, become elevated to dizzy heights. And in tourism, as elsewhere in our contemporary lifestyles, status is so important – for eco read ego (Wheeler, 1993). In academia there have been a plethora of articles, books, modules, programmes and dissertations dedicated to it. The tourism industry warmly embraces it. Professional bodies extol its virtues and approve codes of practice. There are prestigious industry awards for politically correct, sustainable ecotourism projects. A similar positive response gushes from tourist boards and planning departments. And, for what it was worth, 2002 was the United Nations International Year of Ecotourism. So, status wise ecosustainability has arrived. Big time. In this sense then, it has been an undoubted success.

But, if we take stock, and look for substance rather than image, what, precisely, has eco/sustainable tourism achieved in practice? Very little, I suggest. Even after all these years the emphasis is still on 'potential'. What do we actually have? A cosy symbiotic alliance . . . on the one
hand our own pretentious, egocentric foibles and on the other ecossustainability, pandering perfectly to them. A dangerously diversionary tactic, it is little more than an elaborate confidence trick – and one we are all party to. Somewhat perversely, ecossustainability owes its ‘success’ and durability to its actual in-built ineffectiveness in dealing with the real issues of tourism impact. Years ago I argued, with regard to behaviour and lifestyle, that it was endorsed, even encouraged, the main stakeholders in tourism development to continue much as before (Wheeler, 1991). I went on to suggest that the central issues, those at the crux of tourism impact, were not being addressed. Has anything changed? According to some, ‘Ten years on the worst predictions of the pessimists have been proved wrong’ (Channel Views, 2002: 4). I do not think so. My interpretation of subsequent events leads me to quite the opposite conclusion.

To most tourists (living for the ‘now’), sustainability continues to be of little import – far more pressing are matters of price, value for money and fun, fun, fun. For the ‘believers’, I again contend that though they might not be aware of it, the ineffectiveness of sustainable tourism is its strength and remains core to their acceptance of it. The continuing canard – one that allows them, the industry, politicians and tourism developers to carry on very much as before, cosseted in their green, Emperor’s clothes. This, I fear, may sound arrogant on my part. I sincerely hope not, arrogance being a characteristic I despise. But it is, unfortunately, what I believe.

I really do not see ecotourism, or sustainability as the, or indeed an, answer. To me there is not an answer, nor a cure, to tourism impact problems. Primarily, I believe this is because tourism impacts are just one more symptom of the incurable cancerous greed endemic in society. Focusing on this bleak view is depressing. And, to the vast majority (of privileged commentators), accepting it, impossible. Coming to terms with our hypocrisy might at least be a start, perhaps the best we can hope for. We are, I contend, driven (riven?) by short-term, selfish self-interest, any vestiges of genuine philanthropy subsumed, and consumed, by vested, material, immediate concerns.

Nothing necessarily wrong with this in itself. However, what seems unacceptable to me is, when advocating solutions, to blindly ignore these traits in our behaviour, this materialistic avarice. To continue to trumpet idealistic notions of ecossustainability, which are so obviously diametrically opposed to the culture of the dominant West is absurd. Yet the charade continues. Questions remain conveniently unanswered, ignored. And the gaping chasm between rhetoric and reality grows ever wider, the void to avoid at all costs. And the reason? Despite over a decade of practising, in practice it cannot be bridged.
References


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Fancy the concept of a philosophical hotel? Try the Manhattan, Pretoria. Arriving there recently, I was greeted by a poster in the main lift with the hotel’s very own “thought for the day” embezzled across — “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” Fine words of wisdom. Except, looking at it (and assuming the same maxim applies to lecturing in general, and, in this case, to lecturing tourism in higher education in particular) personally I was sorely tempted to scrawl at the bottom. “And the sensible lecturer abandons teaching and concentrates on research.”

The quotation was anonymous. But enquiry a little later reveals the source (culprit?) to be one William Arthur Ward. The fact that he was monikered The Christian Optimist might very well account for his somewhat rosy, hybrid Mr. Chips/Miss Jean Brodie meets Dead Poets Society perspective. Apposite in his day … but how times change. Such idealism has, at least for many embroiled in the machinations of higher education in the UK, been replaced by a far more prosaic necessity … namely, that of survival (and promotion) via publication and income generation: not, it must be emphasised and despite protestations from some quarters, through ability demonstrated in the lecture theatre. Witness “Brunel University Council will meet next week to approve plans to replace 60 academics with new ‘research stars’ … it is clear that research and publication levels will be the key factors in selecting staff” (Mitchell, 2004, p. 1). And the result of this trend? Well, at least to my way of thinking — and again notwithstanding spin to the contrary — teaching suffers, rather than benefits, irrecoverably as a consequence of the inevitable changing emphasis on priorities imposed by this perverse ‘meritocracy’.

Cynicism born of (and borne by) experience? Well, yes I guess so. And yet, despite my dark, jaundiced view of much that is happening in higher education — and my initial, though fortunately suppressed, jet-lagged desire to deface the poster — there may, surprisingly, be some glimmer of hope in what the good W.A. Ward proclaimed. For, even against ever mounting odds, perhaps there is still sufficient room for the inspirational lecturer to manoeuvre and escape… if only temporally… the ever tightening vice of conformity that is gripping education. As such, Ward’s words provide the flimsy, deliberately ambiguous platform from which to launch this chapter.

A couple of riders by way of further introduction. Although I have tried to incorporate some wider international dimensions, this is essentially a white, middle-aged British
perspective drawn from 33 years teaching, researching and working in UK tourism... initially for a short period in hotels, holiday camps and local authority, then in the old polytechnic and subsequently (and primarily) the red-brick university sector before moving, in the last couple of years, into a professional education university in The Netherlands. Secondly, there are undoubtedly difficulties in trying to cover, in a single chapter, such broad issues as teaching and learning. When it comes to exploring our approaches to them we are faced with situations that superficially appear reasonably simplistic but which of course, on closer inspection, are not. Rather than being straightforward, on the contrary, the topic is complex and multi-layered. No longer restricted to education (encompassing as they do political, social, cultural, racial and gender issues) approaches differ with, and are often determined by, both the environment and parameters within which the lecturers and students are operating. These circumstances are, to a degree, fluid in the sense that they fluctuate at varying rates, sometimes in opposite directions, and at different times. As such, generalisations can be too vague: yet specific examples restricted in their wider relevance. Aware of the difficulties, and running the danger of falling between two stools, the attempt here then is to marry these stances by drawing on examples gleaned from personal experience to elaborate on generalisations — before concluding with a couple of considered “recommendations” that might have universal appeal.

Teaching and learning are obviously integral to the education experience. As such, they do not stand alone, isolated. Rather they dovetail into and, to varying degrees, inter-relate with, the wide range of issues that constitute the educative spectrum.

In particular, it is argued here that in the current climate they are inextricably linked with the twin issues of “research” and the drive for “assessment” — both of which dominate much debate in UK higher education. Significantly, for instance, in the last Quality Assessment Audit in the UK, teaching, learning and assessment were reviewed under one banner. Although assessment is dealt with in some detail elsewhere in this text, I do strongly believe that assessment clearly — or, perversely, to be more precise, “unclearly” — has a crucial, determining influence on approaches to both teaching and learning. And, of course, it is not just assessment of the students that is pertinent here... it is also the assessment and league tabling of individual lecturers, teams within departments, schools and institutions themselves. In this respect, these assessment criteria, and procedures, impact not only on the actual choices of approaches to teaching and learning available but effectively are instrumental in determining who actually decides which of these approaches are undertaken/imposed. The freedom of the individual lecturer to determine his/her approach is, it is suggested here, being continually eroded — squeezed by the pressure from “above” to conform. Increasingly, the role played by “management” is taking on ominous importance: institutional and national policies have become critical in influencing, indeed to a large extent determining, individual approaches. Under the “control” of management/national bodies, these approaches become ever more restricted, tied as they are to the albatross of assessment.

Assuming we should, then how do we measure the success, or otherwise, of teaching and learning? And whom? Or what? And, significantly, when? Temporal analysis is, quite rightly, an important feature in many tourism programmes, for example, in tourism planning and sustainability. But is sufficient attention given to the passing of time when actually assessing the teaching and learning outcomes? In the teaching arena too surely more
attention should be given to the dichotomy of short versus long term. With the onslaught of sustainability, so-called sustainable tourism and the drive to include the S word in tourism courses (see, for example, Eber, 2003), isn’t it strange that sustainable courses, the subject matter of what is so ostensibly concerned with the long-run, are themselves inevitably judged by end of term/semester course work or examination? What sweet irony there is in stressing to the students the importance of the long term while, when actually assessing their ability to understand/appreciate/comprehend sustainable tourism, they themselves, of logistic necessity, are always assessed in the short term.

It is not, therefore, simply the type of assessment that primarily concerns me here. It is, in this context of teaching and learning, as much about the time horizons over which our efforts to educate are actually judged. True, we may debate about the type/appropriateness of the assessment, but as far as I am aware very little attention is given as to the time period in which the student is judged. It has to be completed by the end of the month, end of year etc…i.e. over a relatively short time period. In other words, something that is essentially concerned with the long run is assessed in the “immediate”. And both tourism lecturer and tourism student “cut their cloth” accordingly.

And so too with education in general. It is all very well institutions having snappy logos like “Courses for Careers. Learning for Life”, but just how is the latter measured? If we are trying to achieve an “education” for life, isn’t confining the measuring of success or otherwise of these efforts to the immediate somewhat perverse? Shouldn’t we also be judged in the long run? Unfortunately this does not seem to be either what current forms of assessment dictate: nor, concomitantly, what students want.

Yet, it seems crucial in determining approaches to teaching. If educating for the long term isn’t assessed in the long term … and if assessment criteria is short term orientated well there is the obvious danger that the more obtuse, longer term, but surely profound, “benefits” are, in the age of instant/immediate assessment, the first to be jettisoned by the lecturer and the student. Even if lecturers persevere, students are reluctant to embrace things that do not have an immediate, measurable return. Students want tangible, quick, short-term, specific returns… a degree/diploma certificate takes precedence over any far more abstract benefits infused by that idealistic dream of “educating for life”.

Assessment also plays a key role in the interplay between teaching, learning and research — links that also need to be addressed here. Though it is certainly risky to go against the accepted notion that the research-led approach to teaching is automatically the best, conventional wisdom needs to be questioned. What sounds, and on paper looks, good does not — at least from the student perspective — always automatically translate as well into practice. Not only are individuals themselves rewarded for research but so too are institutions for research active lecturers … raising, as this does, the ugly head of the funding agenda.

The “accepted” approach seems to be that research-led teaching is the panacea to stimulating, up-to-date teaching. Active researchers, by feeding their current work into their lectures, are the dream ticket. This, however, not only assumes that the researchers do introduce their research material into their lectures. But, fundamentally, that they do, in fact (willingly and enthusiastically), actually embrace classes, and students, in the first place.

Undoubtedly such published stars are (initially, at least) attractive to students … be it directly as “names”, or indirectly through the undoubted influence they have on research-led league tables so crucial to attracting overseas markets. While they certainly play a key
role as part of an institute’s recruitment drive, do the students actually see much of the researcher either as personal tutor, lecturer or undergraduate/postgraduate supervisor? And in terms of net contribution to the students’ learning surely there is a (strong) case to be made for the argument that had the time and effort invested by the lecturer in research instead been put directly into their preparation and actual teaching/contact time with students then wouldn’t that ... again from the student perspective ... have proved more rewarding?

The relationships between teaching, learning and research (and, crucially, funding) are also, again, far too complex to be comprehensively covered here and partial debate immediately raises anomalies and contradictions. For example, while I am advocating more emphasis (and reward?) be given to teaching the students, on the downside, departments which are not scoring highly in the research assessment exercise do so at their peril, finding themselves threatened with closure (Barkham, 2004) ... even though they are maintaining high levels of student satisfaction with regard to their teaching (and learning?) capabilities. Nevertheless, this does not detract from questioning the mantra that research active staff automatically makes for the best lecturers. It does, though, again highlight the pivotal, and vexed, role that assessment (via determining vital funding flows) plays at the heart of higher education.

One direct way in which assessment affects learning manifests itself in the worrying “if it isn’t assessed, why bother?” trait. We need only look at attendance on non-assessed modules; or selective attendance as students focus exclusively on the lectures related to those aspects of their own coursework topics that they are assessed on; or how lectures are abandoned when assessment deadlines (often for other modules) loom. Initially the preserve of the student, this truculent attitude has spread to many — by their own definition — beleaguered-lecturing staff as well, and effort tailored accordingly.

In a refinement of the same malaise, we have the situation where if the lecturer introduces something related, yet tangential, to the main subject, the more able, willing, adventurous student will pay attention while the weaker, narrower student cannot/will not see the immediate relevance and, as a result, probably may not want to know. (Of course, it will only tend to be the “different” lecturer that will try to introduce, and then persevere with original, unusual material.) The craving for the safety blanket of the “familiar”, of planned lectures, hand-in dates, regimentation of structure, etc., while worthy in its own right, inevitably militates against the flexibility of the spontaneous.

The danger is, usually the weaker the student the greater the need for a safety blanket. Actually, the word “weaker” could be misleading. And perhaps I’m being a little hard here. Maybe lacking confidence in their own ability/circumstances might, in many cases, be fairer. In particular, there is the tendency for some foreign students, understandably, to be particularly vulnerable in this respect. Not only are they struggling with language difficulties but also with an alien culture in general ... and often a totally different educational experience. Many Southeast Asian students in the UK initially fall, headlong, into this category ... to, later emerge, having admirably worked incredibly hard to overcome their disadvantages.

According to Utley, “Anyone currently working in higher education cannot fail to have noticed that with the introduction of fees students are becoming ever more exacting customers. The significance of this shift should not be underestimated. With ‘top-up’ fees just around the corner in the UK, it looks likely that students’ expectations will continue to rise at an unprecedented rate” (Utley, 2004, p. 1). So, somewhere along the line, students have
metamorphosed into customers — demanding ones at that. And — at the risk of getting slandered, libelled and hearing words we’ve never heard in the Bible — we all know that, as Simon and Garfunkel informed us long ago, we have to keep the customer satisfied. At all costs.

While expectations may well rise, unfortunately, with the much vaunted drive for widening access/social inclusion some would argue that ability, inevitably, might well move in the opposite direction. So, the rather worryingly reasoning goes, we end up, overall, with more demanding, less able “customers”. A recent article in the Times Higher “argues” as such. Candid, forthright and very much to the (or rather his) point, Day provocatively and vehemently exhorts us “... keep the tasteless working class away from our universities... If after years of literacy, they still can’t spell whatever words they tattoo on themselves, then what on earth do they hope to achieve at university? (Day, 2004, p. 13)

Although this and the rest of his article might well be regarded, and dismissed, as repugnant bigotry, Day does, at least, beg one pertinent question with his lament “What happened to the idea that knowledge should be valued for its own sake?” (Day, 2004, p. 13). This may have particular resonance in the field of tourism “education”, where there is often conflict between the “educative” as opposed to “training” schools of thought. Some might see this as the “vocational/vocational divide”. While this may appear to be a flippant perspective, perhaps there is an element of truth in it. Indeed, possibly tourism to an extent bucks the trend in that some (of us) involved in tourism teaching during the eighties and nineties tried increasingly to move the subject away from a narrow training base.

We should, I believe, be concerned more with educating rather than training — certainly at postgraduate level. Whether this is the case in practice is a moot point. Indeed, whether this should be the “correct” approach is still, in some circles, open to dispute. But to my way of thinking we should be “educating” not “training”... unless, that is, we are training students to think for themselves. We should be discussing tourism education, not tourism training, here. However, again things aren’t that straightforward.

In tourism debates we have, for years, automatically distinguished between tourism education and the tourism industry ... separating, and often bemoaning, the lack of cooperation between the two. However, haven’t the differences between education and business become blurred? Hasn’t (tourism) education become as much a business as the tourism industry itself? Isn’t higher education now driven by the same forces that power big business? And doesn’t this affect our approaches to teaching and learning? [The scramble for high fee paying overseas students; strategic policies to secure research funding; ‘common’ lectures and group work to reap economies of scale; 2 years Master programmes contracted into 12 months ... in the interests of education or economics?]. Foundations once set in rock are now in shifting sand.

Tracing the history of the campus novel gives some indication of the evolving atmosphere of university life in that changes in the mood and tone of the genre reflect changing attitudes on the campus. [Regardless, they make for entertaining and informative reading.] David Lodge, a past master of the genre, remarked, “The high ideals of the university as an institution — the pursuit of knowledge and truth — are set against the actual behaviour and motivations of the people who work in them, who are only human and subject to the same ignoble desires and selfish ambitions as anybody else”. (Edemariam, 2004, p. 12). Fiction mirroring fact.
create an atmosphere that is positive and appealing just by being receptive, responsive and attentive to students' human needs”.

But even here we are again blighted by limitations imposed by restrictive assessment. It is all very well professing to be creative, injecting "curiosity" into one's lectures, but if that isn't part of the (short-term assessment) then there's trouble. Big trouble. Recent research into the effectiveness of "the video" in teaching postgraduate tourism cohorts supported this particularly disturbing conclusion. A respondent perceptively, but depressingly, noted “... you said postgraduate studies are about thinking in depth and out of line. About instilling curiosity and generating creativity. However, that is not what is used in classes to give us grades” (Wheeller, forthcoming).

Utilitarianism prevails. And averaging and mediocrity become the order of the day. “Since variety is the spice of life, it is bizarre that some of those who work in higher education should be hell-bent on destroying it”. (Birkhead, 2004, p. 23). The “it” in this context could refer equally well to either “variety” or “higher education”. Or both. Birkhead continues dammingly to suggest that “... the powers that be would prefer all academics to be clones, giving uniform lectures in a uniform style, with a uniform structure to feed the uniform notebooks of uniform undergraduates to justify their uniformly good marks” (Birkhead, 2004, p. 23). His erudite assault on the “obsession with uniformity” is welcomed here ... echoing as it does the poignant, sardonic but prophetic lyrics of Flowers are Red, Chapin's (1979) incisive warning as to the dangers of conditioning emanating from restrictive, blinkered teaching. Personally, I too regale against this compulsive drive for regulated, assessed conformity ... a blunt, dumbing down cudgel, if ever there was one.

What about 'differentiation', accommodating individual learning styles? But is the plea for creativity futile? Well, to a large degree I’m afraid it is. Even so, the clarion call here is nevertheless for the original, the quirky, the maverick.

It was pointed out earlier that the heterogeneity of the teaching and learning “experience” does make generalisation difficult — and prone to oversights. Something suitable to one set of circumstances may well be inappropriate, or impossible, in another. Sometimes this is obvious. What suits students at Master degree level may be lost on undergraduates. (Or, disconcertingly, in some cases, vice versa.) Elsewhere, the differences are far more subtle ... difficult to discern, complicated to decipher. This is an acknowledged pitfall that presents inevitable difficulties. So, bearing this danger in mind, there are, I believe, two specific, related, but as yet relatively underdeveloped, themes that have further fruitful potential, and universal appeal, to the teaching of, and learning in, tourism. And, as such, I strongly believe they should be embraced, on a widespread basis, in all approaches to teaching and learning... assuming, that is, that we do still have some influence on how we, individually, approach our teaching. (If not, then maybe another dictate?)

Tourism we argue is part of the modern world ... but how much of contemporary culture — be they positive or negative aspects — do we integrate into our teaching? Surely, then of paramount importance is the need to ensure our teaching contextualises tourism in the “real” world. But, as with most things, this again is easier said than done. The problem here is not just how to achieve this noble aim but rather in ascertaining what the “real” world actually is. We should, I believe, engage more with popular culture to contextualise tourism ... ideally within contemporary events. Here, I strongly believe television, film, music, newspapers and (unfortunately, to an ever diminishing degree) literature can, and
should, have a vital role to play in our teaching. In addition, obviously, to referring to academic texts students should be encouraged to reference from a far broader, eclectic range of material — drawn more widely from their own popular culture. However, based on considerable experience of external examining/auditing and being a member of review (revue?) panels, etc. to me this practice is not in vogue. Nor does it seem to have been encouraged. Which is a shame. But if, as I suggest, we introduce contemporary issues into our teaching, whose "reality" are we considering? To what extent is the student world and their representative cultural signifiers ... the real world? Are our contemporary issues the same as the students? There is the disturbing, but real, danger here of trying in vain, a vain attempt to identify with the students ... of playing Peter Pan in a Walter Mitty world. However, though the specific examples differ with generations, the underlying parallels drawn from one’s own examples may transcend time. Hard to believe, but while The Beach may have resonance with today’s students, surprising parallels can be drawn with yesterday’s Summer Holiday. The doors of imagination should never close.

The second suggestion is that far more prominence be given to the use of “the visual” in our work. The visual is, of course, already used in practice, but it is so far woefully underemployed as a teaching medium in tourism. While there are technical, and copyright, limitations on the use of imagery. I contend the real barriers are our own blinkers — our own reluctance to be more imaginative in the material we employ. Not only does it require vision on the part of the lecturer, it also takes considerable time and effort in preparation. And our resources are already stretched. However, what I strongly advocate is greater emphasis on the use of images — at all levels of lecturing tourism. And I don’t just mean the traditional video or ubiquitous power-point display. In this respect too, our horizons should not be limited. There must be scope for something more inventive than that currently seen as the norm. While Rice’s (2001) brief look at tourism and television is, perhaps, a small step in, roughly the right direction, I do, however, envisage something far more “personal” in approach ... one that encourages and fosters the opportunity for individual expression to prosper. Having assembled a vast array of eclectic slides and images, which always seem to go down well with the students, I have, over the years, practised what I preached and concentrated heavily on the use of the visual in my own teaching. International students especially often find it easier to respond to the visual image rather than the spoken word. (Wheller, forthcoming)

There are examples where these two approaches are effectively combined — of the visual being employed effectively to contextualise tourism in the student world. Although some lecturers may regard aspects of the book as elementary and pedantic, Bertram’s Using Media in Teaching is worth a quick read. In her review of the text de Villiers (2004 p. 14) claims, with justification, “One of the most obvious features of our times is that we live in the information age. It will enable teachers to assist their students to navigate critically through an information-saturated world. Furthermore, the new South Africa require that teachers teach in ways that actively link learning to students’ own lives and experiences. The popular media in particular provide a host of opportunities that could be harnessed to achieve this”. Robinson and Dale (2004, p. 13), in their research, endorse this concluding — not too surprisingly — that “using visual imagery is an effective way of stimulating interest in the subject matter”. With particular reference to teaching tourism they provide examples that “tap into the students’ immediate understanding of the subject matter by contextualising research methods to examples they can empathise with”.
Peighley (2003) makes a convincing argument for greater use of the visual in tourism at research level. Here, I make a claim for it to play a far greater role in our teaching. It is also an accessible way of visually contextualising tourism in the contemporary. Adopting these dual approaches of “contextualising imagery” could provide the scope to enable the individual, be that lecturer and/or student, to flourish within an overall framework.

On reflection, though, I suppose it all really depends where the heart lies. Personally, as something of a “Romantic (secular) Pessimist”, I guess it is more about how you teach rather than what you teach. Besides the obvious qualities of enthusiasm and passion for the subject, together with commitment to the students, there is the need to engage. But while some in higher education are student-orientated, others are not. And never will be. This must cast a shadow on the preaching of such luminaries as Barnett (2004) who seem either to be unaware of, or choose to ignore, this situation. Certainly a positive, it is suggested here idealistic, approach was adopted by Barnett (2004) in his keynote address at the Critical Issues in Tourism Education Conference in December 2004. Almost evangelical in delivery, it appeared to be based on the assumptions that all those engaged in lecturing actually want to teach; that their top priority lies with getting the best out of their students; and that they are prepared to invest all their time and effort to this end. And that students want to “learn”.

Despite having considerable sympathy, indeed empathy, with Barnett’s laudable ideals... I’m afraid, though it saddens me to say so, in reality that is all they amount to — ideals. Unfortunately, these are totally out of kilter with the cutthroat, day-to-day shenanigans of contemporary higher education. As with the concept of sustainability, there is an ever-widening chasm between what should be and what actually is. While a necessary crutch for the theorist, idealism doesn’t provide the prerequisite edifice for practitioners to bridge that alarming gap. Returning to Ward’s world, idealism is, after all, a somewhat flimsy fabric when it comes to re-enforcing his platform, the chapter’s initial springboard. What is needed in today’s higher education is an antidote to the straightjacket of restrictive assessment and the ethos of uniform conformity. Something, positive, practical but flexible: an environment to give the inspirational lecturer room in which to nurture curiosity: one that enables the student to thrive.

But aren’t these also nebulous, hypocritical ideals? Well, yes I’m afraid they are. That there is a degree of ambiguity, indeed apparent contradiction, in some aspects of this chapter is not regarded, at least by the author, as a problem. After all, isn’t the fundamental purpose of a lecture (and chapter?) often to confuse, to provoke debate, to stimulate and encourage independent thought? To enhance “learning”?

But even that might not be enough. On checking out of the Manhattan – this time on the wall, behind the desk — was the dictum ‘Do not confine your children to your own learning, for they were born in another time.’ Now, there’s a thought. And a lesson in itself.

References

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The King is Dead. Long Live the Product. Elvis, Authenticity and Sustainability (2006)

Chapter 19

The King is Dead. Long Live the Product: Elvis, Authenticity, Sustainability and the Product Life Cycle

BRIAN WHEELER

Introduction

In the welter of references to, and articles on, Butler’s Tourist Area Life Cycle model (TALC) there has, to my knowledge at least, been no mention of Elvis Presley. So far.

Clearly, there are a number of ways Elvis, and the Elvis phenomenon, can be seen as a part of tourism and the tourist industry – manifesting, most obviously, as a generator of tourism trips. Evidenced in the pilgrimages to Graceland, to locations featured in his dubious backlog of films, even to Prestwick Airport in West Scotland, site of Elvis’s only – recent sightings apart – visit to the UK, there can be no doubt that Elvis is big tourism business. Appearing regularly in the travel pages of contemporary newspapers and magazines, he remains a huge attraction – Graceland is second only to the White House for tourist visits to US Historic Places (Davis, 1997).

But there are other, somewhat more tenuous, links between Elvis and tourism. It is these that are, perhaps ambitiously, suggested and explored in this chapter. Just how he fits in with the TALC model might at first sight seem tangential – and with ecologics, obtuse. And yet ‘sustainable’ tourism developments in the Amazon jungle seem to me an admittedly quirky, yet appropriate, environment in which to locate Elvis. The parallels drawn in this chapter then, call for considerable flexibility and (vivid?) imagination on the part of the reader. What is more, although traditionally set in a linear/temporal, evolutionary framework, the intention here is to tentatively explore a spatial dimension to the life cycle concept. It is recognised that adopting a two-tier analytical framework on which to hang unconventional empiricism, further complicates the picture. Hopefully, however, it is considered neither irreverent nor irrelevant, but simply seen as an attempt at an unorthodox take on the TALC.
Of the two fundamental supports underpinning Butler’s model, the concept of the life cycle of animal species in the wild appears to be relatively unexplored (although discussed earlier in this volume, and by Coles, and Ravenscroft & Hijiambi, other volume; editor’s comment). Relative that is, to the considerable attention afforded the other pillar – namely the concept of the life cycle of the product. If the sheer volume of subsequent written material on the subject reflects the relative importance of the two founding concepts, one is left with the suggestion of somewhat uneven foundations and (possibly) an unbalanced structure. However, I suspect, it could simply be the result of unbalanced critique rather than lop-sided edifice.

