

THE EVOLUTION OF TOURISM PLANNING IN CYPRUS: WILL RECENT CHANGES PROVE SUSTAINABLE?

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Abstract

The concept of sustainable tourism has ostensibly caught the attention of both government and industry the world over and Cyprus has been no exception. Following several years of rapid and sometimes excessive development particularly in coastal areas, the Cyprus Tourist Organisation and the Government have taken steps to try to slow down development and to take a more informed and planned approach to industry development. Recent actions include the creation of a new Town and Country Planning Law (1990) and National Tourism Strategy (1990) initially designed to control the scale and style of future tourism growth, in the name of a more sustainable industry. This paper will show, however, that despite all the Government's good intentions, it has not been tourism per se which has caused problems in the past, but rather the lack of enforcement of rules and regulations already in place, designed to guide the development of tourism along a more sustainable path. The paper concludes that without the more rigorous application of its planning guidelines, the future development of tourism may fall well short of that intended in the government's plans and policies.

Introduction

The 'planning' of tourism has evolved through several stages during the latter half of the twentieth century, more or less in response to a continuing global increase in international visitor arrivals. Originally, the primary concern of most 'planners' was merely facilitation-making it possible for visitors to travel to the destination and find some place to stay. Subsequently, activities broadened to include spatial planning, but the emphasis remained on maximising the economic potential of new tourist development (Getz, 1986). However, while governments and the industry continued their active support of tourist development, they did so

in relative isolation, virtually excluding any cost recognition. Little attention was ever paid to the more qualitative and less tangible socio-economic and environmental effects.

Recently, this singular economic bias has come under closer scrutiny, with increasing evidence highlighting tourism's less positive effects. The awakening of a global environmental conscience spurred on by increased 'visual' pollution and the loss of pristine resources has begun to change this once 'conventional wisdom'. Ever since the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), 'sustainability' has become the order-of-the-day and, increasingly, many now argue that without a significant change towards a more 'sustainable' approach to development, severe damage to cultural and natural resources will accelerate (Globe '90). If this is allowed to continue, the very resources upon which tourism is based will be lost.

In reply, both governments and industry have ostensibly begun to develop policies which dictate the scale, location, and management of tourism, based not only on economic considerations, but social and environmental concerns as well - all in the name of 'sustainable tourism.' Yet what this concept means in practice is confused. While it could be argued that tourism development has entered a new phase of sensibility, with many tolerant in principle or even actively supportive of the concept, this has generally been without a full understanding of its meaning or its implications for planning and development activity (Butler, 1989; Wheeler, 1991 and 1992; Godfrey, 1993).

This paper examines this issue with specific reference to the island of Cyprus. Recently the Cypriot Government has taken steps to try to re-direct tourism growth away from the dominant mass coastal developments, to more site specific and regional development activities in areas still relatively unaffected by previous industry expansion. Through a more informed and planned approach, the Cypriot government hopes new development activity will produce a more 'sustainable' form of tourism. Following a brief review of the concepts of 'sustainable tourism', this paper examines actions taken in Cyprus to address industry problems and concludes with a discussion on the likelihood of their most recent actions proving effective.

Tourism and Sustainable Development

The World Commission on Environment and Development described sustainable development simply as paths of human progress which met the needs and aspirations of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (WCED, 1987). The concept challenges the conventional wisdom behind economic growth, and seeks to shift the debate away from development versus conservation, to development in harmony with the environment. It puts emphasis on meeting the basic needs of society's poorer members, cultural sensitivity, and 'grassroots' participation in the development

process, as well as looks to a general improvement in the quality of life of all people (Barbier, 1987). Nonetheless what this means in practice is not always clear and, given that one is attempting to describe environmental, economic, social and political features of an ongoing development process, obvious problems emerge (Taylor, 1991; Barbier, 1987