Going some way to addressing this imbalance, initial attention is focused here on the animal/nature perspective – though clearly the notion of ‘the product’ remains crucial to any discussion or, indeed, analysis. Elvis, it could be argued, bridges these two concepts. He was the wild animal that became the managed, domesticated, cultivated product. He metamorphosed from a feral, wild cat – a hip, hep, hell cat – to the big, flabby, neutered pet pussy cat of his later years. His rise, decline – from erotic to neurotic, demise and then subsequent rejuvenation (resurrection might be more apposite here) mirrors, and serves as metaphor for, the well researched phases of the resort life cycle.

**Ecolodges and The Jungle Cycle**

Given some poetic licence, Butler’s reference to ‘the life cycle of animal species in the wild’ (Butler, 2000: 288) could be interpreted loosely and widely (though not necessarily wisely) to embrace all species including man in the wild. Now, it would seem, modern man trapped in the ‘urban jungle’ yearns, ostensibly at least, to escape from civilisation by going back to nature and experiencing the wild.

Where better to engage with nature at its most sublime, and encounter wild animals, than the jungle? And where more evocative than the mythical Amazon jungle? Fabled for its golden roofed opera house, Manaus, the city in the jungle, is the tourist gateway into the Amazon. Once there, tourists partake to varying degrees in the jungle experience. In the mid 1990s I was afforded the wonderful opportunity and experience of several field study visits to the Amazon to explore the developing eco-lodge phenomenon. Somewhat surprisingly it was there, during those forays into the jungle, that the relationships and parallels between Elvis, ecotourism, sustainability and the life cycle first struck me – as did the relevance of incorporating a linked spatial/temporal perspective to the analysis.

To establish a sequential profile of change, the tendency is to view the resort development through a linear time frame. To actually achieve this
we mentally, and instantaneously, leap back—usually to the time when the resort was created/born—and begin our analysis there and then. Tracing, as we do, the resort’s progress from its inception, we move to the present day and on to predictions of future options. When we ‘read’ the resultant graph, our eyes glide from left to right, taking in and absorbing chronologically the life cycle from birth—youth—maturity—old age—from A → B → C etc. Although how we leave the present and arrive mentally at the birth of the resort is ignored and may be of more significance than we think, once there at the origin, the process, and our analysts, appears to flow naturally and chronologically.

While travelling, against the current, back in time up the Amazon (more precisely, the tributary River Negro), I experienced this process in reverse. The 40-hour boat trip (in effect the often overlooked, neglected and, for me up until then, instantaneous, ‘leap back’ stage of the TALC) furnished me with time for literal—and littoral—reflection. Time to reflect on the passing of time, of, for example, the realisation of distant childhood dreams of the jungle. But only now venturing there (both childhood and jungle) from the vantage—or disadvantage—of middle age. And time to realise that the subjectivity inherent in where one is in terms of one’s own personal life cycle must surely have some relevance to any analysis one attempts.

It was this journey up the river from Manaus that made me aware of going back in time. This spatial/temporal dimension was later reinforced when reading Winchester’s *The River at the Centre of the World. A Journey up the Yangtze, and Back in Chinese Time*. ‘The Yangtze flows for 4,000 miles from the pristine glaciers of the pre-industrial Tibetan plateau to the polluted, extended mouth in Shanghai. As it flows it traces China’s history’ (Winchester, 1997: 17). A graphic account of journeying up the Yangtze (a slow boat in China?), as the title suggests travelling upstream from Shanghai was to Winchester, searching for China’s heart and soul, like retreating from civilisation—like going back in time. Similarly in the Amazon, the further the distance up river by boat from Manaus then, generally speaking, the wilder, the more primeval the environment/ambience. This, in turn, is reflected in the ‘nature’ of the ecodge situated on the banks. The further up river they are then, as a rough indicator, the more ‘primitive’ the ecodge, and concomitantly the more natural, the more supposedly authentic the visitor experience. Conversely, those lodges in close proximity to Manaus offer the tourist a safer, sanitised environmental bubble. Generally speaking then, the distance from the tourist gateway influences/determines at what stage each ecodge is at in terms of the overall life cycle of the generic Eco-Lodge.

To me, each successive individual ecodge I encountered on my journey up river epitomised a different stage in the life cycle of the still growing and evolving generic Eco-Lodge. Logistically the picture
unfurled in reverse. The isolation of the ecolodges in the Amazon makes it possible to establish their respective characteristics in a cross-sectional analysis and to locate their comparative position in the overall life cycle of the Eco-Lodge – as opposed to a conventional time-series analysis of an individual resort. Different stages of the product life cycle can, in these circumstances, be determined therefore not by tracing the life cycle of one single 'resort'/product over time but rather by identifying at what stage of the generic life cycle model the particular lodge is at. Here space/distance represent time. Consequently we can view each individual ecolodge as a manifestation of a different life cycle phase, in this case chronicling the process in reverse sequence from the luxurious to the primitive.

For this purpose, the Ariau Tower, situated approximately three hours by boat from Manaus, serves as an example of the lodge where ecotourists are pampered, in a protected environment offering the relative luxuries of air-conditioning, swimming pool and, perhaps the ultimate convenience, flush toilets. At the other end of the spectrum, for those prepared to penetrate further in their quest for the authentic, is the small Xixuau Nature Reserve. This basic ecolodge, bereft of creature comforts, is some 40 hours by boat from Manaus. Put rather simplistically, the sizeable Ariau Tower was catering for the mass ecotourist, the Xixuau for the would-be intrepid traveller.

The Life Cycle from Memphis to Las Vegas

Now superimpose on this profile Elvis's earthly life cycle, from youth to premature death at 42. The Xixuau reserve then equates to the raw teen idol Elvis circa 1956 and the Ariau tower to the commodified, bloated, idle Elvis of later years.

Distanced from civilisation, the wildness of the Xixuau lodge – its primitive, unpretentious, no frills, natural authenticity – represents the unconstructed Elvis from his early days. Aply monikered 'King of the Cats', he was then both the Lion and Loin King. Roar/raw sex. Via the racially slurred, nastily labelled 'jungle music' of rock'n'roll (itself jazz terminology for sex) he brought black music to a white audience – the dark, the dangerous and the forbidden. Effortlessly mimicking the 'primitive', King not by birthright but by revolution, he brought rebellion. And he was sex, animal sex. The impact was cataclysmic. 'Elvis was electric, when he sang "Turn me Loose" that was the feeling. And he spat out his songs and shook and murmured with the bottled up emotion we felt. When he moved we knew it was sex. Rock'n'roll was a euphemism for sex, but not the girl next door. We wanted to fuck the world' (Gosling, 1980: 39) This Elvis was not for the fainthearted.
But already there were problems. How to maintain, and sustain, the momentum of success? 'By 1958, Elvis had ruled for two years solid. . . . He had racked up twenty world-wide million sellers. Still, he had some long term problems. He was already twenty three, he could not go on being a teen idol for ever. The difficulty was how to turn him from an adolescent rebel into a respectable established figure . . .' (Cohn, 1973: 26).

His manager, the enigmatic impresario, Colonel Parker, had the answer 'The King of the Cats' was to be emasculated, tamed and domesticated: turned from beast to cuddly toy. Initially, Elvis seemingly acquiesced in this transition. 'Put a chain around my neck and lead me anywhere' (Mann & Lowe, 1956) proved painfully prophetic. 'I don't want to be your tiger, cos tigers play too rough. I don't want to be your lion, cos lions aren't the sort your lovin' of - I just want to be your teddy bear.' (Mann & Lowe, 1956). The lyrics say it all.

Already the wheels had been set in motion. Elvis had moved from Sun Records to RCA, from specialist to mainstream; from small to mass market, from local to national to international. Moulded to take full advantage of market opportunities, Elvis was stage managed.

Some might see Elvis's commodification and concomitant democratisation as a positive, not negative evolution/development - simultaneously becoming more acceptable and accessible to a far wider audience. To others though, the taming of the wild, dangerous Elvis, his sanitisation and commodification marked the beginning of the end. Are there specific pivotal moments to which decline can be attributed? Or, being evolutionary, is the process slow and defining moment indecipherable? For John Lennon it was Elvis joining the army, and the haircut; for Gambracini it was the contrived television appearance where Elvis, in tuxedo, sang 'Hound Dog' to a lugubrious Basset hound (Gambracini, 2002). To them the 'true', 'authentic' Elvis has been irretrievably lost. This is assuming that there was such a thing in the first place. But what was the 'real' Elvis, and the 'authentic' Elvis experience? At his wildest while performing, apparently off stage he was just a Bible reading country boy from the backwoods who loved his mother. Frontstage-backstage authenticity epitomised? (A perfect paradigm for a cross-sectional analysis.) So was the 'real' Elvis the one performing on stage or was it the shy, polite Elvis backstage?

To find out, Dunk (2002: 63), in his newspaper article 'Discovering the real Elvis in folksy Tupelo' suggests distancing yourself from the gaudy Graceland and commercialisation of the big city, and going (backwards?) to the backwoods to discover the home-spun country boy - his private persona.

Even on stage though, things were not necessarily all they seemed. Decoding early Elvis appearances, Cohn believes '... it was sex in a vacuum. He looked dangerous but ultimately he was safe and clean. That
his youth had come naturally to him — a contrived effort to maintain his younger unspoiled, uncultivated persona, to prolong his success and avert decline. When exactly did Elvis become the first Elvis impersonator? And which of them was 'real'?

Not easy. As Harry Chapin says, 'Reality is only just a word' (Chapin, 1976). Adopting a time series rather than cross-sectional perspective, should we be looking at a youthful Elvis or the Elvis approaching middle age? Both were 'real' and both had their own frontstage/backstage personas. Latter day impersonators of Elvis usually opt for mimicking his rhinestoned, jump suited days/daze. Yet the purists unequivocally see the early Elvis, before he was corrupted by commodification, as being the 'real', 'authentic' Elvis. Ironically though, it was this early Elvis that was seen by many as a, if not the, corrupting influence — more the devil incarnate than in disguise. In much the same way, to aficionados of travel, the traveller and the travel experience are held in high esteem, above reproach, whereas the tourist and mass tourism are worthy of only ridicule and scorn. But isn't the very same traveller the vanguard of the 'tourist, the harbinger of change/decline? Isn't there a familiar inevitable process — that inextricably links conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1970), successive class intrusion (Pearce, 1982) and the pleasure periphery (Turner & Ash, 1975)? And, at the macrolevel, isn't tourism surely beyond coordinated management (Wheeler, 1991)?

However, it would appear that (at the microlevel?) Butler is more positive — if only in the sense that he believes management can avert the otherwise inevitable decline. To Butler, the process of development, unless managed appropriately, is invariably linked with decline. In order to stave off deterioration he calls for 'responsibility and control over development' (Butler, 2000: 294) and consequently views management as the means of sustaining the product and ensuring its long-term survival. This seems optimistic. To me, too optimistic. It calls, on the part of management, for the replacement of short-term profit maximisation blinkers by unimpeded vision, imagination, integrity and compassion. (However, one might argue that the Rolling Stones have survived four decades as the greatest rock and roll group in the world through 'sustainable change' and still sound as good on stage as in the 1960s, so perhaps I am not being too optimistic, editor's comment).

Certainly with Elvis, the role of management seemed somewhat dubious, less altruistic. Parker had control, but whether he matched this with responsibility is another matter. Lacking in integrity, his prime agenda appears to have been procurement of maximum cash flow. Short-term this managerial approach had paid dividends. Mid-term, fuelled by industrial quantities of drugs, gluttony and indolence, Elvis's decline was exacerbated further by those perhaps initially responsible. First by rapacious management,
is what young girls have always wanted from their idols, an illusion of danger, and Elvis brought a new thrill of semi-reality to the game’ (Cohn, 1973: 26). The girls in the audience were uninhibited, shouting, screaming, fainting, whatever, while Elvis was performing on stage because that precisely was where he was – on stage. There was always a safety belt because he was unreachable, unreal and nothing could actually happen.

From Natural to Comfortable

The audience desires excitement and danger, but only from afar. Like viewing caged creatures in the zoo, or perhaps a tamed circus act. Or, from the safely strapped sanctuary of a Land Rover, the ‘wild’, exotic animals at a safari park. While fostering our delusion of wanting the authentic, in reality we much prefer a sanitised, safe and commodified version of nature – the staging of the wild.

So too with tourism. According to Dunn (1998: 38), ‘MacCannell (1976) draws on Goffman’s (1959) recognition of the division between public and private to suggest that tourists seek out the authentic in the private back regions in places which they visit’ (Shades of the ‘real’ jungle adventure of the Xixuau compared with the staged Ariau Tower experience). He continues ‘Much of MacCannell’s The Tourist is concerned with deliberate staging of authenticity and whether tourists are in a position to differentiate between staged and actual’ (Dunn, 1998: 38).

With the ecodge, the jungle adventure is experienced from the safety of the environmental bubble. Even at the edge, as tourist/travellers in the most ‘authentic’ ecodge we, of course, don’t experience the ‘true’ experience of the wild. We are protected, cocooned. We have the safety (and mosquito) net of Mosiquard and malaria tablets, our purified water tablets. We have our tampons and suntan lotion. And our indefatigable illusion/delusion of being at one with nature.

Further down river, in close proximity to the tourist gateway, we have the ‘staged authenticity’, the sham experience of the Ariau tower, the commodified ecodge ‘hotel’, representing the kitsch, Graceland Elvis of the mid 1970s. Pseudo-ecotourists cosseted in the comfort zone of the Ariau tower lounge; Elvis, corseted, lounge lizarding in the jungle room at Graceland.

Certainly, the décor of this jungle room is more pseudo experience than real. Graceland is, in effect, the mummification of 1970s garish Elvis (should that be mummyfication? He did, after all, originally purchase Graceland partly for his adored, and adoring mother, Gladys). Equally, it could be argued, by that time Elvis had himself become a pseudo-experience. A far cry from his own younger self, he was reliant on artificial stimulants and drugs to generate the energy and vitality that in
If he had held control of his own life, he might have chosen to lock himself away in Graceland and never come out again. That wasn’t an option. Tom Parker was a compulsive gambler and needed Elvis to keep working. So the King was dispatched to Vegas again, and then on tour, zig-zag-ing across America, with ever decreasing breaks, until he finally imploded. (Cohn, 2002: 23)

And then secondly by leeching friends. Desperate to sustain their milk cow, his immediate ‘friends’ – whose sobriquet the ‘Memphis Mafia’ seems so apposite – fed him a potent cocktail of drugs. Rejuvenation/regeneration at all costs. Rather than taking care of Elvis, their motto ‘Taking care of Business’, attested to their priorities and true loyalties.

This potent cocktail progressively took its toll. Elvis the Pelvis became Elvis the Product. The cost? Elvis the Person. Local boy made god, his fall from grace was one of tragic proportions. ‘It is a sad and salutary tale: the beautiful prince, kissed by Fate, who turned into a toad’ (Melly, 2002: 15). But as in all true tragedies it was one of overwhelming irony. Because of course, long term for the Elvis phenomenon death proved the ultimate career move. Elvis the idle idol becomes Elvis the icon.

**Conclusion**

Does it matter if the product ‘deteriorates’ and is ‘ruined’ in the process? If the prince turns into a toad? If the proverbial goose is cooked? As sustenance to the masses, maybe it is easier to digest that way. The venerated golden goose may, after all, be a dispensable luxury. While the product undergoes physical decline and decay, the assumption that the utility derived simultaneously declines seems a little doubtful. Individual utility might, or might not, decline. But given the increased accessibility to, and acceptance of, the product by a wider (less discerning?) market, then even though the product deteriorates, the aggregate pleasure/utility may very well increase.

Simple common sense – surely? But maybe, in a sense, simply because it is ‘common’ it is conveniently ignored, indeed eschewed, by the ‘sophisticated’. We need only look at the huge tourist numbers to Las Vegas, Niagara or the Blackpools of the world to realise this. Comparing these figures with visitor numbers to the niche, ecocentres of say, Costa Rica and Belize, confirms the fact that despite its prominence in tourism academic research, and gushing rhetoric from politicians and the tourism industry, eco/sustainable tourism is still only a small, very minor segment of the overall tourism market. Like it or not, mass tourism demand reigns supreme. When it suits, the ‘informed’, the ‘educated’, the ‘sophisticated’ again choose to ignore this too.

And so with Elvis. Because of, rather than despite, commodification and ‘inauthenticity’, the number seeing the King – live or on film – in the
1960s and 1970s far exceeded the rock’n’roll aficionados of his mid-1950s, early ‘authentic’ years. What to some constituted Elvis’s decline to others was, perversely, the very reason for his continued success. His transition from rebel outsider to mainstream good guy and the subsequent pathos of the ultimately sad, suffering tragic hero ensured his enduring popularity – albeit with an (arguably) less discerning market. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder – what to some is ugly and degenerate to others appeals. Content with kitsch, for many this is beauty.

Pilgrims to Graceland:

are not the cool or the hip. Like Elvis himself, they come from the great amorphous white millions, who scuffle to get by, who blunder through lives filled with mess and waste and odd moments of joy, untouched by changing fashion. Small wonder Elvis is their once and future king. They love him, not in spite of his excesses and his grotesque end, but in large part because of them. He suffered so much. He is their martyr. (Cohn, 2002: 23)

And this is the conundrum possibly at the heart of the life cycle/sustainability model – is (perceived) deterioration in quality necessarily synonymous with decline?

To some – often the pretentious and condescending – be they academic experts, pseudo-travellers or music connoisseurs, the answer invariably is ‘yes’. But the majority – the mass market – maybe see things from a different, less privileged, more prosaic angle. To them, the supposed decline may appear merely as a shift in focus, a change that brings the product within their economic and cultural compass. Happily wrapped in their safety blanket, it is suggested here that many don’t feel the need or even want to see beneath the surface, beyond the immediate – particularly if that necessitates any potential discomfort or danger. They prefer the staged to the actual, the superficial to the real.

Similarly, with the ecotourism. While changes to facilities may make the product more attractive to the wider market, do they enhance the jungle experience? The introduction of air-conditioning dilutes the experience of the wild but simultaneously makes it more bearable and, therefore, acceptable to more tourists – who without the decadence of incongruous luxury would not be prepared to experience the jungle at all. And, of course, because it maintains cash flow, the modification is, in a sense, ‘sustainable’ (Wheeler, 1994). So changes determined by market forces/entrepreneurial intervention do not necessarily enhance the soul of the product – indeed they may remove the essence, the very heart. But does it really matter as long as it keeps the customer satisfied? The supposedly progressively less discerning customer, that is.

The King is Dead. Long Live the Product.
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Tourism and the Environment Challenges and Choices for the 90's, London (1993)

Tourism Management, Vol.14 No.3 1993 pp.234-235
to develop much greater understanding of the constraints and opportunities that destination database developments offer, co-author Bob Stanton outlined the main findings of the PATA study. These were that the travel industry's business processes have been greatly altered by the many advances in computing and telecommunications of the last 20 years. In addition to airlines, other industry vendors, such as hotel group and tour operators, are making increasingly intensive use of computer systems. It is also clear that a technology-based industry of 'intermediaries' is developing.

The role of the public sector has been limited mainly to the development of product databases, containing destination data. A limited amount of marketing activity using customer databases has also been undertaken by some administrations, a practice which is commonplace in the commercial sector.

The development pattern of the estimated 200 destination databases that are in existence is haphazard and varied. The success rate to date of the most ambitious projects has been low.

Over 20 of these destination databases were analysed during the study and detailed reports prepared on 14. Four main categories of system were identified: locally based visitor information systems; information systems for professional use; product reservation systems for professional use and fully structured destination databases.

For destination marketers the management and provision of high-quality destination information is clearly a necessary task, not least because of the emergence of new market sectors, such as the environmentally conscious. These offer excellent opportunities for utilizing the targeted marketing techniques that can be supported by fully structured destination databases.

Speakers such as New South Wales Tourism Commission's Paul Crombie pointed out that in many cases tourist boards had computerized their information function with insufficient regard to the marketing implications of such developments.

Telecommunications expert Mark Hukill from Singapore University warned delegates that they had to be realistic about what could be achieved in the current technical environment. Speakers from Europe emphasized the need to coordinate both the technical and commercial sides of the operation with the overall objectives of the relevant destination marketing body, an approach that is being followed in Ireland, for example, with the far-reaching Gulliver development.

There was general support for the study's conclusion that, while competition is a necessary and proper element of commerce, effective data management and systems development require cooperation in certain areas. The main recommendations from the study centred on the need to develop expertise on the issues involved in the development and management of destination databases as well as the potential benefits arising from cooperation between different destinations in coordinating destination database developments, with particular reference to the effective use of scarce human and technical resources and the exploitation of database marketing techniques.

Conference Chairman, PATA's Senior Vice-President Roger Griffin, summed up by saying that, while PATA itself would not be developing a destination database of its own for the region, the body was keen to advance members' use and understanding of the techniques, not least because of the competitive edge this could give in the increasingly competitive world of international tourism marketing. Copies of the PATA Study 'Destination Databases - Issues and Priorities' together with copies of the proceedings of the above conference can be obtained for the inclusive price of US$250 for PATA members or US$375 for non-members from Peggy Lau at PATA in San Francisco, fax +1 415 986 3458 or in Europe from Sue Boyles on fax +44 71 603 2837.

Gilbert H. Archdale
35 Milson Road
London W14 0LH

Tourism and the environment: challenges and choices for the 90s, London, 16–17 November 1992

On the whole, the two-day conference format of main speakers, workshops, report back and open panel sessions worked well. The first day's programme was devoted to 'The Challenges' and the second, somewhat optimistically, to resolving 'The Choices' though inevitably there were considerable overlaps between the days' proceedings.

Jonathan Porritt, the green activist who founded the UK's Ecology (later Green) Party, spoke with customary eloquence and persuasion. While emphasizing the cultural and spiritual challenge as well as the economic issue of development and tourism, he believed the political momentum of green issues to be slow but steady.

Professor Jost Krippendorf's contribution was, to me at least, perhaps the most unexpected. His general optimism and in particular his eulogistic embracing of the codes of practice, and recommendations, of recent UK official documentation - Task Force, Green Light, etc - were somewhat surprising. In what amounted to an enthusiastic eulogy he spoke in glowing terms claiming these to be perfect paradigms, strongly advocating their adoption world-wide.

The workshop sessions covered a range of relevant issues but as they ran concurrently this naturally presented delegates with a difficult choice as to which to attend. Monday's sessions were: Historic Towns; The Country-
side; The City Environment, Coastal Resorts; and Mountain Areas. On Tuesday the workshops were: Funding for Conservation; Planning and Regulations; Design; Transport; Management of Capacity; and Tourism Development in Central and Eastern Europe.

Worthy of special note here was the contribution of Aitken Clark to the workshop on Central Europe. He was well prepared and informed, chairing the session with warmth and sensitivity while encouraging and eliciting response from the floor – an exemplary chairman’s performance. In the workshop report-back sessions the rapporteurs were efficient and informative; however, what was perhaps most striking here was the complete absence of women – of the 11 rapporteurs all were men. Surely it is time conference organizers acknowledged and addressed such imbalances? Those of us who witnessed the all-male, top-table debate of the conference dinner at the recent, otherwise worthy, Durham conference (July 1992) must have thought we had experienced the ultimate last supper of chauvinism in tourism. Evidently we were wrong.

‘Concrete’ and ‘action’ appear to be joining the old chestnuts of ‘sustainable growth’, and ‘visitor management’ in the buzzword/euphemism stakes. Nebulous calls for a ‘concrete agenda for action’ echoed round the conference centre. I suspect this will duly materialize in an agenda of concrete development. With regard to peaking and visitor flows, someone obviously forgot to inform Lancaster House of the merits of the all-purpose, all-redeeming ‘good visitor management’ approach. Arriving for the conference reception (dare I say it) ‘en masse’, by coach on a wet Monday evening in November and then having to queue for 25 minutes to hand in coats and umbrellas at the cloakroom just about summed up the chasm between words and practice.

Rhetoric was rife; yet again there was reference to the goose and the golden egg. Perhaps in light of the pre-Christmas, pantomime spirit this could be forgiven; but surely we can spare ‘Changes are needed – changes that don’t cost the earth. To ignore them might cost the earth’, etc, etc. Nobody seemed too sure precisely what these changes should be, exactly how they are to be implemented, who will be responsible for their effectiveness and, crucially, who will finance them. Krippendorf’s call for ‘Action, action, action’ had something of a hollow, as opposed to hallowed, ring to it and Noel Josephides’ (Association of Independent Tour Operators) argument that destination areas should call the shots in setting and adhering to capacity targets seemed, crucially, to ignore totally the unequal distribution of power inherent in such processes.

What the conference did achieve was the seemingly impossible feat of raising Centre Parcs’ status and profile even higher. Already held in high esteem (some might say reverence) by official tourist bodies, Centre Parcs’ part-sponsorship of the event was, for them, clearly a sound investment. Whether paying delegates felt they had received similar value for money was another matter – £411, or £235 for charities and educational establishments (not including accommodation or conference dinner) did seem a little steep.

Nevertheless the conference was indubitably a prestigious event with a number of influential players together in one arena. Some might believe that it is simply a matter of the same arguments that have been around for a number of years now being discussed by ‘important’ people. Certainly the profile, if not necessarily the level, of debate concerning tourism, development and the environment is indeed being raised.

This conference, constructively, played a significant role in this process and to that extent it was a success. We await to see whether the pleas for action really do reach fruition. The recurring problem of these now familiar ‘tourism and environment conferences’ is the continued under-representation of delegates from the commercial sector of the tourism industry. This conference was no exception – with local and county council officials, government bodies, tourist board representatives and academics dominating the delegate list. The majority of these delegates present could, for a variety of reasons, afford to have liberal, enlightened long-term views toward the environment. It was to a large extent a question of preaching to the converted – albeit a number of them somewhat cynical about the lack of any real green progress.

Others who do not, perhaps, share the coddled luxury of such relatively secure vantage points but whose vision is restricted by more immediate, short-term economic necessities, accept that their priorities, evidently and understandably, lie elsewhere – in this case probably literally only a few miles away across London. The conference was organized to coincide with the World Travel Market. Any optimism generated among the delegates attending the two-day conference on tourism and the environment must surely have been tempered and, I would strongly suggest, put into a far more realistic perspective by just two minutes caught up in the Earls Court jamboree.

Official proceedings for the conference are available from the English Tourist Board, Thames Tower, Black’s Road, London W6 9EL, UK.

Brian Wheeler
CURS
The University of Birmingham
Birmingham B15 2TT, UK
A Carry-on up the Jungle (1994)  

World Ecotourism Conference, Manaus, Brazil, Tourism Management, Vol.15, No.3, 1994 pp.231-233
Ukraine's regional tourist councils (except those of the Crimea, Poltava and Kiev) were turned into tourist excursion associations as part of a reorganization of national tourism in 1988-89.

After the liquidation of the Republican Tourist Council and the Ukrainian branch of Intourist, a number of commercial organizations was formed. Many small business enterprises, cooperative enterprises and joint ventures have appeared. Their main activity has been to provide excursion services such as business cruises and commercial tours. In Odessa, for example, the tourist industry is now made up of excursion associations (1%), small enterprises (43%), joint ventures (6%), tourist agencies and bureaus (18%), multifunctional commercial firms (13%), trade associations, unions and social organizations (9%), tourist clubs (3%), tourist centres (3%) and other groups (4%). The overwhelming majority of these organizations arrange trips for Ukrainians travelling abroad; few are involved in bringing international visitors to Ukraine. Consequently the ratio of inbound to outbound tourists is 6:19.

The large commercial structures that have emerged include the International Tourist Association (Intourist-Ukraine), the joint stock company Ukrintour and the incorporated association Sputnik.

Intourist-Ukraine was founded in 1991 by a group of some 30 former members of the original Intourist organization. It is a voluntary association of enterprises and private persons with different forms of tourism-related property. Its main tasks are the development of international tourism, the expansion of international trade, increasing currency revenues, formation of a data bank for informational services, organizing commercial advertising, fixing the direction of economic policy and setting priorities for tourism development.

The association's managing organs are the General Assembly of Founders, the General and Executive Soviets and the Inspection Committee. The General Soviet, headed by the association's Managing Director, deals with management problems between general meetings and the Executive Soviet, headed by the President, actually running the organization. All decisions are referred to the President and he represents the association in the Ukraine and abroad. Intourist-Ukraine has set up joint ventures, branches and agencies abroad and takes part in international trade fairs and exhibitions.

Intourist-Ukraine functions as a united economic complex aiming to use its capital efficiently, facilitate the provision of tourist services, overcome the former state monopoly on these services and decentralize the sector.

The joint stock company Ukrintour is specifically concerned with the management of international tourism. Its founders include over 40 bodies (eg the City Bank, the Zakarpattian Bank, the Rus hotel complex and various ministries). One of its chief aims is to improve the quality of service, which was often deficient in the past, but it is also involved in the manufacture of hotel equipment, construction, arrangement of entry visas and transportation, etc. It conducts analyses of the international market in order to maximize business, works out tourist itineraries and accredits Ukrainian and foreign firms.

Ukrintour is authorized to create joint enterprises with foreign firms. Its joint stock bank has branches in the Lvov, Ivanov-Frankovsk, Kharkov and Odessa regions. Ukrintour's activities attracted US$700 000 to the organization in 1992. In 1993 it signed new agreements with the USA and various European and Middle Eastern countries and it is currently involved in the construction of a youth tourism centre in Yalta.

Sputnik was originally founded in 1958 and had over 200 branches in the FSU. Before the break-up of the country it had handled over 40 million tourists (of whom seven million were from abroad), visiting 500 cities. On average it served three million young people a year.

Sputnik was reorganized into a joint stock company with 52 subsidiaries in 1991 and today has branches throughout Ukraine and the Crimea. It operates a number of hotels, but still concentrates on youth tourism, organizing trips for research students and various exchanges. It collaborates with 550 youth organizations in 88 countries.

Currently, Sputnik is concentrating on developing domestic tourism, receiving foreign delegations and organizing international tours to Greece, Italy, the UK, the USA, France, Germany and the Middle East.

One further organization which should be mentioned is Ukproftour which was founded by the Independent Trade Unions Soviet and the Social Insurance Fund in 1991. It coordinates trade-union tourism in Ukraine, providing customer services and building new tourist centres.

In April 1993 a State Committee was created to coordinate the work of the various tourist organizations. Thus far, however, the Cabinet of Ministries has failed to elaborate an effective strategy for the tourism industry and no government programme on tourism development has been adopted.

A Mazaraki and E Voronova
Trade and Economics Institute
Ul Kioto 19
252156 Kiev, Ukraine

A carry-on up the jungle

Brian Wheeller, of Birmingham University's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, reports on the World Congress on Eco-tourism, held in Manaus, Brazil, in September 1993.

The thriving mushroom of eco-tourism continues to swell at a disturbing rate. For me there was never any magic attached to it. I can only assume that many of the more recent 'believers' see eco-tourism as a strain of the
magic mushroom variety and are hallucinating as a result. Manifestations of this phenomenon were clearly evident at the Adventure Travel Society's World Congress on Eco-tourism and Adventure Travel.

Held, on the outskirts of the city, at the five-star luxury Tropical Hotel - a veritable pleasure dome - this vast complex seemed just a trifle incongruous, a touch ironic, when one considers the ideals of eco-tourism. An obvious criticism I know but one that speaks (yells) volumes of the hypocrisy of eco-tourism. This is especially the case if the strong, though unconfirmed, rumour that the hotel pumped all its sewage directly into the adjoining River Negro proves to be true. Another irony, though not a great surprise, was that Varig, the Brazilian national airline and one of the conference co-sponsors, also apparently owns the Tropical Hotel. In his opening address Jerry Mallet, President of the Adventure Travel Society, described Varig as 'a key leader in world eco-tourism'.

On second thoughts, maybe it was precisely in keeping with, and the perfect paradigm of, the realities of eco-tourism - an altruistic, even noble, concept hijacked for commercial and material purposes.

Prevalent at the conference was the familiar, seductively straightforward (but unfortunately spurious) logic used to underpin arguments in favour of eco-tourism. We were told, repeatedly, that world-wide, one in 15 jobs was created by tourism, therefore tourism was a proven job creator; that tourism and for the foreseeable future is likely to remain the world's fastest growing industry, therefore employment prospects were good; that there were problems with tourism impact but (you've guessed it) these were caused by mass, package tourism - the 'other', therefore that by avoiding, in every sense of the word, mass tourism and by promoting eco-tourism we would have all the benefits of tourism without any of the costs. Wonderful.

Just taking one fundamental flaw in this routine, it seemed completely lost on virtually all speakers and many delegates that if this miraculous figure of one in 15 jobs continually handed about is 'correct' then these jobs have been created by, and are dependent on, the economics of mass tourism. If we are looking for a comparable figure on which to base estimates of job creation by small-scale eco-tourism projects then perhaps a ratio of say one in 10 000 world-wide may be a more accurate, but somewhat less appealing, indicator.

Speakers, often themselves tour operators, expressed their passionate belief that the indigenous 'natives' should not be exploited by tourism but must have control of their own destiny; that the local populations should not be dictated to by outside pressures, etc. Yet this seemed strangely at odds with their own business practice. A number of speakers and delegates were in Amazonia not only to attend the conference but to sample, on behalf of their prospective clients, the various alternative (or more likely alternative) jungle lodges in the vicinity. The criteria being applied were not from any theoretical eco-audit manual (for sale at the conference bookstall) but from a more prosaic 'keep the (ie my) customer satisfied' school of thought.

The pattern was understandably familiar - those lodges that were considered appropriate got the business; those that were not up to the required standard (ie meeting the requirements of the clientele) did not - and would not unless they responded accordingly and made 'appropriate' changes. While this is perfectly reasonable from a commercial point of view, it is nevertheless difficult to marry with the ethical arguments of indigenous control being advocated from the conference platform. It suggests that, despite all the fine rhetoric, once again the tourists are calling the shots in these so-called havens of eco-tourism.

The themes for the day were Be Aware or Beware; Crossing the Border; Adventure for a Day (field trips) and It's a Small World After All. The quality of the array of papers inevitably varied considerably though almost without exception they were delivered from an unequivocal pro eco-tourism axis. In terms of eco-appropriateness the variety of pre- and post-conference trips (offered as options in the overall conference package) appeared somewhat random. Superficially the Amazon Lodge Experience had the trappings of eco-tourism, which wasn't exactly true for the Luxor Hotel on Copacabana. Nevertheless an excellent time was had by all at both these venues.

One of the central themes of the congress was the cry for the development of a research and management methodology appropriate for eco-tourism. My colleague Bob Prosser pointed out at the conference that this no doubt bemused, confused - even amused - the National Park, Forest and Wilderness managers present from North America and Australia. As he said: 'They already have to hand a considerable body of such procedures and strategies accumulated and refined over many years. The trouble is, apparently, that it is called "Outdoor Recreation Management".'

There wasn't really anything new coming out of the conference in terms of solutions - just the familiar resort to suggested codes of practice, restrictions of access and the dubious 'quality product' argument.

I appreciate it is easy to be cynical about eco-tourism, to be too critical. I know there are genuine individuals and genuine organisations striving, against all odds, for a 'better' form of tourism. Unfortunately, for me the impression from this conference was that these odds are lengthening. It was the same old story of the 'big sell' of eco-tourism, where the desire, and very real opportunities, for short-term returns in the form of the green-backed dollar took precedence over the long-term considerations of a green environment, and sustainable social and cultural structures.

To me this was the real agenda of the conference - how to increase/improve business in general and how in particular to develop commercial opportunities in eco-tourism. This was not too surprising given the approximate breakdown of the background of the 400 or so delegates - private tourism sector 42%; conservation and education 24%; government tourism sector 18%; journal promotion 10%; others 6% - or the profile of speakers.
It is, of course, notoriously difficult to produce the 'right' balance, the perfect mix at tourism conferences. To be fair, accompanying the Adventure Travel Society logo, and stamped on much of its literature, is 'Passport to Marketing adventure travel and developing eco-tourism as a sustainable economic, cultural and environmental resource'. The marketing element is, therefore, pretty much 'up front'. However, the ethical dilemmas presented by this, and the compatibility of the objectives, were not really discussed in Manaus. Perhaps they had been fully explored at an earlier conference, though I doubt it.

This begs the question though of whether eco-tourism refers to ecologically, or economically sound tourism. Some would say these are synonymous, most would argue they should be. On a global scale, however, I'm afraid they never will be. Significantly, it also raises the basic issue of whether the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Eco-tourism is a forum for open discussion on eco-tourism or whether it is essentially a form of glorified 'Trade Fair' for eco-tourism operators, government bodies and journalists eager to embrace eco-tourism. This is meant as an observation, not a criticism. If it was the intention to be such a gathering then it was a very effective one.

The formal conference proceedings were considerably enhanced by a spectacular evening social programme, including three sumptuous banquets. We eco-travellers really know how to have a good time. But it struck me as odd that, when the 'locals' did appear (to perform ethnic dances), we the eco-protagonists/ego-pretenders should greet them so rapturously. Odd, because no doubt we would scorn a Flamenco dance in a two-star hotel in Torremolinos as being a frivolous staged 'pseudo event' - as demeaning and not the real thing at all. Incidentally the Indian group's changing facilities appeared to be the hotel's gents' toilets.

I am, of course, a 'consenting adult' in this entire charade. For networking purposes, for gleaning considerable, relevant information etc and, particularly, from a social point of view then the conference was, without doubt, a resounding international success - a really enjoyable, worthwhile do. For the 1994 conference the wagon rolls on to Hobart, Tasmania. I suggest you leave your consciences on the living room table and go - I'm sure we'll have another damn good time.

Proceedings of the conference are available from: The Adventure Travel Society, 6551 S Revere Parkway, Suite 160, Englewood, Colorado 80111, as are details of all previous and forthcoming events. Despite (or perhaps because of) my jaundiced views I do recommend these proceedings as a source of reference for all those interested in the subject area.

Brian Wheeler
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT
UK

Electronic markets

British delegates to the ENTER '94 Conference on information and communications technologies in tourism, held in Innsbruck, Austria during early January, were doubtless glad to escape the latest spell of particularly inclement British weather. However, none expected this historic city, centre of the skiing-mad Tyrol, to be basking in almost spring-like weather and with hardly a snowflake in sight. Consultant Gilbert Archdale reports.

Delegates were perhaps equally surprised by the scope and quality of this new event, the first of a planned annual series of gatherings. Inspired by a number of leading academics from Vienna University and strongly supported by key Austrian and Swiss tourism organizations, ENTER '94 was impeccably organized by the Tyrol Tourist Board in cooperation with the Tyrol Congress Bureau.

The conference was billed by its sponsors as a first attempt to:

- provide an international forum to discuss the role of telecommunications and information systems in tourism;
- inform the tourism industry about the importance of such developments and illuminate their role;
- enable the research community to discuss their work in this area on a common platform;
- improve contacts between researchers, systems developers and users.

Some 300 delegates from nearly 30 countries attended the three-day event. Experts from 17 nations gave 66 (!) lectures and workshop sessions. The associated exhibition was also well supported, with 40 exhibitors (primarily from Austria, Switzerland and Germany) who demonstrated the latest in tourism information and management software as well as leading-edge examples of multimedia and other new technologies such as Smart Cards.

The special theme for 1994 was 'Electronic Markets'. Those familiar with currency trading would doubtless agree with several of the speakers that true electronic markets do not yet exist in the tourism industry, though the United States domestic airline industry comes close to it. There, with some 95% of all air travel on discounted tickets, fares are filed, distributed and accessed exclusively through the airline CRS systems. Travel agency PC-based software automatically checks and rechecks flight and fare availability, taking advantage of even lower fares filed closer to departure date. Finally tickets can be issued remotely through Electronic Ticket Distribution Networks.

Thus airline seats have almost become a commodity traded like currencies. Although there are not yet futures in seats there are speculators...
Bahamian Rhapsody in Blue

The Mediterranean was also the focus of the next paper on Cyprus by Rodney Wilson (University of Durham). He began by noting the benefits which a rapidly growing tourism industry has brought, especially foreign exchange receipts that represent 43% of earnings from exports and services, and employment which reached 33,000 in 1994. Although tourism has become the cornerstone of the economy, he also stressed that the industry was based on fragile foundations. In particular, he noted that the expansion of tourist arrivals was based on relatively few sources, had created much low-quality employment and had led to massive urbanization along the length of the south coast.

In contrast, the last paper of the morning, given by Ingo Mose (Vechta University, Germany) examined the East Frisian Islands which lie between latitude 5 and 15 km from the German North Sea coast and attract visitors from a fairly limited hinterland in northwestern Germany. The islands are particularly small and have distinctive dune landscapes and salt marsh habitats. However, rapid growth in demand for holidays during the last 30 years has led to problems similar to those experienced by islands in warm seas. Norderney, the largest island, has experienced overcrowding and unsympathetic building activities on the seaward fringe of the old town. In contrast, several of the smaller islands are now attempting to resist the spread of commercialization and have introduced policies to encourage the conservation of historic villages, develop countryside leisure activities such as nature trails and prohibit access to motor cars.

After lunch, the focus of the conference shifted to tourism in less developed island states. Roger Heap (Managing Director of British Airways Holidays), began by noting that tourism policies in the Seychelles have a strong commitment to sustainable development and environmental protection. Heap then introduced a life cycle analysis of those environmental problems that can be linked to tourist development. The study highlighted two major difficulties: destruction caused by building and water pollution linked to inefficiencies in the waste disposal system. Finally, it was suggested that more research using the LCA technique would help to identify variations in environmental practice found in different island destinations.

Peter Burns (University of North London) outlined the factors limiting the expansion of tourism in the South Pacific. In particular, he emphasized the negative impact of remoteness, small domestic markets and complex land tenure systems. Given the relatively small-scale nature of tourist flows in the region it might be expected that ecotourism offers much potential. Whilst this is certainly the case, he suggests a continuum of accommodation and facilities ranging from luxury and business to heritage and ecotourism is most appropriate.

The final session of the afternoon was chaired by Martin Brackenbury (Director of Thomson Travel Group) who reminded participants of the dynamic character of tourism in which the popularity of individual destinations is prone to cyclical fluctuations. To counter such trends, David Barber (Marketing Director [Europe] Caribbean Tourism Organization) explained that regional initiatives have become an important element in marketing, tourism training and education, and in developing new air links. On the other hand, some islands offer unique features that cannot readily be replicated elsewhere. One such example is Bali whose cultural attractions featured prominently in the last paper of the day delivered by Geoff Wall (University of Waterloo, Canada). Dr Wall showed that tourist development had mainly occurred since the airport opened in 1968 and, although some environmental degradation had occurred, the Balinese culture has remained strong due to part to the strength of local institutions and to the early implementation of a tourism master plan that has concentrated development in the south.

A lively discussion brought the conference to a conclusion. This focused first on the fascination of islands and second on environmental matters and land-use planning. Viewpoints ranged from the fairly optimistic, pointing to economic and education benefits and modernization of the infrastructure, to the somewhat gloomy - perspectives on external dependency, inclusive resort-focused development and more general problems of pressures on coastal environments. The informal discussions that continued long after the official conclusion of the meeting confirmed that islands remain a popular and important aspect of tourism studies. Many of the contributions to the conference along with other specially commissioned chapters will be published by Pinter in October.

Douglas Grant Lockhart
Geography Department
Keele University
Staffordshire ST5 5BG, UK

Bahamian rhapsody in blue

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism hosted the Fifth Annual World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism held at the Atlantis - Paradise Island Resort, Nassau, Bahamas 29 October–2 November 1995. Obviously maintaining their penchant for impressive, appealing destinations - Tasmania, 1994, the Amazon, 1993 - the organizers, The Adventure Travel Society (motto: Promoting Adventure Travel, Protecting the Environment) this time chose Sustaining Nature's Treasures as their theme. Brian Wheeler, of the University of Birmingham, UK, was fortunate to experience another intriguing ego-event. Copyright © 1996 Elsevier Science Ltd

On the way from Nassau airport to the conference, the local car in front had a bumper car sticker that read 'Plant a Tree, Save the Earth'. Defender of
Reports

the faith? Not really – the message was just about obliterated by the mushrooming fumes spewing from the exhaust pipe. An ominous portent of what was to come at an ecotourism conference?

The philosophy of the Adventure Travel Society, the conference organizers, is one rooted firmly in the free market economy: profit – sustainable profit, that is – is the name of the game. So many other protagonists in the ecotourism theatre are, for a variety of reasons, only acting their part. At least you know where you are up to with this society. They mean business – with a capital B – and this, clearly is their clarion call. You cannot possibly fault them for being up front about this and I, for one, applaud their openness. Outlining plans for their next conference in South America (November 1996), Jerry Mallett, the Society’s President and leading light, enthusiastically and somewhat evangelically, declared: ‘We are going to do business in Chile’. You had better believe him.

The Society is of the conviction that ‘the foundation of adventure travel is the small business’ and in the pre-conference publicity they, quite right- ly, declare their hand: ‘We know that Adventure Travel offers an excellent opportunity for travel agents and tour operators to maintain and expand their business . . . the 1995 World Congress is making a special effort to support the small businesses that are involved daily in selling Adventure Travel’. In this respect the accompanying trade show, running in tandem with, and dovetailing nicely into, the more formal conference proceedings added further depth to the overall event. Small business delegates formed a substantial proportion of those attending, the organizers clearly successful in targeting their primary market. (There were only around 10 academics present.) The titles from a selection of the sessions endorse this; giving, I feel, a fair reflection of just where the conference organizers are coming from: The Role of the Travel Agent; Selling Adventure Travel and Ecotourism; Nature Beckons – Who and Where are the Travel Clientele?: Successful Promotion of an Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Destination.

Coinciding with this conference, the White House Conference on Tourism witnessed over 1500 American practitioners gathered in their capital to exhort their government to pursue growth policies to secure an increased share of the international tourism market. According to the New York Times (28 October 1995) the Washington conference was ‘primarily aimed at mapping a national strategy for attracting foreign tourists’, the environment being only one of nine objectives discussed, the other eight apparently more immediately concerned with business.

In Nassau a more modest, though nevertheless very creditable 400 plus gathered to hear essentially the same message. The environment, in the context of the conference theme, Preserving Nature’s Treasures, was supposedly the number one focal topic for discussion, yet here too this conference primarily revolved around the economics and business aspects of tourism. Profit, market share and growth were firmly in the tourism driving seat. Environmental/cultural issues of negative impact, though clearly of concern, were seen as an adjunct to their overriding objectives. This is not too surprising given the conference organizers’ strong belief that it is possible to develop a tourism-based economy without compromising natural resources. Protecting wilderness areas, managing natural resources effectively and preserving indigenous cultures will, they argue, help maintain adventure travel and ecotourism, whilst simultaneously providing economic incentives for countries and people worldwide. They therefore advocate responsible tourism management as the key to protecting a region’s or nation’s environment and indigenous culture. Basically, the old golden goose argument. She was, mercifully, only mentioned ‘in person’ once during the proceedings. Don’t tell me that she is in danger of becoming extinct (sweet relief) and about to be declared an endangered species, herself in need of protection.

An apparently peripheral but to me illuminating feature of the proceedings was the ‘dolphin debacle’. As an integral part of the conference programme, a day was given over to field trips – an array of attractive options, which were, naturally, all ecologically sound. Or perhaps not, as it transpires. At short notice, the Dolphin Experience (take a ferry to Blue Lagoon Island for an experience of a lifetime! Swim with dolphins etc. as the conference pack suggested) was rather mysteriously cancelled. According to local press reports, Angela Cleare, of the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, reflecting the view of the organizers, felt that a ‘dolphins in captivity programme’ was not suitable for an ecotourism congress. ‘We do not need any controversy. We have a very exciting agenda and we want people to focus on that . . .’ The director of the snubbed Dolphin Encounter had an understandably somewhat different angle on events. He felt – and I, for one, sympathized with his view – that there were wider, more important issues than the dolphins to focus on. Whether the conference addressed these or not is a moot point.

Specifically, though, his assertion that ‘I certainly feel that there are far worse problems in the Bahamas than the dolphins, which in fact are being very well taken care of. I mean look at the stray dog problem here in Nassau’ seemed to generate positive responses particularly from local delegates.

I thought little of the potentially distressed dolphins until, on my return to the UK, I tuned into BBC Radio 2 to listen, fascinated, to Ed ‘Stewpot’ Stewart lead the bidding for a holiday generously donated by the Bahamian Tourist Board for Children In Need week. You guessed it – the venue, Atlantis Resort Hotel; the unique selling point – swimming with the said dolphins. It was this ‘unique opportunity’ of being with the dolphins that the persuasive DJ used to coax several extra thousands of pounds from the already generous listeners.

This, to my way of thinking, really does raise certain moral dilemmas. How can swimming with the (captive) dolphins be deemed unacceptable for caring ecotourists yet good enough to help raise £7500 for Children In Need? The conundrum is compounded when one considers that the centrepiece of
the hotel’s landscape redevelopment is
the world’s largest open-air aquarium.
Aquatic captivity on a grand scale.
Cancelling the dolphin day out on the
grounds of unsuitability can, in the
circumstances, aptly be termed ‘small
fry’ - a token gesture that served only
to highlight graphically the absurd
inconsistencies of eco issues. A visit to
the hotel’s vibrant casino added to my
count, providing as it did only dubious succour. Incidentally, the
Atlantic Paradise has since featured in
Wish You Were Here, been the venue
for the World’s Strongest Man con-
test, and a holiday there has been
offered as first prize both to Noel
Edmonds’ Telly Addicts winners and
to the victorious ‘Gladiators’. Just
where does this fit into the
ecotourism/elitism debate?

But since when have inconsistency
and hypocrisy prevented healthy de-
bate - in fact, aren’t they two main
prerequisites? That perhaps is precisely
why the ecotourism debate rolls on,
though not. I’m afraid, to any great
degree at this conference, bereft as it
was of any real controversy. Whatever
one’s ambivalence toward the Dolphin
Experience, I felt Mrs Cleare had
misjudged the situation when she sug-
gested that the conference ‘did not
need controversy’. To me that was one
vital ingredient it lacked. Apart from
an entertaining and mildly provocative
contribution by Pericles Maiulis, from
the Bahamas National Trust, precious
little analytical critique of adventure
tavel, ecotourism or sustainability
came from the conference platform.
(This perception obviously reflects my
conditioning, influenced by possibly
mis-spent middle age attending more
academically based conferences that
have a different – though, as we all
know, by no means necessarily better
or more effective – content and for-
mat). Questions, comments and
observations did, however, emanate
from the floor and these were suc-
cinctly assembled and eloquently ex-
pressed by John Fowkes, an ecotour-
ism consultant from South Africa,
who, with an erudite presentation in
his summary session, brought the con-
ference proceedings to a close on a
high note.

To be fair, I understand the World
Ecotourism and Adventure Travel
Society are revamping the format of
the programme for the next meeting in
Chile. They have encouraged con-
structive criticism from past delegates
and this to me is a healthy sign – an
indication that they have come of age,
established themselves sufficiently and
are now prepared to modify the for-
mat of future proceedings accordingly
(responding to market forces?). If
they can combine (temper?) their ex-
isting up beat, go-get-em, effervescent
approach with what some might say is
a more measured - though given what
is currently happening in the eco-
arena, minority - perspective then I’m
sure it will again be well worth while
attending. And yes, I did adhere to
the so typical, if peripherally futile,
conference literature advice to ‘re-
member to pass in your plastic name
tag holder for recycling purposes’.
Actually I had seriously considered
keeping mine as, with a little luck, I’d
be able to use it again in Chile come
November. Now then, are there any
dolphins off Patagonia?

Further details of the Adventure
Travel Society are available from: The
Adventure Travel Society, 6551 South
Revere Parkway, Suite 160, Engle-
wood, CO 80111, USA. Tel: 00 303
649 9016; Fax: 00 303 649 9017; Email
jwhewa@adventuretravel.com

Brian Wheeler
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B12 2TT, UK


The influx of visitors into a holiday destination has become a familiar feature of life. To many residents of the receiver region it is a welcome phenomenon; others view the invasion in a less than enthusiastic light. Attitudes are determined by the effects (often only immediate effects are initially considered) that the influx has on a particular individual or group of individuals. The increasing volume, variety and spatial spread of recreation/tourist pursuits only adds to the pressures.

It is to the issues of the growth of tourism, and the means of mitigating the negative impacts, that Murphy addresses himself. The book is in five sections: Tourism and its Significance; Environments and Accessibility; Economics and Business: Society and Culture; Planning and Management. The author adopts a systematic style and, though at times a little leaden by jargon, most of the issues are sensibly, sensitively and evocatively discussed, developed and examined. However, those expecting the book to provide the perfect, practical panacea to the fundamental problems that accompany tourist development will be disappointed. Murphy proposes an approach, one of 'community integration', that should ideally be adopted, without explaining in any real depth the means of converting theory to practice. His 'community emphasis would temper the economic concerns with environmental and social considerations'. Laudable indeed, but reconciling aesthetics with economics is never easy and tourism is no exception.

Early in the book the author argues that 'to move from the conceptual level to reality requires a system'. Unfortunately, what follows leaves the general reader, and more specifically the practitioner, in considerable doubt as to how precisely this transition is to be achieved and therefore how, if at all, his system is to be implemented in reality.

More empirical evidence of success, and a clear explanation of how it might be realised elsewhere, would make his case more substantial and convincing. One is left with the suspicion that the 'community approach' is itself still at the conceptual stage.

The scope of the text is restricted to tourism in the industrial nations of North America and Western Europe; Third World tourism is not considered. It must be doubtful even in the advanced, 'civilised' communities — with developed planning procedures and social integration — whether a community approach is a feasible alternative. It certainly does not appear to have universal appeal.

That it fails to bridge the chasm separating tourism theory from practice is hardly surprising given the enormity of what some would say is an unmanageable task. Many of the factors requiring consideration in a tourism impact evaluation are the non-quantifiable nature and thus often inexact reliance on subjective value judgements. Conflicts of interests arise and it is around these conflicts that many of the problems associated with tourism revolve. Scales of priority vary according to interests and resolving conflicts of interest to the mutual satisfaction of all parties concerned is often impossible to achieve. Murphy should perhaps have devoted more space to these delicate, but all too real considerations.

This should not, however, detract from the value of what is an extremely interesting, thought-provoking text. It is well written and researched. There is an excellent bibliography, a number of useful graphics and twenty-four of the worst photographs ever published. Throughout, the book clearly demonstrates the author's passion and concern for the subject, which he views from an enlightened perspective. Of particular note are the early chapters containing an erudite exposition of the scope, nature, evolution and general issues of tourism.

Tourism — A Community Approach is recommended to all with an interest in tourism. It is a stimulating text — a valiant attempt to solve what is perhaps an intractable problem.

BRIAN WHEELER
Department of Business and Management Studies
Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, U.K.

1993, pp.78-79
Books

H. Leo Theuns
Department of Economics
Tilburg University
PO Box 90153
5000 LE Tilburg
The Netherlands

*Kadir H. Din, 'Towards an integrated approach to tourism development: observations from Malaysia', in Tej Vir Singh, H. Leo Theuns and Frank M. Goed, Towards Appropriate Tourism: The Case of Developing Countries, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, pp 181–203.

Contemporary tourism issues

THE GOOD TOURIST
by Katie Wood and Syd House

The objectives of this book, written for the 'intelligent, caring traveller' are 'to provide a balanced analysis of the good and bad aspects of tourism; to offer tips and advice to prospective tourists; to promote a more responsible form of tourism – the "good tourist" concept – and to provide information on the range of holidays available that conform to the basic of good tourism' (preface).

As one would expect from such experienced authors, The Good Tourist on the whole achieves these objectives and does so in a readable, stimulating manner. The book serves both as a good read and as a reference text combining interesting, perceptive, subjective material with a wide range of relevant factual information – of particular note are the array of examples of tourism impact and a useful Appendix of Contact Organizations.

However, the book does not fully address the central issue of whether the good tourist concept – the core theme of the book and one that is promoted with vigorous conviction – is actually an effective method of dealing with the negative impact problems as outlined in the book. Wood and House acknowledge that 'some have argued that "responsible" tourism alone is not a real answer: it can be construed as a middle-class, educated and elitist cop-out for those who are caught up in the groundswell of green issues. It is small scale, slow and attempting steady, controlled, and thus sustainable, growth. Is it really the answer to the enormous problems of mass tourism dealing with the movement of enormous numbers of people? The answer is probably no, not in itself, but it can be part of an overall approach to tackling the problems. Such an approach must encompass a whole range of potential solutions each of which may be appropriate according to the situations and circumstances' (p 70). While this may seem reasonable, to me this nebulous 'overall approach' remains vague and conveniently circumstantial. Despite the authors' recognition that the good tourist concept can only be 'part of a whole' there is a danger that the impression given by the book is that the good tourist concept and the overall approach are, in fact, synonymous.

Wood and House state categorically that it is 'impossible to go out and verify a whole country's environmental tourist policy' (p 234) and that therefore it is a pointless exercise to rate countries in terms of 'greenness'. Nevertheless they feel it appropriate to endorse (by way of inclusion in the book) certain tour operators. Even on this considerably less ambitious scale I still, however, wonder to what extent it is possible to conduct a comprehensive environmental audit of all these firms and of the impact of the tourist using them?

Tourists are encouraged to 'environmentally audit yourself' – surely in practice a rather questionable exercise (exercise?)

We are advised to travel out of season and 'consider travelling and visiting places not as well known as the normal' (p 104). Certainly the tour operators detailed in the book, with their impressive marketable names – Discover the World, Arctic Experiences, Ecosafaris, Remote Travel Company etc – dovetail nicely here, catering for demand to those appealing faraway places with strange sounding names. Their product prices, not surprisingly, are often as inaccessible as their destinations. However, according to The Good Tourist 'money is no longer the stumbling block it once was for travellers' (p 105). The philosophy espoused is that it is worth paying more for a product that is environmentally friendly. Maybe it is – if you have the money. The logic employed to justify choosing the correct travel method and tour
operator, and the economies of scale argument suggested to alter the prevailing status quo (p 105) seem at best somewhat naive. Also the very real possibility that travelling out of season and to undiscovered areas adds to impact problems, rather than detracts from them, is not really tackled in any depth. The 'solutions' put forward by the book do not really call for drastic sacrifices to be made on the part of the tourist — certainly not in terms of restricting destination choice. Provided development is sensitive, the exotic, the unspoilt, the vulnerable are fair game.

From an academic perspective *The Good Tourist* makes a welcome addition to reading lists, and for this I recommend it. Wood and House are concerned with contemporary tourism issues, have a number of points to make and they make them well. Students should judge for themselves if the substance of the text is valid or whether it is green rhetoric. I know from experience that this makes for interesting, energetic tutorial discussion.

Undoubtedly the book raises awareness of tourism impact and this in itself is to be welcomed. Whether the solutions it advocates actually deal with these impacts (at a fundamental rather than merely a superficial level) is far more debatable. The authors state that 'every step, no matter how small, adds to the sum of the overall responsible tourism effort' (p 106). This statement, of course, assumes that the step is in the right direction — that the responsible tourism effort is indeed the correct way forward. For those optimists who believe this to be the case, the book is an excellent, reassuring text: for those of us with a more sceptical, cynical view of 'good' behaviour then *The Good Tourist* does little to lift our pessimism. One is left with the lingering doubt that the book, and the genre of which it is an integral part, is more concerned with ego-tourism than with the eco-tourism it purports to advocate.

These salutary comments should not, however, detract from the fact that *The Good Tourist* is an important, potentially influential book and one that cannot, and should not, be ignored by those with an interest in tourism impact.

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These salutary comments should not, however, detract from the fact that *The Good Tourist* is an important, potentially influential book and one that cannot, and should not, be ignored by those with an interest in tourism impact.

Brian Wheeler  
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies  
University of Birmingham  
Birmingham B15 2TT, UK

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**Meetings**

6-11 March 1993, Berlin, Germany  
**Contact:** AMK, Messedamm 22, Berlin 19, D-1000 Germany. Tel: +49 30 30 380; telex: 182908; fax: +49 30 3038 2325.

10-11 March 1993, Birmingham, UK  
The British Travel Trade Fair; incorporating MOOT and Wales Travel Pact.  
**Contact:** English Tourist Board, Thames Tower, Black's Road, Hammersmith, London W6 9EL, UK. Tel: +44 (0)81 846 9000; fax +44 (0)81 563 0302.

1-4 April 1993, Athens Greece  
The first international exhibition and conference for environmental technology.  
**Contact:** Horizon Ltd, 14 Nikis Street, 10557 Athens, Greece. Tel: +3 3233 144; telex: 215359; fax: +3 3247 048.

2-4 May 1993, Da Nang, Vietnam  
International conference on 'Vietnam: Opportunities for Tourism and Hotel Industry Development'. The sessions will focus on a broad range of topics that are related to tourism and hotel industry developmental opportunities in Vietnam, including: Growth potential of tourism in Vietnam; Education and Training Needs Assessment; and other topics related to the potential impact of tourism.  
**Contact:** K.S. (Kay) Chon, William F. Harrah College of Hotel Admin., University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV 89154-6023, USA. Tel: +1 702 759 3930; fax: +1 702 597 4109.

6-10 May 1993, Kauai, HI, USA  
1993 PATA Chapters World Congress.  
**Contact:** PATA Marketing Department, 71 Stevenson Street, Suite 1425, San Francisco, CA 94105, USA. Tel: +1 415 398 4295; fax: +1 415 394 0711.

16-21 May 1993, Jerusalem, Israel  
The First International Conference on Investments and Financing in the Tourism Industry. Topics: National and Public Policy; Tourism as a Stimulus for Regional Planning and Development; Financial Reliability and Roles of Financial Institutions in Tourism Projects; Evaluation of Tourism Projects; and Universities and Research Institutes.  
**Contact:** Secretariat – Omega Conventions, The First International Conference on 'Investments and Financing in the Tourism Industry'. PO Box 71102, Jerusalem 91079, Israel.

14-18 July 1993, Loughborough, UK  
'Leisure in Different Worlds'.  
**Contact:** Deborah Walker, Leisure and Studies Association, Centre for Extension Studies, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU, UK. Tel: +44 (0)509 222174.

28 July to 5 August 1993, Mexico DF, Mexico  
Symposium on Tourism as a dimension of culture.  
**Contact:** California State University, Chico Chico, CA 95929-6400, USA. Fax: +1 917 896 68 24.

September 1993, Manaus, Brazil  
World congress on adventure travel and ecotourism. It will aim to offer a series of sustainable tourism demonstrations, provide management models for indigenous peoples and natural resources and supply examples of adventures for leisure travellers. There is a call for papers.  
**Contact:** Renee Karlin, Adventure Travel Society, 6551 S. Revere Parkway, Suite 160, Englewood, CO 80111, USA. Tel: +1 303 649 9016; fax: +1 303 649 9017.

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**Books/Meetings**

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**TOURISM MANAGEMENT** February 1993
‘Sustainable Tourism Development’ by Coccossis, H and Jijkamp, P and ‘Tourism and the Environment’ by Hunger, C and Green, H (1997)


Further swelling the burgeoning library on that seemingly elusive notion of sustainable tourism are these two recent, additional texts. Both claim to address the issue of the relationship between tourism and the environment. One, Coccossis's and Nijkamp's edited text, draws on a range of authors to give breadth; the co-authored text of Hunter and Green, after an initial overview, narrows and focuses on their specific expertise. The result, as one would expect, are two very different texts ostensibly covering the same ground, their similarity restricted essentially to the fact that they both have somewhat misleading titles.

It seems unusual that in a co-authored text detail is given of the authors' respective contributions to each chapter — some individually authored, some jointly. However, such is the case with Hunter's and Green's work. Maybe this is to highlight their apparently disproportionate contributions. I'm assuming here,
though, joint responsibility for the views expressed in their book.

To Hunter and Green tourism appears to have considerable ‘potential’. Examples of tourism’s potential are legion. ‘Potential for tourism to make a crucial contribution to global sustainability’ (p. 63). It is important to make explicit reference to the potential role of the tourism industry in the protection of resources on regional, national and international scales, as well as at destination areas’ (p. 76). ‘Potentially tourism could exert a significant influence in the conservation of fossil fuel supplies and of the reduction of atmospheric emissions’ (p. 76). Similarly they have high expectations of environmental impact assessment (EIA). ‘EIA potentially has much to offer as a vehicle of local community development’ (p. 180). ‘Potentially EIA has an important contribution to make to the realisation of sustainable tourism development, because it may provide a means of translating the concept of sustainable development into action on the ground’ (p. 122). ‘The potential contribution of EIA in the appraisal of tourism development has been recognised’ (p. 165).

It is hard though to see any evidence in the book to really support this optimism. Nearer the mark are the authors’ comments that ‘much of the discussion on the relative merits of EIA method is hypothetical since there exists very little information on the actual operational performance of different methods’ (p. 151) and also that ‘the use of EIA in the appraisal of international tourism products is still comparatively rare’ (p. 163). Surely the fact that this potential remains firmly in the realms of theory speaks volumes. Precise details of how potential is translated into practice, how it is actually to be realised, would add considerable weight and credibility to the text, as would more convincing examples of existing successful sustainable tourism. Together with the ubiquitous ‘potential’, ‘should’ and ‘must’, not surprisingly, also feature regularly in the text — echorations to encourage correct future behaviour.

Hunter and Green acknowledge that ‘unfortunately the more one examines the concept of sustainable development, the more illusionary its apparent simplicity becomes’ (p. 57). Elsewhere in the text they warn of similar dangers, yet then apparently ignore these in their own eulogy of environmental impact assessment and auditing, surely in itself so fraught with practical problems of implementation to make the transfer from academic niceties to effective policy instrument a chasm that cannot be crossed. They do indeed recognise specific problems: ‘much needs to be done before one can envisage regular environmental auditing’ (p. 48), yet seem to breeze on as if EIA will inevitably materialise.

The customary call for monitoring is there: ‘the importance of continuous environmental monitoring cannot be overstated’ (p. 178). I think it can. Monitor this, monitor that. Isn’t there a danger that too much monitoring is simply an excuse for inaction? We have always had monitoring (I was one at school), but it does not seem to have made all that much difference. Take 100 lines: ‘Monitoring is Procrastination’.

Given the upbeat message of the book, the relatively few references to critical works on sustainable tourism is perhaps acceptable. What mystifies me, though, is why, particularly given its UK slant, as far as I can see there is no reference whatsoever to the Journal of Sustainable Tourism. Surely this is a glaring omission. Also, a number of Hunter’s and Green’s references come from the early 80s and seem, perhaps, to be in need of some updating.

The book is disjointed and unbalanced, contextually stronger in the early chapters where it provides a useful background material for readers new to the sustainable tourism debate. Here a range of issues is raised. They point out, for example, that destinations cannot exist in isolation; that in terms of policy implementation focusing down to a particular destination means that the wider links that sustain the area may be forgotten. ‘Even if a destination area becomes completely self-sufficient in its resource requirements, such an area will still generate environmental impact through tourist travel’ (p. 26). They also note the problems of the proliferation of small-scale development — their ‘death by a thousand cuts’ (p. 86). However, instead of developing a detailed analysis of tourism and the environment, as the title would suggest, the book diverts into the cul-de-sac of environmental impact assessment — an obvious and acknowledged particular interest of the authors. Nothing necessarily wrong in this of course — except such an emphasis should, somehow, have been reflected in the text’s title. As a book extolling the virtues (and, to be fair, some of the potential drawbacks) of EIA it is possibly a gem, but on the question of whether there is a sustainable relationship between tourism and the environment it has less to offer.

Sustainable Tourism Development is divided into two sections: theory and planning; and policy case studies in sustainable tourism. Just how ‘sustainable’ the case studies actually are is, however, a moot point. Undoubtedly though, they are essentially European in bias. So too are the actual contributors themselves. Surely a European perspective should therefore have been incorporated into the title which, in this respect, tends to mislead. This is an important consideration given the perceived global nature of the subject. The individual contributions range in style, content and quality. Ashworth’s is, as always, notable — raising a number of interesting points. So too do Buhalls and Fletcher in their chapter. The latter point out that ‘if
tourism development is sold to destinations on the basis of its strong backward linkage with other sectors of the economy, then the environmental damage emanating from these supporting industries, as a result of tourism activity must also be brought into the equation" (p. 13), with the obvious necessity to apply principles of sustainability to these support industries.

A more abstract, mathematical approach is adopted by Lanza and Pigliaru. Their chapter is something of an oddity and, I suppose, in that sense is worth including. After the first couple of pages it is very hard, for me at least, to see how they relate sustainable tourism to the real world or, indeed their model to sustainable tourism. Yet maybe this is just my aversion to such tangential modelling and formulae. In this respect those of a nervous disposition should avoid p. 97. I confidently predict, should the book be adopted by any library, that this page would be the last to be razored out by students.

There are grammatical errors (e.g. p. 41) in Cocosis's and Nijkamp's text that closer proof-reading could have rectified, and repetition that probably required tighter editing. However, as some of this repetition is in fact in the editors' preface this might be asking too much. 'Tourism is intricately involved with environmental quality, as it affects directly the natural and human resources and at the same time is conditioned by the quality of the environment. Such a relationship has important implications from the point of view of policies, management and planning' followed, in the next paragraph by, 'tourism ... has significant effects on the environment but depends also on environmental quality. It is this feedback mechanism which has to be understood and incorporated into policy making'. However, as this is the main theme of the book, perhaps I am misjudging and for 'repetition' we should read 're-emphasis'.

A concluding chapter from the editors would have added depth and balance to the book. As it is, the reader is left with a final sentence, 'These measures will provide the necessary mechanism for the development of a high quality tourism product which is capable of evolving according to the dictates of demand'. Maybe taken out of context, but is reacting to the dictates of demand really what sustainable tourism is all about? Intriguingly, there are 12 blank pages at the end of the text. Maybe it's one of those books where you write your own concluding chapter, your own happy ending to the sustainable tourism saga. If you do, you will be mistaken, succeeding only in transforming this worthy text book into a romantic, novel, work of fiction.

Sustainable Tourism Development goes some way towards meeting its stated purpose of providing 'insight into the relationship between tourism and the environment' (p. xiii) balancing, as it does, sustainable tourism theory with case studies of (attempted) good practice. Tourism and the Environment in its efforts to provide 'a research-based overview and analysis of the relationships between tourism development and environmental quality with sustainable tourism as its central theme' (p. ix) — claiming in the process to review much of the tourism and environmental management literature — is perhaps more equivocal in terms of achieving its objectives. In their own respect both texts are worth looking at, though don't be fooled by their titles. Inevitably, in their hardback form they are rather expensive, but, then again, show me a sustainable tourism product that is not.

BRIAN WHEELER
University of Birmingham, UK

Book Reviews

Ecotourism: comprehensively certified?


In Font and Buckley's text, almost anything and everything you would (and possibly would not) want to know about ecotourism labelling is here - sometimes twice. Given the topic and nature of the book, its structure - individually authored chapters, broken down into numerous subsections - makes some repetition almost inevitable. Not that this detracts from the read. Rather it tends to ensure that a number of issues and perspectives are reinforced in the reader's mind. Well laid out, accessible and with good bibliographic support, the book is reader-friendly. There is a range of contributors (collaborators?) - experienced researchers, academics and practitioners, together with a refreshing mix of recent graduates. The latter are mainly responsible for the informative Directory of Tourism Ecolabels that concludes the book. With a dominant European flavour running through the text, there is an attempt at a further international dimension in terms of some specific chapters, for example Canada, Australia.

There is recognition in the text that factors other than environmental are instrumental in determining holiday decision-making. Though obvious, is it stressed enough? I suspect not. Just how important, relatively, are eco-labels - a supposed litmus paper of environmental friendliness - in determining actual customer choice and consumption patterns? One could counter the assumption from the section rather clumsily labelled Theoretical Assumptions Underpinning the Market Functioning of Environmental Labelling; Environmental Behavioural Theory section 'that
consumers prefer and choose products that are eco-labelled (p. 58) with the more prosaic, admittedly maybe random, observation that in practice most consumers don’t seem to give a toss about eco-labelling. But maybe this is being churlish on my part. Those readers of a more positive disposition than myself will no doubt respond warmly to the (abstract?) optimistic elements of the book. Personally I am drawn more to the likes of Sharpley’s wary, questioning chapter on consumer behaviour.

I do stress almost everything on eco-labelling is here. Despite (or perhaps because of) the revealing breadth and depth to which eco-labelling is scrutinized, after reading the book I am nevertheless still unclear as to whether or not eco-labelling actually ‘works’. Maybe again I am being unfair. In contextualizing eco-labelling in the wider arena of tourism, ecotourism and sustainable management, Font and Buckley’s book raises and discusses a range of pertinent issues. Consequently, given the apparent complexity of what to the uninitiated might, at first, seem a relatively straightforward topic, it is probably too much to expect to be able to answer such a direct question as to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of eco-labelling. All those with an interest in ecotourism and sustainable management should read this text and draw their own conclusions.

Many of the related, and tangential, issues raised in Font and Buckley’s book are developed and explored, understandably in greater depth and detail, in Weaver’s substantive volume, The Encyclopaedia of Ecotourism.

Undoubtedly considerable effort has been expanded in producing this commendable text. Assembling all the material from an impressive array of contributors – 41 individually authored chapters, eight major sections and nearly 700 pages – into an accessible text must have been a formidable task. To a large extent this has been successfully achieved: the effort involved worthwhile. The book as a whole holds together and reads well with short introductions to each section providing an informative thread through the work.

A substantial tome, Weaver’s work is indeed encyclopaedic in scope if not in layout. However, the very size, breadth and density of the volume may present some problems. The student who wishes to dip in and out of it looking for specific material may experience difficulty. Apart from a short (though useful) glossary it is not laid out alphabetically in the traditional (passé?) encyclopaedia format. Therefore without a systematic reading of the whole book, there is the potential danger (even with the contents pages) that the specific information being sought might be a little difficult to access and easy to miss. Possibly a more detailed disaggregated index might have helped. For example, strangely, given that the significance of eco-labelling merits the publication of Font’s and Buckley’s book, it is rather surprising that eco-labelling does not appear to warrant a specific entry in the index to the Encyclopaedia of Ecotourism. An editorial quirk, perhaps?
Delving into the realms of ecotourism and peeling back the layers, as this admirable book does, reveals many of the uncertainties and dichotomies that envelop the enigma of ecotourism itself. I do, however, have one fundamental reservation. I am not entirely convinced that the book achieves the publisher’s—flier claim that ‘each chapter combines theory and practice in a complimentary way’. Near the end of the book (p. 650), Fennel claims that ecotourism bridges the gap between the social and natural sciences. Maybe. I remain unconvinced, however, that ecotourism spans the far more wider and worrying gap between theory and practice. Can it ever bridge the chasm between what perhaps ‘should be’ and ‘what actually is’? While throwing considerable light on, and thereby illuminating, this dilemma, The Encyclopaedia of Ecotourism does not, to my reading, solve the conundrum. But then again I suppose, deep down, I would be very disappointed if it did.

With a price of £95 it is clearly outside the financial compass of most students. I sincerely hope, however, that libraries ensure that it is not beyond their educative horizon. Expansive (and expensive) The Encyclopaedia of Ecotourism is, as the editor rightly states, indeed an ambitious volume. It is also an impressive one — a major work in the field and a welcome addition to the literature.

Both texts are worthy in their own right and I recommend them. Though questions do remain unanswered, sometimes it is perhaps better that way. As the old Johnny Nash song once so eloquently put it — there are more questions than answers. Well, here’s another the committed reader might well ask: isn’t it time that ecotourism itself was certified?

Brian Wheeller
Centre for Urban and Regional Tourism
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK
Tourism and Sustainability: Development and New Tourism in the Third World by Mowforth, M and Munt, I

Tourism and Sustainability: Development and New Tourism in the Third World


Brian A. Wheeller
Breda University of Professional Education, The Netherlands

If tourism really is the world’s largest industry, it should be constantly borne in mind that the world is driven by avarice and that tourism is both instrumental in and symptomatic of this. Greed and short-term self-interest dominate society and a “much wants more, what’s in it for me” mentality prevails. Certainly this is true of the Western culture that is pervading the globe. It is a corrupt world. Scratch the surface of respectability and invariably there is dirt. Dig deeper and plummet into the quagmire. However, academics looking at tourism (particularly its sustainable form) generally prefer to keep their keyboards clean. Though relatively sparse, fortunately a few notable exceptions succeed in contextualizing tourism in this mire. An excellent addition to this canon is Mowforth and Munt’s latest work.

Admirably critiquing the crucial role power plays in the process, they demonstrate a healthy scepticism at all levels of their considered, yet passionate, analysis of the interwoven relationships between tourism, globalization, sustainability, and development. The authors make a convincing case for embracing a broad perspective and adopting a multidisciplinary approach. It is “a book about sustainability and Third World tourism rather than sustainable Third World tourism” (p. 2) and “[a] key to our argument is the need to understand sustainability within a broad context” (p. 299). Their critique “places the relationships of power at the heart of the enquiry” (p. 4) as their frequent reference to “uneven and unequal development” testifies.

Despite its serious conscientious attempts are made at measured and balanced perspective, the book, quite rightly, pricks with a sense of injustice, indignation, and simmering outrage. Morally admirable, but not a rant, its passion is tempered...
by robust reason. The result is a forceful, cogent, perceptive, well argued, but controversial, text.

The authors regard their book as "an attempt to broaden our thinking and approach to the field of tourism" (p. 115). Their laudable claims are fully justified by the book's style and content. But, unfortunately, many in tourism may not respond well. Put off by the controversial undercurrents flowing through the text, those of a certain disposition will not like, agree with, or be prepared to stomach the radical message. As the song says "[a] man hears what he wants to hear, but disregards the rest" (Simon 1968). There being no reason to suppose this trait is gender specific, the book like tourism itself, may very well broaden a broad mind but, unfortunately, narrow a narrow one. This is not a criticism of Mowforth and Munt's honorably worthy efforts. Nevertheless, those of a certain fixed, blinkered mindset may read no further than "left to its own devices the Western industrial and financial edifice is incapable of self-regulation and the social and environmental consequences are ominous" (p. 168). Or, "[b]ut the profit maximization motive does have a tendency to subvert and subjugate other considerations, ethical and environmental. It is essential to keep this in mind in any analysis of the tourism industry" (p. 179). This assumes readers have not reacted too adversely to "[s]ustainability is as much to do with ensuring continued profits through more flexible patterns of capital accumulation, or middle-class lifestyles in the First World and the ability of these social groups to experience (sustained) indigenous cultures while holidaying in the Third World, as it is to do with ecology and environment" (p. 30). It is emphasized here that these and similar statements are supported throughout the book by appropriate empiricism and stout, sturdy argument. Any failure to engage a wider audience with the salient issues does not lie with the authors. Thus one should neither shoot the messengers nor ignore their potent message.

True, the book occasionally does become a little dense, probably due to the wealth of material it contains. By careful reiteration of the main themes and gist of their arguments the authors are, on the whole, successful in guiding the reader through the multilayered relationships exposed. What effort it takes for the reader is well rewarded. However, if ever a case needs to be made for the old maxim, "don't judge a book by its cover", then this text must be prosecution exhibit number one. The photograph and garish colors on the front fail to do justice to an otherwise excellent text: a first-class book with a third-class cover.

It is a shame that due attention is not given to McKercher's (1999) work on chaos theory and tourism, which surely dovetails into some of Mowforth and Munt's arguments. Further weight would also have been added by reference to Brown's Tourism Reassessed (1998) in which she, too, critically explores the wider issues of tourism's relationships. But maybe this is being far too pedantic as it is surely impossible for a text to cover every relevant source. This book, drawing as it does on a breadth and depth of material, is impressively well researched. There is, however, an important caveat here. In line with generic problems that afflict second editions, without a complete rewriting of the book, some references may appear dated. Certain sections draw heavily on material from the early to mid-90s. But this is not so serious a drawback as a first glance might suggest. Fundamental issues of concern, initially raised during that period, have still not been addressed in the broader tourism literature. Wisely, Mowforth and Munt frequently remind the reader of this, hence the need for apparently dated references. These do not, therefore, detract from the currency or relevance of the second edition, which is supported by the additional new material incorporated and considerable updating that the authors have actually undertaken. Building on the solid foundation of the first edition (which in its own right was an important and valued addition to the literature), they provide a valid, vibrant, contemporary analysis of tourism, sustainability, and development.
In informative, stimulating, and provocative, the book deserves to be read by a wide audience, with its discourse embracing the gamut of sustainability and development studies. It is absolutely essential reading for all those serious scholars of tourism studies wishing to appreciate “the bigger picture”. This audience should be all of us (otherwise, how can scholars consider themselves, or be considered, “serious”?)

This text provides a much-needed contextualization and wider awareness of tourism. It is also a “must” for students, probably best suited to those on final year undergraduate and postgraduate tourism programs. But, as with their lecturers, students in development studies and related fields should also be aware of this vital text.

Brian Wheeller: Department of International Programs, Breda University of Professional Education, Mgr. Hopmansstraat 1, PO Box 3917, 4800 DX, Breda, The Netherlands. Email: <wheeller.b@nhtv.nl>

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The Global Nomad: Backpacker Travel in Theory and Practice


Young-Sook Lee
Griffith University, Australia

This volume provides a valuable insight into the phenomenon of backpackers in both theoretical and practical perspectives. At the departure point of the book, backpackers—treated as global nomads—are conceptualized mainly in the context of modern and postmodern societal modes of the West. This book will appeal to anyone who is interested in the social phenomena reflected in the form of tourism, and to those who are in the area of tourism with a sociocultural, anthropological, or managerial focus.
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Appendix C

No Particular Place To Go: Travel, Tourism and Popular Music, A Mid-Life Crisis Perspective

Brian Wheeller

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
University of Birmingham
UK

I find it interesting and illuminating that the organisers of the present conference on tourism and culture should choose as their marketing pitch a painting by Seurat.

Immediately I have some problems with this, reflecting, as it does, a dilemma that, to me, is at the heart of analysis of tourism (or is it travel?) and is, I suppose, central to my critique of sustainability (though I am not dealing with that today). Now I’m on very thin canvas here as I am no art expert - "I don’t know much about art but I know what I like etc" - but I believe Seurat’s picture was half of a set of two, one depicting the bourgeois boulevard at play, symbolically separated on an island, and the second, the working classes, resting between their toils, across the river down in the boondocks. The higher’ cultural art form image is the one that’s taken here as being suitable for us in our educated analysis of tourism but, like all advertising, is one which isn’t really a comprehensive view of the phenomena, failing to paint the true picture. An insular perspective? And a nostalgic, rather than contemporary, image is chosen - a familiar, obviously successful, travel marketing ploy (Wheeller 1993).

To me the use of high art to depict a suitably acceptable/seductive image is significant. It should however be contextualised, as should all our work on tourism, and what better way to do this than a survey conducted, I believe in 1993, when 2,000 Londoners were asked who was their favourite artist. In third place with 9% of the vote was Turner; in second, Constable with 19%, but in pole position the artist that people regarded as the most popular, with a resounding 38% of the vote, was none other than Rolf Harris. Seurat, I suspect, didn’t feature.
The point is that culture is subjective, very much a class/elite thing. For example, if I mention Wimbledon many of you will immediately have images of tennis, strawberries and cream, while others may well think of Vinnie Jones and the Crazy Gang. (Don’t be confused here with Bud Flanagan). A few sorry individuals may be reminded of the Wombles. The relevance of this I think is apparent when we come to look at music. If I say the Four Seasons, some may think of Vivaldi whilst others think of Frankie Valli. Those still dreaming of Orinoco may relate the Four Seasons to a pizza. Similarly if I say Johann Sebastian some will think of Bach while others will get confused with John Sebastian of the Lovin’ Spoonful.

A warning: those of you that thought of Plough Lane rather than Number One Court, of Rag Doll rather than Autumn, of Daydream not the Brandenburg Concerto and were raised on a strict curricula of the 3Rs, that is Radio Luxembourg, Radio Caroline and Radio One will probably appreciate the gist of, and get more out of this talk, than others might. So when, in the opening lines of Croall’s book Preserve or Destroy; Tourism and the Environment, ‘he states “A spectre is haunting our planet”, (Croall, 1995) one might, if only for a sublime moment, legitimately believe he is referring to Phil’s Wall of Sound, rather than the more prosaic the spectre of tourism. Over the years, we have all been familiar with the struggle we’ve had overcoming the scepticism and narrow minded attitudes to tourism, the traditional Mickey Mouse image. I’ve always thought that Minnie Mouse would be more appropriate here given the enormity of the underestimation of tourism’s global significance. Here I mean mass tourism. You see, just as tourism doesn’t get the academic respect it deserves from those outside the study of the discipline, to me mass tourism in turn doesn’t receive the attention it too warrants from those within the discipline. So, in the academic charts, tourism is seen, way down, struggling to the strains of muzak with its Eurovision song contest/Gary Glitter image, whereas the academic heavyweights of, say, law or classics resound to the formidable, wholesome Wagner or Tchaikovsky. Here, just as everywhere, there is of course a (false/subjective) culture of lightweight versus respectability, inferior versus superior, mundane versus sophisticated. This applies to both tourism and to music - tourism versus travel; mass tourism versus individual travel; popular versus classical. Perhaps it is notable that there was a successful group called The Tourists, but not the Explorers or Travellers (but there were the Wilburys).

So, as with tourism, I’ve always felt that popular music, as a reflection of culture has never received the academic attention that it deserves whereas classical music (and acceptable literature) have. It’s fine to study the lines of Shakespeare but not the lyrics of Shakespeare’s Sister. This unfortunate - though so typical - phenomena first struck me at school and has stayed with me ever since. I do, however, read with interest articles such as ‘Poetry as the new rock n roll’ (Wright 1996) which argues that this neglect is now being addressed. Just how this ties in with a sub heading Teachers told to put Schubert before pop to save heritage in an article Schools must not blur boundaries of culture, say Curriculum Chief’ (Times 1996 a) is a bit uncertain. The article goes onto say, “schools must introduce their pupils to high culture and help them to escape the growing creed that sees no difference between Schubert and Blur. Nicholas Tate, the Government’s Chief Curriculum Adviser said.” There is some cross-over, some blurring - Just as Return to the Forbidden Planet links travel in space, popular music and Shakespeare - based or is it (loosely) on The Tempest, perhaps the record that best bridges classical music, pop music and tourism (in the form of summer camps) was Alan Sherman’s Camp Grenada (Hello muddah, hello faddah) - adapted as it was from, I think, Ponchielliis La Giaconda.
When I was around 18, unfortunately more a Lyman juvenile delinquent than teenager in love, I was interested in travel and pop music. What’s intrigued me about the way my two interests, so vital to me at the time, have changed over my life is that the boundaries of travel have, for me, expanded immensely, in a sense that now knows no bounds, whereas my musical tastes tend to be fossilised round about mid/tate sixties and if anything have moved backwards to the era of Fred Astaire, Ella Fitzgerald and, God help me, early country and western.

Already though, as a youth, the two were entwined in my mind. It wasn’t really just the songs like Trains and Boats and Planes/Faraway Places with Strange Sounding Names, Calling, Calling, Me/Island of Dreams/Slow Boat to China/Blue Bayou/Tallahassee Lassie or even Telstar, Fly Me To The Moon or the eponymous No Particular Place To Go. It was really surf music and images of West Coast, Southern California that fired my imagination. Lines like I know what I want’. I’ve got it all planned. I’m going to surf all day and sleep in the sand’. The fact that actually it took me twenty years to get there and even now, still can’t swim, tells me something, although I dread to think what. If there really were two girls for every boy, then someone else must have had four.

Place - both in a spatial and temporal sense - is linked with music. The old standard that USA place names featured in songs usually have far more romantic connotations compared to their UK counterparts, is familiar ground. I Left My Heart In San Francisco; New York, New York; Galveston; even Delaware etc have (to UK residents at least) a somewhat more appealing ring than say, Streets of London; Leaving of Liverpool, Durham Town. Just compare Hank Snows, I’ve Been Everywhere Man, with the UK cover version (by the ubiquitous Rolf Harris). Both veritable gazetteers of their respective countries but each, I suspect, creating considerably different visual images. As always, there is considerable confusion though with imagery. For example, The Hollies singing Boulder to Birmingham provoke different images depending on cultural roots. Similarly a friend of mine couldn’t understand why Dean Martin should be singing about Euston (station), when in fact he was drawing Houston, (Texas). Personally, I do, however, admit to a secret yen for Gillygillyouenfeffercetonellabogabong by-the-sea. All together now, Sing Along with Max style. “There’s a tiny house......” Now were the Ovaltines the embryonic forerunners to the current karoke craze?

Actually, I have been meaning to get round to writing on this subject for years. My procrastination brings to mind the “Task Completion Wishful Thinking Syndrome” developed by Dr Griffin. A Tijes report states: - “A university psychologist has worked for 5 years to discover that tasks always take longer to complete than we expect. We all tend to under estimate how long it will take and fail to modify our expectations on the basis of experience. Promises are cheap, say Dr Griffin... who has yet to write up his findings”. I suspect this rings a bell with most of us.

I am trying here to link, in a rather irreverent way, two vastly underestimated phenomena, tourism and popular music; underestimated, that is, partly because of the elitist attitudes of observers, pundits and indeed some practitioners. This paper is intended as an introductory exploration; more of a meander, suggesting areas for further thought and research - on place, image, travel and music (though I am aware of increasing recent academic interest in this general field emanating, particularly from cultural studies). It is more a segued medley of mild thoughts rather than a crashing cacophony of penetrating revelations.

I am wandering (deliberately) in the use of my terminology - travel and tourism. Rather than restrict thoughts here to the straight forward, straight-jacket holiday' notion of travel and tourism,
I'd like to also consider the more obtuse, perhaps esoteric ideas of travel through life, travel in your mind, even travel in space. These might be considered tenuous links with tourism. Well, maybe, but I do see them as relevant, certainly to travel and I suspect to the fundamentals of tourism as well.

Some would regard passage through life as the ultimate journey, accompanied all the way as it is by music - from lullaby to funeral elegy. In an article Funerals go with a swing as deceased do it their way', Gledhill (1996) writes "Pop music and theme tunes are increasingly supplementing hymns at funerals, often as a last request of the deceased. The trend is well established in churches as well as crematoriums, where one of the top ten tunes is Smoke Gets In Your Eyes. Other family favourites range from Whitney Houston's 'I Will Always Love You to the theme from the Australian soap opera Home and Away. Many clergy feel mourners are helped if the music has a special personal meaning. A survey in one local newspaper showed that almost a third of funeral services now include a pop tune, up from only 2 per cent ten years ago. Britain's most regular funeral request includes Sinatra's My Way, Streisand's Memories, Lennon's Imagine, Bette Midler's Wind Beneath My Wings and football team anthems." Surprisingly no mention here of the multi-talented Rolf Harris and his cover of Led Zeppelin's Stairway to Heaven.

In Journey Through Britain, Hillaby (1979) talks of the "skull cinema", the dream factory, an escape from present circumstances. There's an obvious ability to travel in one's mind; music often provides an accompanying, enabling vehicle in this. (Is a vivid imagination a suitable substitute for virtual reality?) Music has the ability to evoke personal memory, to place something in one's life in a personalised period context.

As Cushman (1993) succinctly puts it 'Popular songs freeze the moment'. For confirmation, and provided you can cope with Sue Lawley, just listen to a couple of Desert Island Discs programmes. So too, it is in the wider arena, a film score of an Elizabethan period piece will include madrigals: 1930s screwball comedy often include dance band numbers from that era etc.

As regards journeying into space, John Peel's Radio Four documentary on the evolution of space travel. Beam me up Scotty relied heavily on an evocative space-orientated, pop culture base. Interviewed for this delightful programme Savage (1996) argued that space and pop music are inextricably linked and you can certainly see it in the origins of rock n' roll. There are dozens of rock/rockabilly numbers e.g. Rock The Universe, Man From Mars, Orbit With Me. It's all there and it's all great fun. I recommend the Randell's Martian Hop. "We have just discovered an important nose from space, the Martians plan to hold a dance for all the human race." You might laugh at this and yet revel in Holst's Planet Suite, strange really. According to Savage, Joe Meeks productions, for example Telstar, Life On Venus and later the Byrd's CTA 102 were authentic' because they thought they could actually contact alien beings though radio waves and music. That is strange. Then came space rock and psychedelia, epitomising the links between people taking LSD and going to outer space, hence the term space out. There is plenty of journeying to and from the stars. Examples of this genre include Third Stone From The Sun by Hendrix and The Stones 2,000 Light Years From Home. These represented a darker side (of the moon?), alienation and being alone (similar to the theme of H G Wells Time Machine). Then there was Bowie's Space Oddity and, later, Glam Rock - androgenous aliens from outer space best epitomised by Ziggy Stardust. Now I can see a link between this, music, journeying, space and the final frontier. I hope you can.
You might think the idea of travel in the mind is a little obtuse but if we look at some recent examples of advertising then its relevance is quite apparent. Music from the 1960s or lyrics from songs of the 1960s popular songs often play a key role. Here is the use of nostalgic musical imagery. With reference to the journey through life Guinness are currently using, in an ironic way. Townshend's 'Hope I die before I get old' line to support the visuals of a beaming octogenarian preparing to marry a (pregnant) 20 year old. Again we'll side step the morality of this. Incidentally the same line from My Generation is used in the Wall's ice cream advert emphasising/endorsing their 'Do it your way' slogan. Presumably Sinatra's My Way wasn't deemed appropriate here. Then there is The Smoothest Ferry Since Bryan' slogan used to advertise cross-channel links. It might also be that the advert for Costa Rica 'Three Steps to Heaven' (Observer Life 1996) has associations with Eddie Cochran although this probably is just coincidental. Less circumspect is Detroit's attempts to attract visitors using a Supremes picture and a Motown Magic motif. Take a trip down memory lane.

The phrase taking a trip is open to interpretation. One way of escaping is flying high and here drugs and music are surely interlinked. In the Sixties there were Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds, Eight Miles High, (though this actually referred to crossing the Atlantic by plane rather than flying high) and the Magical Mystery Tour. Leaving aside the morals of the drug culture - though wasn't Coleridge porlock'd and just what were the actual elements in Holmes' 'Elementary my dear Watson'? - popular music has associations with drugs; mind blowing, mind escapism, mind travel etc.

Reference to transcendental meditation and drug culture is also quite common in a number of adverts. There's Jimmy Hendrix mind explosion for Penguin books. The picture chosen to celebrate 60 years of Penguin books (Observer 95) - Jimmy Hendrix reading Penguin Science Fiction - with the caption 'A Penguin has always been a mind expanding experience. Expand your horizons.....' dovetails nicely the music/drugs/space/travel imagery with its commercial/advertising potential. Volkswagen's advert 'Remember those mind expanding trips of the 60's. They're back' (Times magazine 1996) with the psychedelic painted VW minibus in the background and the new MPV in the foreground the advert plays on the duplicity of trip and drug imagery of the mind expanding trips, concluding the MPV's have reached a new high.

As always though, the associations between the car, travel, escapism and new horizons are open to wide interpretation. From the middle aged lament/threnody of Harry Chapin's WOLD - Sometimes I get this crazy dream, I just take off in my car, But you can travel on 10,000 miles, And still stay where you are - to the teen-queen expectant euphoria of the Beach Boys Fun, Fun, Fun. Well, she's got her daddy's car and she cruised to the hamburger stand now. Seems she forgot all about the library that she told her old man now, With the radio blasting she'll go cruising just as fast as she can now. And she'll have fun, fun, fun till her daddy takes her T-Bird away. Travel and music are often associated with escape. (Indeed the song Escape', Rupert Holmes' Pina Colada, deals with an attempt to break free from a stifling domestic relationship.)

Another car advert using popular music to reflect the passage of time/journey through life is the somewhat contrived Peugeot 306: 'Manage The Kinks, The Stones and Dire Straights. Aha! Here comes the Peugeot 306 XSi as it wings its way along the cliff towards some sandy shore in the beautiful south of France. Away from the jam on the main road, the sweet 2-litre, fuel injected engine delivers in excess of 120 bhp. Accelerating in a blur to 62 mph in just 9.2 seconds. Five star handling complements this power, preventing the skids in mud or wet, wet, wet conditions.
The XSI is also available with ABS (Good news for stray cats in the middle of the road). Further safety features include a driver’s airbag and side impact beams to protect you and the young ones from an unexpected wham or other such madness. We’ve ensured barren nights for the public enemy lurking in the shadows thanks to the alarm and an engine immobiliser. The temptations continue….. etc (The Times Magazine 95).

Travel is linked with literature, always has been. Increasingly though, this has become more obvious, more commercial, witness the plethora of travel books in the 1980s and 1990s, though this mushrooming is but one indication of a tradition, from classical times of travel, being linked with (respectable) literature, an accepted symbiosis. Look no further than the cover of the Oxford Book of Travel Verse, - ‘an effortless and exciting poetic Grand Tour of the World (Crossley-Holland). It always interests me what people read on holiday for escapism. Sometimes it’s the obligatory relevant travel guide-book or a novel set in the holiday destination. Quite often though it’s in fact the opposite. For example I’ll perhaps go to Spain and read a Raymond Chandler book set in Los Angeles or go to California and read say, For Whom The Bell Tolls. Nevertheless, “Reading fiction can be an excellent way of discovering more about where you are on holiday. Novels, or travel literature…. give that sense of place which is lacking in many guide books” (Anderson 1996). So too with music related literature. See Brown’s (1993) American Heartbeat - Travel from Woodstock to San Jose by Song Title' and Coast to Coast. A Rock Fans US Tour’ by Bull (1993). Even Lonely Planet are into it. According to their newsletter ‘Driving the USA is the best way to see America and whilst Route 66 is a bit of ghost town these days, it is really worth taking the time to follow the old road for a while and visit the 66 towns. We came across diners that looked like movie sets, complete with movie waitresses, ladies with pencilled eyebrows and towering beehives to whom everyone was honey’. It really felt like we had entered a time warp…… our music education was addressed in Memphis, the Sun Records studio tour was terrific and captured the embryonic sound and atmosphere of rock n’ roll. (Wheeler, M 1994).

Music itself adds a further evocative dimension. The Beatles Here comes the sun’ was used as the theme music for early Holiday programmes. As each destination was explored/advertised, the visual images were backed by appropriate music. An excellent example of mixing music, nostalgia and visual imagery was Simon Caulder’s wonderful television series ‘Back on the road again’. Introducing Radio 4s Breakaway is, appropriately, a 1930s/40s ditty, ‘Let’s do the breakaway’. This nostalgic signature tune sets the scene admirably, elevating as it does, the programme to enhance its sophisticated travel image. No, I do like to be beside the seaside here (see Wheeler 1993).

If we are looking for a litmus paper for the transition from travel to tourism then one could do worse than take a listen to a chronological juke box’ of travel/tourism related numbers. True, it would only be a superficial indication and may be the jury would be hung, but even so it is a thought. What could be more evocative of the way things have changed than to compare the contemporary tourism mantra of Here We Go, Here We Go, Here We Go etc conjuring up as it does images of, let’s say, revelry’, with the good old fashioned, open air healthy picture painted by the I love to go a wandering…. with a knapsack on my back’ etc., so popular on Uncle Mac’s Children’s Favourites? From the valderi, valdera’ days of the early fifties, it’s been a downside slide/spiral via the likes of Cliff’s Summer Holiday, Viva Espania, the Sex Pistols Holiday In The Sun, John Cooper-Clarke’s Majorca to the current contemporary chanting of Here We Go, Here We Go - a musical journey from lost innocence (or is it just another reflection of getting old).
Popular music and its concomitant trappings are in themselves tourist attractions. Gracelands is a mecca for Elvis aficionados, Bob Marley's museum in Kingston a similar shrine, so too is Jim Morrison's grave in Paris. Route 66, now no longer in its former glory, still evokes images that in turn materialise into tourist trips. So the familiar visitor numbers, per capita spend, income/job creation statistics etc., are, in these situations, music generated. The Pop dead are big business, so too are the living. Adverts are now common to see the Stones in the New York, Bon Jovi in Frankfurt, Rod Stewart in Rio etc. Takers of these trips, whether for a weekend or longer are counted in tourist statistics. Just how a day trip to Wembley, to see, say the Eagles counts is another matter? I'm sure it does and is included in tourist spend and tourist numbers (probably twice, counted going in and going out to inflate the day visitor numbers). Whichever way you look at it popular music is a tourist attraction. Jackson, (1990) writing in the Times emphasises this.

"The importance of The Beatles, and indeed of the whole of the Mersey sound, cannot be overstated where tourism is concerned", says Mike Wilkinson, Liverpool's Head of Tourism Arts and Heritage. "When you ask foreign visitors what they know about the city before they came here, it boils down to football teams and pop groups, Pop related tourism has developed a lot already but there is quite clearly scope for a great deal more. New Orleans has jazz, we have The Beatles, it's definitely an important way forward." Ken Wright, the impresario of the musical Ferry Cross The Mersey, says "If you've got it, flaunt it. We're fools if we don't capitalise on our musical past. Jackson continues "Round the corner at the Cavern Pub the pun hungry visitor can order a Sergeant Pepper Steak Sandwich or portions of either Give Peas A Chance or John Lennon's Meringue Pie. (Jackson 1996). Cliff Richard's Summer Holiday, the 1960s movie about a bus trip to Greece (no pun intended) is to be staged at Blackpool Opera House as a musical. (Times 1996 b). Musicals dedicated to pop icons - eg Buddy Holly, Roy Orbison, Elvis etc - help generate visitor numbers. Its Yesterday Once More.

The real commercial power of popular music in relation to tourism was demonstrated earlier in the year when the Brazilian authorities attempted to prevent Michael Jackson from filming his latest video in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro for fear that it would present the wrong 'image' of Rio to the world, thereby hitting the tourist trade. According to Gamini (1996) "The video, for his latest single, They Don't Care About Us', is meant to highlight the plight of children in poverty-stricken areas of cities.... Rio's authorities took legal action to ban him from filming in the filthy alleys of the Dona Marta slum, which is home to 4,000 people.... Marcelo Alencar, the governor, of Rio, said the video would reflect a "negative and damaging image" of the city, especially when it is trying to promote its flamboyant carnival which starts on Saturday. Dona Marta favela, or shantytown, is a stark reminder of the high gap that exists between rich and poor in the seaside city...." The fact that the authorities were, and had for the previous thirty years been, more than happy with the positive (though, to many, misleading) pictures portrayed by the Girl from Ipanema is typically indicative. With this in mind, rather than Seurat's painting, maybe Fischl's The Island, would have made a far more appropriately ambiguous backdrop to this conference. I don't want to be too flippant here because I really do feel that there's more to this point than mere semantics.

At the beginning of the talk I mentioned sustainability. To support the increasing welter of 'Sustainable Tourism' in the environmentally (in the widest sense of the world) fragile areas there is a need for sustainable, or rather sustained, economic growth in the tourist donor countries. Undoubtedly, and unfortunately, this looks likely to be achieved only by the continued 'What's in it for me' individual approach to life - a much wants more' attitude best summed up in a pre-
Olympic headline 'Olympic spirit of 1996. Faster, higher, richer' (Observer 1996) - a clarion call of onwards and upwards. In musical terms We Are The Champions - or the false expectations of Fame's I'm going to live for ever, I'm going to learn how to fly'. This saddens me. Just rounding off on that now. In the academic study and practice of tourism and sustainability there are basically two schools of thought, for and against. For those of optimistic disposition perhaps their anthem should be 'Don't worry, be happy'. Those of us of a more realistic, pessimistic bent might prefer joining, in full voice, with a chorus of 'Cheer up chum, don't be glum, we all know there's worse to come'. Here I do see some hope though, hearing in mind a recent Sunday Times report 'Miserable people make more sense' (Leake and Lawrence, 1995) which states: 'Research by a team of eminent psychologists has shown that happy people cannot think straight. The glum do much better.' I do hope today's talk hasn't been an exception to that rule.

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Fish, Fishing and Tourism. The ‘Incompleat’ Rural Angle (1999)

Fish, Fishing and Tourism. ‘The Incompleat’ Rural Angle

Brian Wheeller
Senior Lecturer in Tourism
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies
University of Birmingham
J.G.Smith Building
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT

Tel No: 0121 414 5016
Fax: 0121 414 3279
Email: B.A.Wheeller@bham.ac.uk

Abstract
The paper explores some aspects of the relationships between travel and tourism with fish and fishing. Socio-cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions are suggested. An element of poetic (fishing?) license is adopted as these wide, general links are illustrated and considered before being contextualised as a means of highlighting our inconsistent and hypocritical attitudes towards tourism and sustainability. Images of fish, and their environment of river, lakes, oceans, etc. are, it is argued, graphic, evocative and increasingly deployed weapons of tourism marketing strategy - surgical strikes at the tourist/traveller wallet. The paper continues with a brief look at the significance of fishing to the rural tourism environment, before concluding on a familiar, depressing note, by placing fishing within the sustainability saga.

Four years ago, in a paper at the Strathclyde Tourism: State of the Art conference, I briefly referred to fishing as a means of highlighting our inconsistent attitudes towards tourism and sustainability. Last year, at the Caledonian conference, my presentation included, what I at least considered to be, evocative images of the coelacanth to re-inforce aspects of this same argument - namely the absurdities of our attitude to the environment.

In a sense, the present paper continues with this theme. However, as the title suggest this tiny fish, rather than being on the periphery of the argument - in the margins - have, so as to speak, taken centre
This is no coincidence. Since childhood, I have been fascinated by fish. My wonder, indeed awe, at their beauty - far from being diminished with the rites of passage and the onset (onslaught) of middle age, middle class, mediocrity have, if anything, increased. This process has, no doubt, been fuelled by a sense of injustice - namely, that a life-form of such beauty and versatility can be so underrated, under-appreciated and undervalued. To some, then, there is a danger that this paper may be seen as self-indulgent reverie put to paper, rather than put to rest. I don’t see the exercise (exorcise?) in such a blinkered way. While it is true that I do, indeed, derive considerable pleasure from thinking and writing about fish and fishing, (and shouldn’t we take pleasure while we can?) equally I see fish’ ‘mans’ pursuit of fish, as a fertile source of material with which to illustrate and examine aspects of our subject of travel and tourism. I hope in this short paper to outline some of these thoughts - ideas that I am developing elsewhere. General observations are mixed with specific examples. By adopting a wider perspective than the conventional, and looking here at a few seemingly rather random relationships, it is hoped to give some insight into the eclectic manner in which fish/fishing is linked with, and plays a part in, travel/tourism. Though not exclusively the emphasis, as the conference subject matter dictates, will be on the rural environment. To an extent this seems reasonable as sustainability (like fishing) is, I would argue, still seen primarily in a rural, ‘nature -based’ context and, despite claims to the country, not as an urban phenomena.

Perhaps, initially, its worthwhile briefly returning to, paraphrasing, and developing my earlier Strathclyde example (see Wheeller 1994) in order to reiterate the premise, my belief that most of our attitudes towards, notions of and belief in sustainability are founded (and therefore flounder) on a base of inconsistency and hypocrisy.

A lad is fishing off a seaside pier. All morning no luck. He is disappointed: the fish are happy. Tiring of the friendly ‘caught anything yet?’ from passers-by (watching people fish, the fishing boats coming in and unloading, and the fish market are all part of that quintessential holiday pastime, the stroll along the prom and around the harbour) - he thinks dinner-time and out come the sandwiches. While munching food for thought, he decides on a different tack. He changes bait, off comes the lug-worm and he pinches bread, from his sandwich, onto the hook. Still no luck. He decides to keep the same
bait but change the quarry. Rather than cast into the sea in search of fish, he lets his line and hook settles on the pier. Instant success, he hooks and reels in a squawking, flapping seagull. Pandemonium breaks out amongst the ‘pier-group’. Whilst they would have been happy (or at least not questioned) seeing a writhing fish hauled in, and cudgelled they are somewhat less impressed at the sight of a distressed seagull. Alarmed, a call to the police or local RSPCA, with a view to immediate retribution for such cruelty, is made.

Was the boy an ecotourist when he was fishing for fish? Yes because he wasn’t catching any? But what about the worm? If he had caught the fish would he have been eco-friendly? Does it depend on the species caught? Whether they are rare or plentiful? (see Thomson below). Or whether his catch is eaten to sustain his family; thrown back (often damaged, to die); given to his cat-which then dies? Or what? Why don’t the same criteria apply to catching the seagull as to the fish? And why the public outcry? Why does the Labour Party tacitly support angling but have doubts (but little action) about blood sports?

In Living Fossil, The Story of the Coelacanth Thomson examines the ‘discovery’, in 1938, of the fish thought extinct for 70 million years and explores its importance to evolutionary biology, raising as he does ethical problems of scientific study. What is the justification for continued hunting, capture, and inevitable killing of these fish in the interest of science “without anyone having the foggiest idea of how many fish there are being left below the surface of the Indian Ocean? If there are hundreds of thousands of individuals, catching a few each year will not matter, if there are only hundreds, then a ‘few’ becomes a very dangerous number” (Thomson 1991). Its all relative. Though this begs other questions, the general thesis seems reasonable. He concludes the coelacanth “may well be the only organism whose extinction is by scientists - the species was discovered by scientists and collected for scientists for research and for exhibition in scientific institutions” (Thomson 1991). Similarly, the recently reported discovery of a new species of bird in the dense forest of Ecuador suggests that, despite no knowledge of the actual numbers surviving of the hitherto unknown birds, specimens were captured and (it would appear from the photograph that accompanies the article) at least one was killed, presumably ‘in the interest of scientific research’ (see Varadarajan 1998).
Again it just depends on how far we want to delve to search out and, if not able to rectify, then at least expose inconsistencies in both thought-process and action. The same is true with sustainability, in this case sustainable rural tourism.

The recent welter of angling programmes on television has seen ‘catch and release’ emphasised as a sustainable, environmentally friendly approach to fishing. I am a little confused by this. The prey, after being savagely hooked, dragged from the depths into an alien world is (after weighing/photography/man-handling etc.) then carefully, sympathetically, and sometimes with smug satisfaction, returned from whence it came. Good sport. No damage done - everybody happy. Well almost. Except the mackerel, dogfish or crab that was caught, bludgeoned, cut up and used as bait. Why the satisfaction of releasing something that surely has been traumatised in the name of sport, but show no concern for killing fish for bait to catch another fish to release? And then claim that there are no ethical problems because the fish was released anyway? Absurd.

Isn’t there a parallel here with our approach to ecotourism and sustainability? Smug satisfaction at the ostentatious end result, going ethnic in our eco haven at, say, an ecologe in the Amazon - preening ourselves on our environmental credentials of eating only local food, adopting local customs, avoiding an outboard and using only a canoe etc., - while completely ignoring the ‘costs’ of actually getting there? The car to the airport? The flight over? A night in San Palo; another in Manaus. Five nights at Coppacabana on the way back? Eco friendly? I think not.

Is sustainability about carefully considered weighted value judgements? Is it about ignoring/sacrificing something or somewhere in order to sustain an alternative we value more? Or is it simply about hypocrisy?

Alarming inconsistency is apparent too when captured fish are strung up and displayed as trophies, accompanied by the conquering hero/heroine in suitable triumphant pose. Transparent is probably more apposite, judging by the lack of outrage at this spectacle. It would seem that people see straight
through this in the literal, rather than ironic sense, without ever noticing any inconsistency. For clarity, take a closer look at a page from the Times Travel Section for a holiday in Africa - Hooked on Big Game Fishing in the Sun (Times 1996). The main photo shows the proud tourist and bloodied sail fish, the latter prone, vanquished on the boat deck; a smaller picture top left depicts Esmarelda, the world's heaviest tortoise, weighing in at over 600lbs being admired (adored?) tenderly and almost lovingly; bottom left is a smaller picture of another fish, a butchered trevally. All perfectly civilised and acceptable. Now imagine the situation reversed, the fish swimming happily unhindered in peace and the tortoise upturned, skewered, tangled up with hook and tackle, at deaths door. Wild animal as trophy. Outrage.

Similarly if it were a lion or, taking examples from further afield, say a polar bear or a tiger or heaven forbid, a panda, that was strung up then there would again be an outcry. But not a fish? Well no, its only a fish. Another recent item from BBC 2 Country File raises similar issues. Deep sea fishing with Drift Nets, the so-called 'wall-of-death' has been banned off-shore in Europe. According to the report, the nets, which can kill dolphins, whales and turtles will be phased out in the next three years. In Britain the tuna fisherman of Newlyn will be most hit. The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation has retaliated, arguing that the new law is based on emotional feelings for the dolphins, rather than on sound scientific evidence. No mention here of any emotional feelings for the tuna (Country File 1998).

Nothing new in this I guess. And, I suppose, of relatively minor import when one acknowledges the sorry state of affairs that more concern is often shown over pictures of distressed animals than children, "As many of my African friends often make the point to me that when they watch the television in the United States or Britain quite often they see the television producers and reporters being more concerned that a couple of elephants were shot or a crocodile was captured by poachers than about the fact that there are lot of children going hungry" (Furedi 1997).

I know these discrepancies are obvious, so obvious that they are accepted without question. So too I would again argue is the way bland acceptance of eco/sustainable tourism and damning of mass
tourism has (erroneously in my opinion) become the norm amongst our peers. As always a smoke screen of goody - two shoes rhetoric and respectability masks both theoretical and more significantly practical problems of implementation. There is, for example, always the lingering conundrum that if the problem, say rural depopulation, is of sufficient size/intensity to warrant intervention, then that intervention has to be of sufficient size to tackle the problem. If the solution is to take the form of tourism - sustainable tourism that is - then a large scale problem isn't usually solved by small scale solutions. “The argument that together a number of small projects operating in unison could make a significant economic impact might be acceptable but then, of course, the aggregate number of tourist would also increase to significant (intolerable?) levels. This is the very situation that the new forms of tourism are trying to avoid.” (Wheeller 1997).

Back to fishing. While claims in, and title of, Packman’s Fish, Fishing and the Meaning of Life are perhaps a little hyperbole (and somewhat reminiscent of a Bill Shankly quote) there is, at least when it comes to travel and tourism, a case to made that fish (and fishing) are contributing a surprisingly important, if rather understated, role. Fish are in our minds before we even think ‘holiday’.

The ‘fish’ pervades the home. Not just in the goldfish bowl perched on the windowsill; or the aquarium placed in the corner; or more functionally - on the plate; (or, for that matter, to those of the fishing fraternity, to the maggots ‘on ice’ in the fridge). It is in ‘life style’ magazines, on television, swimming on the computer screen, on the cover of professional journals, in the mind and in the wallet. There is an array of available kitsch. The fish souvenirs and trinkets range from indispensable fish slippers and fish oven gloves to mugs (for mugs?) to purchase. Even three flying fish for the wall, replacing the forlorn, forgotten ducks. But the fish is used to sell more, far more, than fish products.

In the financial world Prudential Assurance currently uses fishing imagery to market its product; more pertinently in the arena of travel and ease of access to funds, American Express has used fish images and, of course, there is the eponymous Goldfish card.
Commercially, for the travel and tourism business, fish (and fishing) is an image that sells. Examples are legion, ranging as they do from the straightforward and obvious to the more tangential and obscure. Images of fish and their environment of rivers, lakes, seas and oceans are graphic, evocative and increasing deployed weapons of tourism marketing strategies - surgical strikes at the tourist/traveller wallet.

It is of course not just fish per se that creates the required image and connotations. It is their living (and dying) environment - water - that is so evocative. Leaving aside Marx’s (Groucho) customarily perceptive comment about (drinking) water, it has a powerful appeal that is universally utilised/exploited in tourism marketing imagery. Whether it be rivers, ponds, lakes or the sea/ocean its significance as an image creator for travel and tourism is obvious. Actually, it is not so much about the water itself as it is about the adjoining banks, and more obviously, the sea-shore/coastline/beach.

The fish is an image that has been with us from childhood and stays with us through life. The ‘fish’ has religious connotations. Two fishes and five loaves. Fisher of Men. And the Journey. The fish on the car in front. Follow that fish. But beware. Remember the priest kills.

It is no surprise that fish are big in the eco-tourism charade - another deceptive iron fist in velvet glove. A few examples. Brochures featuring appealing images of iridescent fish (and often resplendent coral reef) on their cover are a common feature on travel agency racks e.g. Lily Beach Resort, Maldives; Australia, A Travellers Guide 1994 from their National Tourism Commission; Explore South Africa. Ecotourism. Principles and Practice. Fishing features on the Discover Both Sides of Nevada, their Visitors Guide brochure; on Ireland - Is there a Catch? (only if you are a fisherman) campaign. In Scotland there is the Scottish Tourist Boards’ Fish Scotland covering game fishing, coarse fishing and sea angling. Also, from the S.T.B there are more detailed publications aimed at the industry, like Going Wild in Scotland Developing Scottish Brown Trout Fishing (STB 1993).

There are fish on travel magazine covers. They feature on Condé Nast Traveller, on the Eco-Traveller, on (more obviously) diving magazines; and in the recently introduced Food and Travel magazine.
The February 1998 edition of Field Magazine was their 'Travel Number': on the cover, superimposed on a flyfisher in idyllic setting were the words Alaska's 70lb fish: Argentina; 20lb Brown Trout: Exploring the Amazon.

Of course, with eco-tourism and the marketing of ecotourism (aren't these synonymous?) is the education corollary - namely the ecotourism conference and the marketing of the eco-tourism conferences. For education read business. Here again fish have their role to play - see for example the choice of venue for the fourth World Ecotourism conference at the Paradise Resort, Bahamas complete with its (allegedly) largest aquarium in the world. And take a glance at the cover of the Conference proceedings from the Eco-tourism Concept, Design and Strategy meeting run by the Institute of Ecotourism, Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok (1995). In similar vein, the re-vamped International Development Department at the University of Birmingham has used an image of aquaculture - fish-farming in Uganda - in its new poster to advertise (and sell) its Poverty Reduction and Development Management Programme. Specifically, one of the modules in this programme relates to Rural Poverty and Development.

It is not always the case that a positive image ensues - but as the experienced (and manipulative) are aware, often there is money too in notoriety. Take for example, Benchley's Amity and the shark(s). Doubtless though initially tourists to the town would be scared-off once the danger had passed, they would be back to witness, and enjoy, the scenes of former gory. Also, in the real world, tourists have probably flocked to where Jaws was filmed on 'location', and of coarse to the real 'Jaws' strung up on winch at Universal Studios. A newspaper article, under the familiar photo of the shark, reads "Some 22 years after first frightening cinema audiences, Jaws remains a major attraction at Universal Studios" (Abse, 1997).

In addition to the advertising/image angle, there are a number of familiar ways fish are 'used' - some more pertinent here than others. They are, for example, seen as sport (conventional fishing), as entertainment (tanks, koi ponds, aquarium) and as cash crop (fish farming, aquaculture). All these have a financial dimension.
Besides pure 'sport', there is the underlying, determining business element to fish/fishing. Some see fishing as providing a potential lucrative return in itself, as an alternative to forestry (Cherry 1993). According to a spokesperson for the Salmon and Trout Association “one fish caught on rod and line is worth £500 - 750 in England and if you turn it to Scotland it would be worth well of £1000. So it is hugely important when one considers fishing often takes place in quite rural communities where that sort of figure is absolutely essential to the local economy” (Knight 1998). If these figures are anywhere near accurate, then given the decline in the numbers of salmon and sea trout runs in many rivers, there is understandable economic (and environmental) cause for concern. Linklater suggests the downward multiplier has already taken hold. “On the salmon rivers of Scotland the talk this season is once again of poor catches, with anglers cancelling expensive holidays, gillies being laid off and hotels closing” (Linklater 1998). More positively though he points out that “The Tweed alone accounts for a £11 million industry, supporting an estimated 520 jobs” and draws attention to the national significance of the sport - “In Scotland as a whole between 5,000 and 6,000 workers depend directly on the continued health of river fishing. The changing habitats of the Atlantic salmon are thus of vital importance to an entire community”.

And then there are the Vardon Sea Life centres at St Andrews and Oban. The latters publicity reads like a hotel brochure “nestling amongst the pine trees on the shore of beautiful Loch Creran, Oban Sea-Life centre enjoys one of the most picturesque settings in Britain” (Sea-life 1998). Its ‘environment’ is important. Notable, too is Deep-Sea World in North Queensbury Fife described as “a world class establishment” in an article earlier this year. Presumably quoting from a Coopers & Lybrand Report on Deep-Sea World, it claims the aquarium “has a turnover of £1.5 million and nearly 500,000 visitors a year, has brought 300 jobs in related industries to the area, in addition to the 89 staff it employs in high season” (Henderson 1998). Clearly a ‘fish based’ product, I see the economic and social/cultural/education impacts of the growth of ‘the age of aquarium’ as a visitor tourist attraction as a significant trend - and one I am pursuing. Business, at present, if booming. “Over the past five-years aquariums have become the fastest - growing tourist attraction in the UK: there are now more than 30 - double the number of 10 years ago” (Rumbold, 1998).
Moving temporarily to the city Expo '98 held in Lisbon is a celebration of the Oceans of World. Images of fish were prominent in the pre-event marketing (as were babies and small children - another theme, representing “our hope for the future”). Perhaps this partly explains why Expo '98 featured as a 'Blue Peter Special' in which fish again played a central role (Valerie Singleton, varicose veins and all, still has a lot to answer for). Travel sections of the various UK newspapers celebrate Lisbon as a venue for Expo. Tourist demand for the city has mushroomed this summer. Some companies have responded by providing special Expo Brochures, for example Destination Portugal’s ‘Welcome to Expo’, while others have settled for highlighting the event in their ‘standard’ brochure portfolio e.g. Thomson’s City Breaks, Cresta, etc. Expo is not just a tourist attraction. It is there to ‘sell’. To sell the exhibitors respective country. And it achieves this by using the peripheral, marginal areas - often on the liminality of the land and sea - to good effect. “The theme of Expo is the ocean and many countries make enthralling presentation of their coast lines, marine life and deep sea exploration. . . . Tiny islands, impoverished former Soviet Republics and even war torn Eritrea manage dignified and informative exhibits” (Binney, 1998).

Also worth a mention here is aquaculture, world-wide a growing industry but to many a contentious one. Size of plant and location are debatable issues. Ranging in quality and substance from sophisticated salmon farms (of North America), make-shift reed traps (Irrywaddy, Amazon), to the potential of ‘free range’ fish farms, issues of pollution are being expressed. Rural in location, concern as to their relative merits in many ways mirrors discussions on the pros and cons of tourism development. Non more so than in Scotland. Many fish farms are located in lochs and lakes in areas of great beauty, and, it is argued, they diminish the visual and deter tourists. (In other cases trout farms, in themselves, are often an attraction, people visiting and actually paying to feed the fish). But the problem as always revolves around money and economic generation. Aquaculture is business. Essentially it is again the old chestnut, the insolvable quandary of economic benefits (jobs, income generation etc.) set against pollution - compounded in the aquaculture debate by genetic considerations. Here, as elsewhere, we continue to prevaricate on the sensitive, environmental issues.
On a rather more sure footing fishing hotels, when appropriate (and sometimes it must be said, when not) quite naturally always make the most of their location, their environment - as well as their fishing - in their advertisements, see by way of classic example the brochure for the Scourie Hotel, Sutherland or take a look at the photos and copy of the adverts for accommodation at the back of Fishing for Scotland brochure. Clearly there is mileage in this approach not least because the angler (despite singular behaviour) is often accompanied by non-fishing partner and family.

Maintaining the rural, Scottish environmental theme, I’d just like to take a closer look at the two aforementioned publications by the STB, Fish Scotland and Going Wild in Scotland. Though the pamphlets claim “for many anglers it is the quality of the landscape that matters, rather than the size of the fish caught” (STB 1994), the literature plays safe, linking fish imagery strongly to the environment, whilst effectively milking the angler’s ego. Fishing is very much ‘located’ in the (romantic) environment. “Scottish pike, like the environment itself are wild rugged and exciting” (p14). Reference too, to the adventure spirit ‘the final frontier’ (p18), appealing to the “angler with a passion for exploring, there is the priceless prospect of the north-virtually unfished and waiting to be discovered by the adventurous angler”, (p16 ). There is talk too of “hard and unforgiven shores - - - for the equally hard shore angler” (p17.) Highlighting a point mooted earlier in this paper, namely the significance of the liminal coast, as an introduction to sea angling the copy in Fish Scotland continues “Scotland has perhaps the most varied and beautiful coast-line in the world, the shingle beaches, sandy bays, sea locks, cliffs and coves and rocky headlands provide a vast spectrum of marine habitats. These coasts are the melting pot for the warm water of the gulf stream and the cold water of the north. The result is a bewildering number of species on the sea anglers menu” (p.16).

Game fishing, sea angling and coarse fishing are all employed by the industry to lure visitors; some to undeveloped areas, others out of high tourist season. There’s getting “off the beaten track” (p16) (as opposed to off the beat?). Return on capital for investments in developing fishing waters might be low but “it is justified commercially by increased hotel occupying in May and June” (p.16). Seasonal and spatial spread deployed in its true role as marketing queen, rather than planning pawn. Not too surprisingly given that these are ‘tourist Board publications there is the customary exultation for
quality “competitive fishing is usually bad for fish stocks and is, in any case, not part of the quality product this guide seeks to encourage” (p14) and also calls for the partnership approach “a co-operative effort between Angling Associations, the tourist industry and the riparian owners (p 6). One would also expect a number of familiar phrases, not far removed from the usual tourist brochure clichés, are in evidence throughout the copy “the fishing towns are steeped in angling tradition” (STB, 1994, p.17).

However, rather more questionable is reference to under-exploited resources: specifically to “three under exploited big game species - world record porbeagle sharks, heavyweight halibut and giant skate” (p16). Now this is disturbing. Is the ‘environment’ there to be exploited? The suggested assumption surely is that because the resource is there, under-exploited, then it should therefore be exploited. Exploitation is something we should surely eschew.

Going Wild in Scotland was presumably sponsored by GlenMorangie whisky, maintaining the traditional linking of whisky with game fishing, evidence an advert in an early Sunday Supplement. Under the headline ‘The Regal Flavour of Scotland’ a three-quarter page, commissioned painting of a leaping salmon, the king of fish, captures the eye to advertise Scotland’s prince of whiskies, Chivas Regal. Copy reads “a highland stream in spate up through the rusty waters a salmon leaps wash of silver blue. The flavour of such exciting moments is the flavour of Scotland and so is the splendid taste of Chivas Regal Scottish Whisky” (Sunday Times, 1963).

The advert also includes the line “Discerning people gladly pay more”. Contemporary ‘green’ products invariably seem to cost more than their ‘inferior’ counterparts. So-called eco/sustainable holidays (should that be journeys?) are no exceptions to this rule. 35 years on then, does this mean that all eco-tourists are discerning? Certainly, they would like to think so. But, I suggest, this ‘discernment’ owes more to egotistical perception and crass class values than it does to any eco-logic. Entrenched in our hypocritical value system, what ‘eco’ logic there is appears, in turn, to owe more to eco/nomics than eco/logical concern.
We are all riddled with hypocrisy. Despite my earlier eulogy to the ‘fish’, and genuine concern as to their welfare, I conclude by admitting that, since childhood, my favourite culinary delight has steadfastly remained fish. Well, more precisely fish fingers - slightly burnt. We devour that which we love. In eco tourism too we all get our fingers burnt.
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Random thoughts... the Society needs to alter and grow; it needs to become more attractive. Conveying professional status may not be enough. It has to offer more perceived advantages and/or better value for money. We need alternative formats for meetings, which should increase skills, knowledge and professionalism, as well as provide good networking opportunities ... We risk remaining small if we do not offer a route to membership through a few paying examination ... Is there perhaps a need to think about a rapprochement to other professional bodies, which may well be going through the same self appraisal for the same reasons?

ALLISON ROBERTS FTS, consultant, teacher and trainer

In the next twenty-one years we should make an effort to enrol more hotel proprietors and managers into membership, because the Society can offer them a level of contact and of debate within a much wider spectrum than other bodies. To be effective in our work, we need these days to be better informed about markets, planning, public relations and statistics. The Tourism Society can do so much to help a young professional hotelier onto a broader - and richer - career path and be, in turn, enlivened by him or her in membership.

MALCOLM A SEYMOUR FTS, Director, Cumbria Tourist Board 1968-1980; Proprietor, Somerset House Hotel, Bath 1980 -

I am often saddened by the lack of understanding, recognition or support the tourism industry gets, particularly within local and central government. In the future I see a need for the Society to provide the leadership that is so lacking in our fragmented industry by dramatically increasing membership, particularly at the grass roots level. For many of us London is too distant and I would like to see active Regional groups set up to help recruit new members from all the various agencies involved in tourism, including local government, who would act as a catalyst in promoting our industry at all levels.

TONY TREGONING FTS, Partner, Classic Cottages


1998: Elvis lives on - courtesy of careful corporate strategy of re-packaging and re-issuing of old words and material. Tourism Society, having successfully negotiated the rite of passage, comes of age, 21. Halfway to Paradise. It's a Young World. But increasingly, dangerous waters lie ahead. The Tourism Society in a Society of Tourists? Professionals/practitioners, adrift on an ocean of hedonistic amateurs, perhaps need to cast off business blinkers, take on board more egalitarian ethical ballast, and then immerse themselves in the (ground) swell of compassionate social - cultural - environmental concerns. It's now or never. Otherwise...

2019: The Tourism Society dies. Aged 42. Death certificate reads 'death due to careless corporate strategy of re-packaging and re-issuing old ideas and material.'

BRIAN WHEELER FTS, Senior Lecturer in Tourism, University of Birmingham

In the future the growth of tourism will need a single organization. The threats are clearly a sectoral division into the many and varied elements that form part of the tourism mix. The opportunities must rest with the growing importance of tourism worldwide as a prime economic generator and this must give the Tourism Society a new dimension. It must reach out to the regions and have a greater influence through the various colleges and universities throughout Britain and the world and through the various practitioners based in the provinces.

TIM WHITEHEAD FTS, Director of Strategic Services, Torbay Council

Tourism management into the next Millennium will require increasing professional skills. Sharing experiences, good practice and networking are essential tools of the tourism professional and the Tourism Society should continue to offer opportunities to do this. The Society has responded positively to industry changes so far and should continue to reflect the interests and concerns of its members.

The main threat to its existence may come in the form of competition for members from other organizations and, as the workload of managers increases (as it seems relentlessly to do!), the sheer difficulty in getting to Society events and even keeping pace with mailings.

PAM WILSHIER MTS, General Manager, Mercyside Tourism & Conference Bureau

This publication was compiled by Professor Rick Modrak FTS, with Adrian Clark FTS and Brenda Shulka. 'How it all began' and the highlights of the first twenty-one years of the Society were contributed by its Chairman. Annual Reports of the Society, the Bulletin (later Journal), and Membership Handbooks (later Membership Directories) were the main sources used.

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The Tourism Society
25 Chapter Street
London SW1P 4RN
Tel: 0171 834 0461
Fax: 0171 932 0238

20
Brian Wheeler

THE EYE

There is a scene in 'Harvey' – which happens to be my favourite film – where the gentle Elwood Dowd (alias James Stewart) is asked why he no longer has time to do anything any more. His response is that he is “too busy” sitting by the bar with his dear friend, the eponymous Harvey – a six foot three and a half inch white rabbit. Elwood explains he now spends every moment he has chatting warmly with strangers and making anybody and everybody that comes into the bar (that is, who enters into his world) feel wanted and happy. It is reminiscent of another film gem in which William Bendix and Bing Crosby give their sparkingly rendition of “Busy doing nothing” in a Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court. They are, however, perhaps more selfishly wrapped up in their own hedonistic pursuits, whereas Elwood and Harvey are philanthropic in attitude, showing sustained concern for others happiness.

Harvey’s is, of course, a dream world. But I can dream, can’t I? But as we all know some dreams are nightmares. Daubed on a wall during the 1968 Paris student riots was the evocative ‘Forget all you’ve learnt. Start to dream’. I learnt something and started to dream but, always dissatisfied, wanted to dream more. So I wanted to learn more. A poem ‘Leisure’ by W.H. Davies has stayed with me. “What is this life if full of care / We have no time to stand and stare / No time to stand beneath the boughs / And stare as long as sheep or cows... / A poor life this if, full of care, / We have no time to stand and stare”. The irony was that we were given this to learn, as homework from school, on one bonfire night, when I should have been out enjoying myself. Around this time, there was the Lovin’ Spoonful’s “Daydream”. Also, the Association had a record out called “Time for Living” with the line “I took off my watch and found I had all the time in the world”. This philosophy dovetailed nicely into my early teen dream daze. But rude awakening, when dreams died abruptly for 56,000 Americans in Vietnam, who had dreamt similar dreams. Maybe, for every dream there is a nightmare (only much later did I realise that Asians dreamt too).

Do we ever leave our childhood dreams behind? Do we ever leave childhood? Mickey Newbury’s chilling lines “I’ll be damned if I can understand what life is all about / He’s 80 and his thoughts are running wild/ He’s worked and sweated all his life / To finally find it out / He was once a man but twice a child” must surely leave and indelible mark on any reflective soul.

So if you do get a couple of hours to spare why not spend them daydreaming on your own, yet – I suggest – in the company of Harvey. After all, the mind remains the nearest faraway place. Maybe you too like Elwood Dowd, will discover a trusted, trusting friend and believe that everyday is a nice day. But remember dreamland, like solitude itself, is ‘a fine place to visit but a sorry place to stay’.

Brian Wheeler
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, England
Ever, entertainment is a complex phenomenon functioning at different levels and layers, across cultures and over time.

Entertainment is usually divorced from work and associated with spare time and leisure – to be enjoyed at weekends, in the evenings, or on holiday. Opportunities to participate in some forms of entertainment are determined partly by income (together with other variables like social status, gender, and background). Those not working may have free time but not the means to participate – thereby restricting their choice and limiting their involvement.

Entertainment can be free or there may be a charge. Varying in type, scale, and scope; from country to country, regionally and between urban and rural environs, entertainment provision can be both private and/or public sector driven. The entertainment experience can be active or passive, amateur or professional, and may be consumed on one’s own, with friends, with relatives, or, in the sense of being part of an audience, with strangers.

Entertainment encompasses a range of activities (and venues) at, for example, cinemas, shows, art galleries, festivals, and sports. Hobbies can also be regarded as entertainment. However, what constitutes a hobby stretches from the conventional to the bizarre and there may only be a fine line between hobby and fetish.

Pleasure is gleaned from entertainment. Usually this is seen in a positive light. However, in certain societies, some forms of pleasure (tolerated elsewhere) might be regarded by non-participatory members of that society as being unacceptable. Indeed, the entertainment in question might sometimes be deemed illegal. Prostitution, pornography, drugs, and alcohol might be examples. Thus, although entertainment gives pleasure – sometimes it is forbidden pleasure. What is entertainment to one person may well offend another, an example being the controversial role of fox hunting in the United Kingdom.

It can sometimes be difficult to precisely identify, and then isolate, those elements of an entertainment activity that actually generate the pleasure derived from participation: for example, watching television for entertainment. However, are all television programmes entertaining? Do people watch the news to be entertained, or to be informed? Are these synonymous? Similarly, wildlife programmes may entertain while simultaneously informing.

**ENTERTAINMENT**

Entertainment is a loose, fluid term that incorporates an array of activities and encapsulates a wide spectrum of pastimes. At its simplest, it can be regarded as anything that entertains. However, entertainment is a complex phenomenon functioning at different levels and layers, across cultures and over time. Entertainment is usually divorced from work and associated with spare time and leisure – to be enjoyed at weekends, in the evenings, or on holiday. Opportunities to participate in some forms of entertainment are determined partly by income (together with other variables like social status, gender, and background). Those not working may have free time but not the means to participate – thereby restricting their choice and limiting their involvement.

Entertainment can be free or there may be a charge. Varying in type, scale, and scope; from country to country, regionally and between urban and rural environs, entertainment provision can be both private and/or public sector driven. The entertainment experience can be active or passive, amateur or professional, and may be consumed on one’s own, with friends, with relatives, or, in the sense of being part of an audience, with strangers.

Entertainment encompasses a range of activities (and venues) at, for example, cinemas, shows, art galleries, festivals, and sports. Hobbies can also be regarded as entertainment. However, what constitutes a hobby stretches from the conventional to the bizarre and there may only be a fine line between hobby and fetish.

Pleasure is gleaned from entertainment. Usually this is seen in a positive light. However, in certain societies, some forms of pleasure (tolerated elsewhere) might be regarded by non-participatory members of that society as being unacceptable. Indeed, the entertainment in question might sometimes be deemed illegal. Prostitution, pornography, drugs, and alcohol might be examples. Thus, although entertainment gives pleasure – sometimes it is forbidden pleasure. What is entertainment to one person may well offend another, an example being the controversial role of fox hunting in the United Kingdom.

It can sometimes be difficult to precisely identify, and then isolate, those elements of an entertainment activity that actually generate the pleasure derived from participation: for example, watching television for entertainment. However, are all television programmes entertaining? Do people watch the news to be entertained, or to be informed? Are these synonymous? Similarly, wildlife programmes may entertain while simultaneously informing.
There are links and overlaps between gaining information, being educated, and deriving pleasure: the variations and combinations are inordinate; disaggregation often impossible. As the parameters of the entertainment activity grow, so do complications.

Entertainment is inextricably linked with changes in consumer taste — and with advances in technology. As these evolve, so does entertainment. Within one’s own lifetime, and through one’s own life cycle, entertainment patterns change. Where and how entertainment is provided and consumed has also changed over time. What was entertainment in the 1950s and 1960s is regarded by many as passé now.

Worldwide, the entertainment industry is huge — a behemoth, with tentacles spreading and reaching everywhere.

That’s entertainment!

BRIAN WHEELER
MUSIC

Music is the art of combining vocal and/or instrumental sounds and lyrics in (usually) harmonious and expressive ways.

Pervading all societies and cultures through its multitude of manifestations, music is a universal phenomenon that touches people's emotions. People are affected, consciously or subconsciously, and influenced by music as it infiltrates their lives. Music is part of a personal journey through life, a sound track of people's lives, and their own PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE — lullaby as a child, hymns at weddings, funeral elegy at death. Memories are attached to music; they become inextricably linked. Special moments, relationships, periods of people's lives, and places visited are often associated with specific, readily identifiable songs or pieces of music.

It is not just the past but also the future that can be located in music. Music helps conjure up images of destinations people wish to visit, or states of mind people wish to be in. This relationship is reinforced and manipulated as music takes on an increasingly integral role in the MARKETING of leisure, recreation, and tourism. Music sells. It also forms an important element in the drive to regenerate inner-city nightlife — particularly through club culture.

Musicals — plays with music and song as principal features — have traditionally attracted large numbers of visitors to the bright lights of the big city, to the THEATRE land of New York's Broadway and London's West End. So, too, has opera and orchestral performances of classical music, which have proved irresistible lures to certain audiences prepared to divest of their TIME and money. More prosaic, but possibly more popular, country and western music venues are powerful magnets for devotees of the genre. Similarly, when popular groups and artists go on national and international tours, they fill huge venues with their fans. Drawing on niche markets, music in its many forms and guises can therefore be regarded as a recreational pursuit and tourist ATTRACTION. In the wider arena of leisure and recreation, music is big business.

As a form of recreation and leisure, music can be engaged with in a variety of ways. For instance, as participant in the sense of performers, or spectator in an audience (possibly for Karaoke aficionados — both). Or it may be merely ancillary — literally background music while other pastimes are pursued.

Although generally associated with leisure, relaxation, and entertainment — with dancing, singing, and socializing — music can have ritualistic, religious, and/or political resonance and significance. There are, for example, national, and, sometimes disturbingly, nationalistic connotations.

Although each continent, country, and culture has its own musical roots, with increased TRAVEL, technological breakthroughs, and GLOBALIZATION, English-language (though possibly American) songs and artists have tended increasingly to dominate the world of popular music.

Musicology is the study of the history and the forms of music as distinct from the study to compose or perform it.

References


BRIAN WHEELER
Cheese, Gromit. We'll Go
Somewhere where there's Cheese. Wallace and Gromit's
Grand Day Out: Imagery,
Metaphor and Postgraduate
Tourism Teaching

Keynote: Critical Issues in
Tourism Education.
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Keynote Speakers

‘Cheese, Gromit. We’ll Go Somewhere Where There’s Cheese’. Wallace and Gromit’s Grand Day Out: Imagery, Metaphor and Postgraduate Tourism Teaching

Brian Wheeller
Breda University of Professional Education
The Netherlands

Abstract

This presentation explores the integration of unorthodox teaching material, imagery and metaphor into the delivery of postgraduate tourism teaching and learning – with Wallace and Gromit and the impacts of travel and tourism as exemplar. It reports and elaborates on a research funded by the Learning and Teaching Support Network for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism. Although the original project was clearly focussed on imagery and the visual...and this, indeed, remained central to the ensuing research...interest broadened to incorporate other relevant, concomitant aspects – of which humour (its delivery, currency, international and intercultural appeal etc) was considered critical. The research, therefore, embraced learning and humour in general (and their visual interface in particular).

Fieldwork was conducted at eight higher education establishments; 110 postgraduate tourism students were involved in the exercise. Student feedback would suggest that A Grand Day Out is an excellent teaching tool. Not only can the range of tourism impacts – be they social/ cultural/ political/ economic environmental – be elucidated, but spatial and temporal dimensions of this impact memorably illustrated. It is a stimulating, provocative and, crucially, hilarious means of engaging students in the appreciation of tourism impacts. Just as importantly, it is argued here that the Wallace and Gromit DVD/video is a particularly apposite vehicle to show, ideally at the beginning of their programme, to a group of multi-cultural postgraduate tourism students from a range of cultural and discipline backgrounds, and who have varying levels of expertise in English. After all, a laugh, it is said, is the shortest distance between two people. And tourism, and tourism teaching, should surely essentially be fun. The research, it is argued, reinforces the belief that, if executed with conviction, and using suitably considered (if unorthodox) material honed to the needs of the recipient cohort, an exercise that deliberately introduces something eclectic into an otherwise conventional programme does have disproportionately positive effects.

Keywords: Imagery and Metaphor, Postgraduate Tourism Teaching and Learning

Introduction
This presentation explores the integration of 'unorthodox' teaching material, imagery and metaphor into the delivery of postgraduate teaching and learning – with Wallace and Gromit and the impacts of travel and tourism as exemplar. It is a first step in reporting and elaborating on recent research funded by the (then) Learning and Teaching Support Network...now metamorphosed into the Higher Academy Subject Network ... for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism in the UK. At the outset, I am pleased to acknowledge my appreciation (and admiration) of their vision, and am obviously grateful for their support, with regard to this venture.

Although the original axis of the envisaged project was clearly focussed on imagery and the visual...and this, indeed, remained central to the ensuing research...interest broadened to incorporate other relevant, concomitant aspects – of which humour (its delivery, currency, international and intercultural appeal etc) was obviously crucial. So, I’m hoping that to some extent this will be reflected in today’s rather light-hearted, but neither flippant nor frivolous, finale to the conference proceedings. It really is a pleasure to be here and I’m flattered by having been afforded the opportunity, and flexibility, as a keynote to attempt something a little different in bringing the conference to a close. After these initial introductory words, what I’d like to do is take the liberty of showing the video in its entirety. Rather than edited ‘highlights’ I have opted for showing the full twenty–two minutes, in all its engaging glory. Usually, videos in keynotes are about as welcome as a death at a birthday party. But I’m confident that Wallace and Gromit’s inimitable style will win you over and that the ensuing presentation endorses my decision.

My reading, listening and watching encompassed learning and humour in general and, in particular, their visual interface. The approach was eclectic in scope, embracing as background, yet integral, contextualising material information on television, film and the video, a history of stop-motion animation, Wallace and Gromit, Nick Park’s career and the successful development of Aardman Productions. Similarly, I employed a range of material - books, journals, newspaper and magazine articles, video/DVD and the internet - the intention being to cover and include both academic and, equally importantly, non-academic ‘popular’ matter, thereby cementing a theme close to my heart and one that I have always tried to adhere to, and incorporate into, all of my work. Often, we tend to be too academic, too highbrow, overlooking or failing to recognise the wealth of teaching resources readily available in unorthodox, yet common or garden material. (See chapter on Teaching and Learning in Airey, D and Tribe, J forthcoming International Handbook of Tourism Education.)

Fieldwork
The fieldwork was conducted at eight higher education establishments during the 2002-2003 academic year. The respective postgraduate cohorts taking part consisted primarily of students pursuing a range of named postgraduate tourism programmes. Also present were hospitality students and a very small minority undertaking other majors. A total of 110 postgraduate students pursuing the tourism modules covered by the survey were involved. All completed a questionnaire. In some instances, a few undergraduate students also attended the sessions. They are not included in the numerical breakdown and their completed questionnaires have been removed from the sample.

Chronologically, the fieldwork was conducted at:

The University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, September 2002
19 students:
- Graduate Diploma Tourism 10
- Masters in Tourism 9

University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, September 2002
33 students:
- Graduate Diploma in Tourism 9
- Master of Business International Tourism Management 13
- Master of Business International Hotel Management 8
- Master of Business International Events Management
- MBA 2

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, October 2002
23 students:
- MA Adventure Tourism 5
- MA Tourism Business Administration 14
- MSc Hospitality with Tourism 4

NHTV, The University of Breda, The Netherlands, October 2002
10 students
- MA European Tourism Management 10

University of Exeter, October 2002
12 students:
- MSc Tourism Development and Policy 12

University of Plymouth, Seale-Hayne, March 2003
6 students
- MSc Rural Tourism 6

College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, April 2002
5 students
- MA Tourism and Social Responsibility 5

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, May 2003
3 students
- MSc Tourism Management 2
- MSc Leisure Management 1

Total = 110 postgraduate tourism students

Some considerable thought was put into the questionnaire design. Given the constraints of delivery, the intention was to come up with a short, manageable straightforward format that consisted of (hopefully) interesting questions, which would provide the requisite basic data - while encouraging individual expression. A couple of 'generic' questions on the use of videos to be completed before being shown Wallace and Gromit's lunar adventures, introduced the exercise. Then, after screening, the students were asked a further eight questions prior to the discussion session. Post-discussion, students were encouraged to respond to the remaining questions which comprised essentially of repeating three key questions - in order to gauge the significance of the discussion - plus some that provided profiled data of the students.

Student Feedback
Clearly, as an exploratory exercise, only so much could feasibly be achieved. Even so, student feedback would suggest that A Grand Day Out is an excellent teaching vehicle..."I think it is a fantastic teaching tool" "very good teaching method" "I like your lecture" "Enjoyed the different lecturing" "It is a great video. Should show more to any people" etc. Not only can the range of tourism impacts - social/cultural/political/economic/environmental - be elucidated, but spatial and temporal dimensions of this impact can be successfully illustrated..."Excellent way of illustrating implications of tourism" "This lecture basically covers all of the impact lectures." "I enjoy this kind of educative tool, for me it is more effective than lectures" etc. While recognising possible charges of 'cherry-picking' here, these positive comments do reflect the overall student response as recorded by the survey and are indicative of the tone of the discussion. Only three returns were overtly negative - although it is also readily acknowledged here that some student cultures, disproportionately
represented on postgraduate tourism programmes, are far too polite to respond negatively to the lecturer. These reservations were “This video would be more useful when illustrating these topics to a younger audience”... concern that the video did not cover tourism planning and comments that using the video denigrated the subject matter. And another student did comment that ‘the dog’s interests weren’t sufficiently considered.’ If nothing else, it was well worth conducting the entire research process if only to elicit this one marvellous response... for this one magical moment.

Adopting an unorthodox approach can undoubtedly engender interest, critical thought and fire students’ imagination ... “Excellent session, very interesting and stimulating. This is one of the few seminars I’ve been able to concentrate on all the way through”; “Critical thinking”: “It’s really open my eyes. I hope you give us more speeches to broaden our view.”: “An interesting and unique twist to introducing tourism themes and impacts. A revelatory approach that sets minds thinking”. And, rather worryingly, “brian-storming”.

Students were wary of “old, out of date videos from the 80s”. But none commented negatively on this with regard to Wallace and Gromit. On the contrary some recognised its ‘timeless’ qualities...and transposed this to ‘quaintness’. {Literature on Wallace and Gromit, and Aardman productions in general, emphasise this ‘timeless’ appeal.}.

The British sense of humour was commented on by many students, who thought it a useful way of familiarising themselves with a different culture. Those students whose first language was not English also found the predominantly visual medium easier to understand (while it is noted here that there is, of course, dialogue - at times colloquial and with an accent - it is delivered slowly, sparsely and in tandem with ‘explanatory’ animation).

The time given to discussion proved fruitful, with the mutual feedback section very successful. For many of the students (understandably, especially those new to the subject) the discussion appears critical to the success of the session. “Great film especially when you delve deeper.” Pre-discussion one student wrote...“I’m interested to see what is coming up. I hope I am not being too critical but I would like to see some relevance.” And after the discussion? “Wow! A new way of looking at things. Especially, the approach was very interesting and the use of alternative mediums in education. I was surprised by the relevance the video had to my studies.”

Reflections and Conclusions

Although notes of the discussions were taken at the time, it would have been sensible to have tape-recorded them as well. Similarly, if the exercise is to be repeated, there is room for possible improvement. When, and where, appropriate, the cohort could, perhaps, be split into groups...probably with directed, specific questions to address as a group, before the lecturer leads the cohort discussion. Ideally too, there could be a concluding, wrap-up discussion at the end of the session where students are encouraged to suggest other possible potential unconventional material that they might think apposite. In the discussion sessions I had broached the idea of incorporating wider, more eclectic material into postgraduate tourism programmes. On reflection, this could perhaps prove most productive if conducted at the end of the session. Either that, or include a specific question to that end. Or both.

To me, it would seem that the most productive delivery would be to show the video in the first full session with the new cohort of postgraduate tourism students ...and then re-run it again at the end of the (or appropriate) module, elaborating with further appropriate lecturer input and group discussion. But unfortunately, given timetable limitations, this is perhaps unlikely to materialise.

It is appreciated that it is often easier as a one-off visiting lecturer to generate interest amongst the students through what is perceived as a different approach. Even allowing for this, I feel the project helps reinforce the belief that, if executed well and using suitably considered material, carefully honed to the ‘interests’ of the recipient cohort, an exercise that deliberately introduces something ‘different’ into an otherwise more conventional programme does have disproportionately positive effects. These,
and other, impressions/conclusions are drawn from an amalgam of both qualitative and quantitative data generated by the project. Knowledge acquired from the literature search, the experience gained from conducting the surveys, the contribution of the discussions etc, together with the questionnaire data itself, all proved fruitful.

Particularly rewarding was the impression that by far the majority of students appeared to enjoy the exercise immensely. In the current education environment, where discerning postgraduates are often funding their own studies, ‘to enjoy’ is, I suggest, synonymous with getting out of it ‘something worthwhile and relevant to their studies.’ While conducting the sessions the mood and atmosphere in the lecture rooms was buoyant and positive. This was reflected strongly in the questionnaire returns. “It is easy to understand and I really enjoyed watching it” etc.

From a personal perspective, conducting the research was fun..... an enjoyable and highly rewarding exercise. Wonderful.... And one that, judging from their responses, has broadened the imaginations of, and brought pleasure to, the vast majority of the students that participated.

A laugh, it is said, is the shortest distance between two people. With this in mind, it seems appropriate to conclude with a line from the aptly evergreen titled Quotations of Our Time (Peter, L 1980). On page 80 there is a quotation from Laurence J. Peter that reads “Two things reduce prejudice...education and laughter”. Dovetailing together perfectly in A Grand Day Out, these two precious, priceless commodities are evident in glorious excess in Wallace and Gromit’s splendid video, surely, a ‘must-see’ for all postgraduate tourism students.

Thank you.

References
30508? Do you keep stationary?
Reflections on McGill’s Seaside Postcards
(forthcoming)

Invited chapter for forthcoming book Tourism and Postcards,
Robinson, M (ed)
Long ago, and far away (well, actually Mersey Square, Stockport, circa 1965) I remember rashly splashing out on that year’s Manchester University Rag Mag. Rather uncharacteristically, actually, as I’ve never been one for charity. Surely the state should provide? But, as a result of that somewhat hasty purchase, a joke therein has stayed with me ever since. It made me laugh then. It still does now. The very fact that it still amuses me after all these years in itself also makes the smile ‘double the pleasure. A sad case, indeed. Ingrained schoolboy humour coupled with the ironies it presents in the passing of time, A personal indictment, too, I’m afraid... but one that continues to fire my interest in, and admiration for, Donald McGill – the man whose tellingly amusing postcard images were, once upon a time, so much an integral part of the British seaside holiday experience.

It was a couple of years later while dawdling, appropriately enough, on the prom along Blackpool’s Golden Mile that the derivation of the particular joke suddenly became apparent. Furtively glancing through a stack of old postcards, one in particular caught my eye. Picture the scene: staid, conservatively dressed man at the counter of a newsagents/bookshop addressing the racy young woman, decked out in (customary) red and white polka-dot dress, behind the counter. And in riposte to the gentleman’s innocent query ‘Do you keep stationery, Miss?’; blushingly, were the immortal lines ‘Well, I wriggle about a bit, sometimes!’ Wonderful. And the creator of this delightful gem? McGill, the past master of the pithy innuendo, at his very best. Affectionately known as ‘the Picasso of the Pier’, other equally warranted monikers included ‘the Botticelli of saucy postcards’, ‘the genre’s Michelangelo’, the ‘Ace of Cards’. But his most famous sobriquet? He was, without doubt, the undisputed King of the Seaside Saucy Postcard. And well did he deserve that accolade. Over his lifetime his output was prodigious, the numbers involved staggering. Even allowing for margins of error in the estimates, the statistics amaze. In a career spanning over fifty years McGill is credited with creating a phenomenal 12,324 differently designed postcards. With sales of his work estimated to be over an incredible 200 million cards (BBC 4, 2006), it is the sheer volume, the extraordinary proliferation of his work that astounds.

By the 1950’s he had been producing cards for decades and although his portfolio did range across a wider spectrum, it is with seaside holidays (and the antics and escapades therein) that he is best remembered. And it is with this dimension of his output that this chapter is primarily concerned.

Although his kingdom was extensive, the seaside was undoubtedly his true domain. It was there in the heady atmosphere of the hustle and bustle of the milling holiday crowds that McGill’s medium worked its magic, and it was there, in the realm of the
raucous, that sales of his cards burgeoned as the visiting hordes took to his humour with vim, vigour and gusto. Along with fish and chips (wrapped in newspaper), George Formby ditties, donkey rides, bucket, spades and sandcastles, striped deckchairs, dodgy fortune-tellers, kiss-me-quick hats, candyfloss, sticky rock and soothing calamine lotion his saucy seaside postcards have become icons of that far away, much lamented traditional English seaside holiday.

It had been a long held and seemingly cherished belief that, despite the apparent irreputable connections and connotations, perversely, McGill had neither visited the seaside nor ever sent a postcard. Both these characteristics, while adding to the mystique of the man, have subsequently proved spurious myths (BBC 4, 2000). Nevertheless, McGill (1875-1962) himself was, in real life, actually something of an enigma. As King, he could have worn his crown with ostentatious pride but, being a humble man, his life was one of relative obscurity rather than regal splendour. Modest, mild, dapper and of impeccable manners, he resembled more a quiet, inoffensive bank-clerk than the prolific artiste he was. In his private life (and he was a private man) he epitomised the quintessential ‘Victorian’ gentleman. An apparently happily married, family man, his own life style and values were, to all intents and purposes, the complete antithesis of those represented in his work. The bold, vibrant, even gaudy, colours and brash content of his cards were in sharp contrast to his unassuming disposition and demeanour. In the early 1950’s, when beating the panel on What’s My Line, he was taunted by a rattled Gilbert Harding: “So you do those dirty postcards?” To which McGill simply replied, “No, I’m a seaside artist” (Harris, 2003, p19).

And so back to the promenade and the ‘stationery’ joke. Actually, a, as opposed to the, definitive derivation might be more apposite. It transpired that in the Rag Mag the punch line had been elaborated and ‘refined’, rewritten as “Well right up to the last moment, but then I go absolutely wild.” A variation on a (recurring) theme. After all, McGill had, over the years, scoured every imaginable source - music halls, overheard snippets of passing conversations, newspaper cuttings, the wireless etc. - for his own inspiration. And once McGill had found a successful formula he was prone to skillfully rework it. “McGill certainly revised his bread and butter winners many times in a long career” (Phillips, 2000 p22). Though this was an observation of the specific - namely, McGill would tweak a particular idea, reinventing and periodically re introducing it over the years (variations of ‘I’ve Lost My Little Willie’ were well received evergreens) - it was also an appropriate general comment on, and summing up of, his work as a whole.

And the cards themselves? Most of his material, especially his seaside specials, revolved around a simple, successful formula. - striking, eye-catching graphics of familiar themes and a cast of readily identifiable ‘character-types’ combined with the deft use of the double-entendre. Although sweeping in scope, there is much truth in the statement ‘The comic postcard’s strength lies in its ambiguity’ (Howell, 1977, p1). The double-entendre and innuendo (in your end, oh!) were the constructs and the mainstays of McGill’s work. Carefully crafted image and accompanying caption ensured that the visual and the text came together sublimely as one. Harris’ (2003, p3) justifiably claims that “to study McGill’s postcards is to study social history: entertainment, leisure, fashion, changing humour – and the development of the double meaning.”
In his book The Saucy Seaside Postcard, Wykes (1977, p9) sees the eponymous cards as "...this curious fringe world that at one edge embraces the Chaucerian and at the other the feebly trivial, while between them lurks the unexpectedly subtle..." Contextualising McGill within this framework certain commentators perceptively acknowledge his quality while confirming his significance. "The British 'saucy seaside' humorous cards continued to flourish. The fat ladies squeezed into tight bathing costumes, the vicars, the drunks and flirtatious young things could be found in the postcard racks at every seaside resort and became so well established that they often prove to be the first type to spring to mind when postcards are mentioned to non-collectors. The work of Donald McGill typifies this sort of humour, and in fact in many ways he 'is' seaside comedy." (Willoughby, 1992, p120). And "Inevitably, the seaside comic postcard with its picture of mixed bathing, along with a distinctive exaggeration of the human form, sometimes lent itself to a certain amount of vulgarity...McGill quickly became known for his comic postcards which, although never downright obscene, sometimes had a suggestive sense of vulgarity about them which has ever since been associated with the English seaside and typifies an aspect of English life and humour" (Staff, 1979, p73).

Orwell believed "They are a genre of their own, specializing in very 'low' humour....I have associated them especially with the name of Donald McGill because he is not only the most prolific and by far the best of contemporary postcard artists, but also the most representative, the most perfect in the tradition ....their basic subject matter, the KIND of joke they are aiming at, never varies. A few are genuinely witty, in a Max Millerish way. Examples:

'I like seeing experienced girls home'

'But I'm not experienced!'

'You're not home yet!' and

'I've been struggling for years to get a fur coat. How did you get yours?'

I left off 'struggling' (Orwell, 1941)

(Reminiscent of the 1932 film 'Night After Night' and "Goodness had nothing to do with it" - Mae West's classic response to the hat-check girls exclamation "Goodness! What a lovely diamond.") Then there are, of course, other examples 'She's a nice girl. Doesn't drink or smoke, and only swears when it slips out!' and girl in hotel restaurant saying 'Take this jelly away, Waiter. There are two things on this earth that I like firm and ONE of them is jelly!' And his infamous (self-explanatory) Stick of Rock, Cock.

As Kustow (2000 p9) points out "The British saucy postcard has no equivalent elsewhere." Primarily for a British audience, all the cultural references tended to be British/English specific. And it is, too, essentially English humour we are looking at here, captured and contextualised in time and, indeed, space - and itself, in turn, epitomising the English seaside - resort of a by-gone era. Perhaps no single resort is more so evocatively captured by, nor representative of, McGill's work as the Blackpool of the late 1940's and 1950's. "Commemorating a long tradition of naughty British humour, Donald McGill summed up the typical seaside holiday - a sort of Carry On Blackpool. McGill cartoons of honeymooners, hen-pecked husbands, mother-in-laws, of enormous women clutching rolling pins bring back that long lost British boarding house holiday humour" (Finnigan, 2006).
While this is undoubtedly true, the circumstances were not necessarily always clear-cut. Just as the economic welfare of donor, generating regions are inextricably linked with tourist arrivals at today's destinations so, it is suggested here, the subject matter of some of McGill's cards often reflected the drudgery of 'domestic bliss' that those, away at the seaside for their two weeks annual holiday, had tried to leave behind. Their world of the humdrum - of mangles, oilcloth and antimacassars: and as Orwell (1941) stressed 'Home Life' was standard fare for McGill. Although at the seaside to escape the corseting restrictions of home, as with today's 'environmental bubble', the familiar, somewhat perversely still appealed, saddling and travelling with them. Sometimes (and apologies here to political correctness) quite literally, in the form of 'the wife' and the inherent, concomitant bitter-sweet/love-hate relationships. Of course, many of his cards were located at the seaside - the hotels, landladies, bed and breakfast, the beach, sea etc. - but even so McGill depicted material, situations and conventions that the buying public could also identify with from their normal lives at home - albeit, sometimes only in their dreams. So there were examples of where recurring themes and, sometimes even the backdrops, are the very things that haunt the clientele of his cards, the very things they are trying to escape from when they are at the seaside. Those on holiday could send cards, with their own appropriate messages scrawled on the back, as reminders (both to themselves and) to those friends and relatives still suffering back home. In this sense then, his cards could, perhaps, in themselves be regarded as 'escape-aides' - giving a different twist to the expression 'nothing to write home about'.

I have always believed that as academics we should eschew the absurd notions of objectivity, declare our respective interests and proceed enthusiastically (see Wheeler, 2005). Here, looking at McGill, is no exception. So rather than deconstruct, dissect, decode or decipher McGill in (disparaging?) detail, the approach adopted is hopefully more personal observation on, and an appreciation and celebration of, his work. In doing so, I am aware of a number of oversights and possible inconsistencies in my 'reasoning'. By way of a get out clause, clearly the subject matter warrants more than a chapter and relevant issues inevitably are skirted around. (None more so than that of gender but this too is, in itself, indicative of tourism studies in general). Nevertheless, although to some, changing values have rendered this type of postcard unacceptable, here they are essentially viewed nostalgically, affectionately and sympathetically ...as mirrors reflecting (imagined?) former glories of a past era. "The cards conjure up a vanished England...a safer, more innocent, less sophisticated, more re-assuring age...and looking at the cards is a way of bringing that better time back." (Crossley, BBC 4 2006) And for my generation, too, it must be said they are passports to another world, that of (memories of) one's own childhood and early teens in the 1950's and 60's and the secrets of self-discovery. If it wasn't through the wonders of Parade, revelations in The News of the World, or surreptitious glances at the well-thumbed pages of the National Geographic then there was always titillation via McGill.

As Hartley so astutely and memorably informed, the past is, indeed, a foreign country. However, he then perhaps over embellishes, adding "...they do things differently there" (Hartley, 1997, p9). Some things, true; most things, in fact: but not all things. Fundamental traits in society prevail, and distinctive class differences and differentials would seem a constant. With this particular aspect in mind, there are
perhaps some parallels to be drawn (though I suspect unfortunately no lessons to be learnt) by affording some attention to the absurd prosecution of the Ace on obscenity charges. Looking, in a little more detail, at ‘the authorities’ take on McGill in the 1950’s, and how at odds their views were to the general public, reveals not just the absurd hypocrisy and anomalies of the time but also serves as a window into our own contemporary confusion.

In the early 1950’s, the years of his prosecution, his cards were still selling in their millions. Yet, in the courts, the prudish minority prevailed. As Harris (2003p3) explains “McGill’s parade of characters show his keen observation of human nature and his ability to laugh at pretentiousness and the culture of concealment behind such institutions as marriage.” It was, in particular, this ability to pour scorn on pretentiousness that, while endearing him to the general public, was to bring him into serious conflict with the ‘arbitrators’ of public decency. It was the very hypocrisy of the age that his cards manipulated; and it was this same hypocrisy that led to his cards being seized, McGill charged, and found guilty. “Pretty much anything worthwhile in the way of books, paintings and music has usually had a rough ride from self-appointed guardians of decency” (Decharne, 2003 p13). How depressingly perceptive is this bleak message. And McGill, and his creative genius, was a classic victim, falling foul, as he did, of this unfortunate timeless truism. Even though the puritanical views of a few were so out of kilter with those of the consuming masses, nevertheless, at the age of 80, McGill was branded a criminal.

Saucy seaside postcards were, according to Hattersley (2006) “seen as the indulgence of the working class and there were strong feelings that the working classes had to be helped out of their weaknesses and short-comings... ‘we’ had to improve their morals... and postcard (censorship) was all part of that process”. More, as it turned out, a crusade than a process, with many of the local, often self-appointed, self-righteous, and always self-opinionated watch committees strongly influenced by the clergy. The early 1950’s witnessed a (temporary) religious revival and concomitant upsurge in church attendance and this perhaps fuelled the ridiculous purge of the McGill postcard. Yet another case from the litany of examples of the moral Right, once again, proving wrong.

While, from the vantage of our ostensibly enlightened, modern, progressive perspective, we now may very well laugh at this condescending absurdity, to me, the real tragedy lost on many contemporary tourism commentators is that this arrogant, patronising (seemingly) anachronistic attitude is, in fact, alive and well. Nurtured and thriving in the current sustainability debates, the irony, it is suggested here, is that this demeaning attitude is, unfortunately, still prevalent today in many of our academic attitudes to tourism. Whereas in the 1950’s, illusions of the moral high ground manifested overtly in matters of a sexual content, now this has, to an extent, been replaced by the environmental prerogative/agenda. Once again, the educated middle classes (this time in the guise of the would-be, caring traveller and ecotourist) with their (our?) sustainability mantra now know not only what is best for themselves but for the entire mankind, including of course the mass package holiday fraternity. The watch committees of the 1950’s have been replaced by their modern equivalents, the ‘public spirited’ bodies. OK, so the parallels might not be perfect but allowing a modicum of poetic licence then surely the same dangerous similarities prevail? The agenda may have changed but have the underlying class value systems? I think not.
This seems to be completely lost on the goody two shoes holier than thou perpetrators of missionary zeal to be found amongst many of the contemporary proponents of ‘good, wholesome’ tourism - as oblivious to their arrogance and dubiously irrational thought processes as, possibly, I am to my own.

As a related issue, there is also a tangent, if not another parallel, to be drawn here too with similar hypocritical attitudes today towards sex and tourism. For many of the self-appointed moral crusaders of the 1950’s, sex was seen as a class thing - common, coarse, vulgar and, like the McGill cards, the preserve primarily of the working classes/masses (on holiday). And this is still the case today. Although, as is suggested above, one’s supposed environmental credentials are the current, contemporary badge of respectability in our ‘caring, sharing eco-world’, nevertheless, the undercurrent of sex does (or, apparently, does not) raise its ugly head in the inherent high/low cultural dimension that underpins (or, more accurately, undermines) current academic ‘discussion’ on the traveller/mass tourism continuum. Now, I haven’t conducted a thorough survey of this but a cursory glance through the academic tourism journals would suggest that sex and tourism is a (relatively) under researched field. And when it is, there is a tendency to assume that sex is restricted to being a working-class pursuit. There is little, if any, mention of sex in any of the sustainability journals. And that, by default, sustainable/ecotourist aren’t remotely interested in sex, that “casual sex on holiday is the exclusive preserve of the 4s mass package tourists, regarded by many ‘educated’ observers as mindless riff-raff, the ‘fuckit and spade brigade’ (my words, though not my opinion). That somehow, eco/sustainable tourists are not only cerebral, but also celibate.” (Wheeler, 2004, p 474). But this high culture/ low culture double standard divide is both rife and widespread, running through all aspects of our society, not just travel and tourism. It is reflected in our attitude to almost everything, including, of course, the art of McGill.

Summer 2004 witnessed The Cartoon Art Trust’s McGill Exhibition held at the Brunswick Centre, London. Modest in scale, but exquisitely presented, the exhibition’s sensitive representation did justice to the great man. Tackling the contentious issue of censorship in an informed, forthright manner, the display of original cards - in conjunction with an array of pertinent support material - nevertheless still managed to effectively (re-) create the whimsical frivolity of the Master. While, across the river at the New Tate, the concurrent Edward Hopper exhibition, with its stark images of bleak isolation, angst and melancholia, understandably drew the crowds, and justifiable plaudits, this warm, light-hearted homage to McGill, was a far more understated, low-key affair.

On the surface then, two distinct, readily accessible art styles and events, each depicting (apparently) conflicting, opposite extremes of human behaviour, emotion and social comment. And yet both, in their own unique way, grappling with and graphically exposing human/humane feeling - be they fears or frailties, fantasies, foibles or flaws.

Strange then that one artist, and his work, should now be held in high esteem - while the other overlooked, dismissed out of hand as irrelevant by the art aficionados. I wonder why? (Technique, style, subject matter, the inertia of acquired status and concomitant snobbery?) To me they are on the same plane, of equal import. By wonderful dint of circumstance, exhibitions dedicated to my two favourite artists
showing at the same time, within a couple of miles of each other. And yet to others, it would seem, they might just as well have been a million miles, and light years, apart. So near yet so far away. Indeed the distance, in some minds, between high and low culture - a chasm not to be bridged. (It might just be of passing interest to discover which has sold the most - postcards of Hopper’s Nighthawks or McGill’s infamous A Stick of Rock, Cock?)

But some values do, in fact, change over time... at both a personal and societal level. Cultural tastes, and the consequences thereof, wax and wane.... “impact, like fashion, is a transient thing.” (Wykes, 1977p42) With Hopper, for instance, some contemporary critics viewed his work with disdain, dismissing it as low art. His popularity came late. In a sense too late, in that apparently only eight people were said to have attended his funeral. At least Hopper has now gained credibility and appreciation, albeit mainly posthumously, whereas McGill’s wonderful endeavours and considerable contribution seem to have been almost completely overlooked. An artiste, rather than businessman he was never rich in material terms. He gained little recognition in his lifetime, from his employers drew parsimonious financial reward for his stunning creativity, died a relatively poor man and now lies, ignominiously ignored, in an unmarked grave.

“Donald McGill, the legendary comic postcard creator whose art work has probably given more pleasure to more ordinary folk over more years than any other Briton, is lying in an unmarked grave in a south London cemetery. The man hailed by George Orwell as the nation’s true folk artist, and whose work symbolises the kiss-me-quick seafronts where his cards were sold, lays in an unkept piece of ground in Streatham Park cemetery in plot no 30508. Only a small piece of numbered wood marks the spot” (Randall and Anderson, 2005 p 30).

Scant justice for a man who in his lifetime of creative brilliance (anonymously) brought immense pleasure to millions of people. With McGill, as is so often patently the case in tourism, the rewards for endeavour and sacrifice did not accrue to those who most deserve them. Although his cards sold, as Hilda Baker might have put it ‘in prestigious numbers’, it is, then, not too surprising that, despite this astounding impact he had on actual sales, McGill doesn’t always feature as prominently as he might in ‘postcard literature’. McGill seems to have suffered at two levels. His very medium, postcards have invariably been regarded as inferior, a lesser art form. And this oversight has, it could be argued, been further compounded because within the postcard fraternity itself, comic postcards have themselves in turn sometimes been frowned on.

Postcards do not appear within the parameters of Clarke’s (1997) otherwise seemingly comprehensive and informative Art and Propaganda ... particularly intriguing given the full title of the book – ‘Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century. The Political Image in the Age of Mass Culture’ Despite Orwell’s (1941) comments to the contrary, maybe McGill didn’t really ‘do’ politics, even so (given that he certainly did whole heartedly embrace mass culture) this seems a glaring omission. As a genre, the assertion that ‘...a certain neglect of the postcard has remained apparent in the popular art of the West’ seems reasonably valid. Posters, yes. But surprisingly, postcards have not been given the prominence they deserve. They were a form of, and reflected, social comment – but, perhaps, not in the way the contemporary cartoonist did. (See, for example, Douglas’ Between The Wars, The
Cartoonist’s Vision... no mention of McGill here). But maybe it is just a case of
definition. Are postcards cartoons? In a piece celebrating the opening of The Cartoon
Museum in London, Bayley’s (2006, p16) comments would suggest so. After
discussing their physical dimension, he continues “But cartoons can be lighter
pleasures too. Donald McGill’s lubricious girls with their unlikely busts and bottoms
introduced sex into national life, outrageously – and democratically.” Again, a
problem of definition? No mention, for example, of McGill in Norgard’s 1969 effort
‘With Love. The Erotic Postcard.’ True, it might be stretching the limits of most
imaginations to regard McGill as ‘erotic’ but even so it is hard, at times, to dismiss the
possible accusation of ‘omission by snobbery’. Similarly, there is only one example –
‘operations on an extended front’ of McGill’s (early) work in Laffin’s (1988, p60)
‘World War One in Postcards’.

On the other hand, McGill does get creditable mentions in both Willoughby’s and
Staff’s books (see earlier quotations). And, notably, there have been a number of
works exclusively dedicated to McGill (see, for example Buckland’s The World of
Donald McGill, which as a “... sympathetic and comprehensive study of McGill has
done much to further his recognition as the foremost comic postcard artist” (Harris,
2003, p4)).

Recent events, suggesting a resurgence (or perhaps more accurately, a real
awakening) of possible sustained interest in McGill, have gone some way towards
redressing the neglect of his achievements. In conjunction with the McGill exhibition
there has been a flurry of related media material, including a number of newspaper
and magazine articles, a dramatised version, on BBC Radio 4, of the events
surrounding his court appearance, even an item on The Richard and Judy Show. And
Michael Winner, a McGill enthusiast, has threatened to erect a tombstone in homage
to the Postcard King. Winner to the rescue? Heaven forbid.
Significantly, too as part of a series looking at Britain in the 1950’s, a superb BBC 4
documentary, which informs this chapter, re-examined McGill’s work in the
particular context of censorship and social change in the early part of that decade.
Exposing the absurdity of McGill’s prosecution on obscenity charges, the programme
was a carefully considered, perfectly blended collage of commentary, visuals, erudite
observations from a cross-section of interested, relevant parties and all accompanied
by a wonderfully evocative soundtrack. Anyone viewing must have been impressed
by its quality. So, long overdue recognition at last?

Well, to an extent, yes ... but despite these developments and the respect and
appreciation of a few aficionados and devotees, McGill still remains spectacularly
underrated.

McGill should enter the Pantheon to take his rightful place along side other such
similar giants of entertainment as Max Miller (the cheeky chappie doyen of the blue
joke); George Formby; Sid James, Kenneth Williams and the ‘Carry On’ crew (the
series, likened by Porter (2005 p61) as ‘saucy-postcard features’); Kenneth Horne,
Frankie Howerd, Benny Hill and Les Dawson. All, in their similar, yet inimitable,
way, masters of their art. All, proponents of the double entendre, innuendo, visual
gag, and all (at least for a while) in touch with the ‘contemporary’, with the popular
culture of their time. And their repertoire mirrored this. In much the same way as did
their respective declines as (some) tastes changed society ‘progressed.’
In certain quarters, hackles of political correctness are immediately raised with the mention of the much-maligned Benny Hill and, therefore, comparing McGill with Hill is perhaps a risky business. But there were, it is suggested here, many similarities in their work: both stock in trade, predictable content (stereo typical characters) and message (fleeting moments of stolen, often fantasised, pleasure as against a lifetime of mundane drudgery). "...Donald McGill, the courteous Victorian gentleman who, fantastically, challenged establishment prudery with his colourfully crude cards – at the expense, that is, of being considered ‘poor taste’. Hill, like McGill, merely disseminated the prevailing domestic humour of recent centuries – that oh-so-British blend of smut, sauce and suggestion" (Lewisohn, 2002 p 236). Monkhouse’s analysis of Hill’s qualities is, perhaps, equally apposite for McGill: "Some young comedians tell me that Benny’s universal appeal bewilders them. I think they’ve arrived a little late on the scene. There’s well over forty year’s of rich comedy experience and unerring instinct behind every move that he makes. Those years inform Benny’s masterly comic touch so that his art conceals art. Inexperienced eyes and ears and tastes may not be so quickly attuned to the deceptive ease that conceals the complexity of great drawing, great jazz or great cuisine.” (in Lewisohn, 2002 p 319).

And McGill was a fine artist.

Footnote. Incidentally, Monkhouse is also accredited with two wonderful throw-away lines. "I’ve suffered for my art. Now it’s your turn." And, from the vantage of a lifetime’s success, reflecting back on his early aspirations at an intended career in comedy, he quipped "They all laughed when I said I wanted to be a comedian. They’re not laughing now.” (BBC 1 2003)

Hill’s career was emerging as McGill’s closed. More a contemporary, George Formby (1904 – 1961) is worthy of a special mention here. Like McGill, Formby epitomised the risqué, near the knuckle but worth a chuckle, seaside humour of his time. And, in the public consciousness, both had strong (image) associations with Blackpool. Although, obviously, the delivery was different, their respective dubious messages were of similar ilk. Little wonder then that George Formby was described as “…the Donald McGill spirit of the comic-coloured English seaside incarnate.” (Glancey, J 2004 p5) and his marvellous, tongue in (surprisingly, his own) cheek rendition of My Little Stick of Blackpool Rock, a masterpiece. Suitably ambiguous, the phallic symbolism of this jaunty little number is in the same familiar (blue) vein of McGill’s aforementioned, controversial Stick of Rock, Cock, card - one for which he was (so unjustifiably) prosecuted.

At the other end of the spectrum, McGill’s work has, by a few brave souls, been favourably compared with a range of established establishment cultural icons. In Orwell’s celebrated essay ‘the Art of Donald McGill’ he points out that jokes barely different from McGill’s can be found in Shakespeare’s tragedies. Cunningham (2006), giving added weight to this view by citing examples from Henry IVth, highlights further similarities between the Bard and the Ace. While Shakespeare’s ribald humour, misunderstandings, double meanings and innuendos are held, by many, in high esteem - revered as clever, masterly literary techniques - it is suggested here that few of the same classic scholars cum critics would see similar
value in McGill’s work. Yet here is the rub. Whereas those likening McGill to Shakespeare might well themselves be laughed at, dismissed as eccentric, the comparison is, in fact, a reasonable one. To me the most telling, and appropriate Shakespeare quotation linking Shakespeare and McGill must be from As You Like It “Come, woo me, woo me, for now I am in holiday humour and like enough to consent”. This feeling of (potential) abandon, central to holidays, sits comfortably with.... “The traditional saucy postcard with its voluptuous women, feeble-minded husbands, bursting bikinis, cartoon nipples, its world where every encounter had sexual possibilities, where everything that can be erect is erect, was an art form that gave symbolic form to the universal feeling about the release of holidays” (Bayley, 2002, p8).

It is this ‘holiday humour’ (together with a sense of fun and abandonment) that constitutes such a vital, integral element of tourism. Surely holidays are meant to be fun? Preferably fun in the sun. And while the 1950’s English seaside couldn’t necessarily provide the latter, a trip to the seaside at least conjured up possibilities of the former. Often, it must be said, sexually related. And indiscretions of a casual sexual nature were always a possibility - witness McGill’s card: - young girl to cad, expectedly holding her in a tight embrace “Do you believe in love at first sight? The bounder replies “Do I? I’ve got to – I’m only down here for the week-end!”

However, fun, having a laugh and sexual indiscretion have, to a large extent, escaped the research gaze. Still neglected by academia, these aspects of the holiday were the very essence of McGill’s idiom. As Coleman (2002, p4) suggests “... the seaside postcards were extraordinarily explicit but sexual licence extended only on condition that sex was treated as a joke.”

Wykes (1977, p49) notes “And how lacking in their essential life-spice of crudity all seaside jokes would be if the artists treated their characters with anything approaching a normal appreciation of the attractions of human physiognomy” elevating comparison of McGill to a higher plane by adding “The convention of distortion is not, of course, limited to seaside postcard art: Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Brueghel and George Grosz immediately spring to mind as artist who deliberately distorted the human face and body in the service of satire and apocalyptic vision.’ (Wykes, p55).

So, too (some might say at a more prosaic level) Beryl Cook and Jeanne Lorioz.

But dig a little deeper into Wykes’ work, superficially a seemingly breezy run through the seaside postcard arena, and we find a worryingly dark ‘analysis’ of sex and humour that disturbingly, to me, at least, reveals as much about the author’s inner thinking as it does about the subject matter itself. A little lighter relief is provided by Midgley (2002p5) “The Victorians, of course, did much to create a sense of shamefulness about the human body. Piano legs had to be covered up and nudes were allowed in high art only if their private parts were covered and they appeared in ancient or biblical settings. It was just because sex was considered so taboo that peep shows and saucy postcards emerged Hence the popular image of the strict, frock-coated patriarch, eyes bulging behind his pince-nez as he feasts on ‘What the Butler Saw’. Viz sends up this hypocrisy in the cartoon strip Victorian Dad in which the puritanical father beats his daughters for showing their ankles, then masturbating over a woman in a Victorian bathing costume.”
Such recurring themes of hypocrisy (and class culture) still riddle tourism. And, as we have observed, society as a whole is riven by a similar ambiguity. Favourably comparing McGill with, on the one hand, such cultural luminaries as Chaucer and Shakespeare, Hogarth and Bosch and, on the other, artistes of the calibre of Miller, Hill and Cook is a valid, if uncomfortable, and to some, unacceptable exercise. Significantly, doing so mirrors, and thereby again illuminates and graphically illustrates, the high culture versus low culture contradictions that continue to subvert most contemporary studies of tourism. Be it 'the traveller' versus the 'tourist', ecotourism versus mass tourism or in the sustainability debate, a politically correct, 'educated' moral high ground is adopted/adapted, indeed assumed - not only in, and by, virtually all academic tourism research but also in so-called 'quality' media concerned with travel and tourism.

Back to McGill. Despite these comparisons to the likes of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Brueghel and Bosch, to many his work is still regarded, and consequently dismissed, as merely 'art for the masses'. But the very fact that his material is democratic, accessible and popular must surely be sufficient in itself, indeed the very reason, why McGill should be celebrated and lauded. It was, as McGill’s grandson justifiably claims “pop art: art for the masse” and, if only on this basis alone, “justified as being considered something of merit” (Tumber, 2006). How true.

Another irony, of course, is that not only were the cards actual classic works of art in their own right, they were also brilliant, perceptive, incisive social comment. Winner (B.B.C. 4, 2006) remarks “Anyone interested in social history, and in good painting, would have to admire them. They are good. Bloody good. ... They were a history of the country: the modern Hogarth”. Again in similar complimentary, but equally perspicacious mode Winner, this time on The Richard and Judy Show, lauded McGill: “Serious, terrific works of art in the tradition of Hogarth, Gilray and Rowlandson (Channel 4, 2006). And its true, the quality of the art-work, particularly in his hey day, is exquisite. “McGill is a clever draughtsman with a real caricaturist’s touch” Orwell (1941). But, as Russell Taylor perceptively suggests, there is far more to the Postcard King re than that. “McGill’s is one of the most potent imaginary worlds around – although when you look at Martin Parr’s photographs of seaside Britain you do wonder how imaginary it is. There is no doubt that Parr is an artist, so how can we possibly withhold the title from McGill?” (Russell Taylor 2006, p 36).

We are familiar with overwrought analysis of highbrow art, personified by the Brian Sewells of this world. But, as a counter point, is sufficient attention given to so-called lesser art forms? High- brow versus low- brow: high culture versus low: veteran comedian versus the politically correct new kid in town. From Pier Revue to latter-day peer review. Actually, ‘re-view’ is, in its own way, probably more apposite and illuminating as to review McGill in the context of contemporary (politically correct) standards seems, in a sense, to be missing the point. That was then. This is now.

Even so, in today’s age, it might still be legitimate to ask if there is anything relevant in McGill’s cards? Although as O’Brien (2006) points out contemporary political satirists and cartoonists do, occasionally, draw on McGill’s trademark style and material, it is essentially in the field of entertainment and leisure that, understandably, the legacy of McGill is most evident. Coleman (2004, p 4), succinctly and evocatively, captures the popular appeal of McGill’s seaside postcard and how the
English enjoyment of the double entendre lives on. Like the music-hall comedians of their day, with their risqué innuendo, McGill’s cards display the bawdiness so often associated with popular culture. From Chaucer onwards there has always been an earthy side to English humour, a tradition that is still with us....” For confirmation, tune into any recent edition of Radio 4’s ‘anti-dote to panel-games’, the ever popular I’m Sorry I Haven’t a Clue replete with bawdy, suggestive double-entendre. It is, then, in a particular vein of British humour that McGill’s influence (coarsely?) courses.

However, it is probably in a far more nebulous, intangible nature that McGill’s influence impacts. “McGill’s dirty jokes excluded homosexuals and foreigners, let alone incest, animals, barely legal teens, fisting, inter-racial and whatever other sexual material it is you can find on the net today. Therein is their charm and fascination.” (Bayley, 2002, p8). And it is this nostalgic, endearing warmth that has, to some, assured an enduring appeal to his work. With the passing of time, McGill’s cards have acquired a kind of charm, a unique quaintness. The same cannot be said for the comic postcard, in general: nor its seaside contemporary. In the mid 1990’s there were calls, by local pressure groups in St Ives, Cornwall, to ban unsavoury postcards. Is there a familiar ring to this? Shades of the 1950’s? But the cards in question were not “the old fashioned saucy postcard but the modern photographs of women in various states of pulling their bikinis apart” (Utley, 1996 p3). And since then things have taken on a darker hue. In Rio “Postcards of bikini - clad beauties may be banned from the city’s shops and newsstands in an attempt to discourage sex tourism” (Independent, 2005,p29). But, it could be argued, the clamour for such censorship is no better nor worse than that which befell McGill in the 1950’s. Is this reasonable? To put things in perspective, take a trip to Blackpool, look at the cards currently on show and judge for yourselves. Appalled? Amused? Or what? Then, from the vantage of our more relaxed mores, morals and social norms, reflect on McGill. In this context at least, perhaps McGill’s cards still have resonance today. If nothing else, maybe they are not just mirrors to the past but also to our own hypocrisy?

In Travels with my Aunt there are a couple of typical Greene sentences which describe Henry Pulling, the protagonist, with some time to kill, waiting for the eponymous aunt on the front at Brighton... “Just opposite was a stationer’s which sold comic postcards... the metal stand for the cards rattled and strained and turned like a windmill. I noticed a card with a bottle of Guinness on it, and a fat woman in a snorkel floating face down. The legend read ‘Bottom’s Up!’ I was looking at another of a man in hospital saying to a surgeon, “But I said, circumcision (sic?), doctor” (Greene, 1969 p37) His aunt appears, and porlocked, Henry returns to reality.... So, too, with me. Fact to fiction. Or fiction to fact? In my mind there I am, giggling surreptitiously in Blackpool all those years ago. Yet, in reality, here I am looking back, vision blurred, distorted and romanticised by the passing of time. And time has, indeed, taken its toll. Again, that was then. This is, unfortunately, now.

So we can deconstruct McGill’s postcards or we can try to appreciate them and simply enjoy them for what they are - markers in, and of, their time. Once an integral part of the seaside holiday routine, postcards have subsequently been superseded by the telephone, mobiles and texting. And the modern day equivalent of the saucy seaside postcard? Well, sadly, to me there doesn’t seem to be one. While some might rejoice at their demise, I mourn the passing of this particular art form. Not only has
the quality caricature artwork been lost but, perhaps more, in many ways, the relative subtly of double-entendre humour has been replaced by overt lewd crudity – the visualised sleight of word by the FCUK of contemporary society. Stationary? Maybe its more than enough to make McGill turn in his grave.

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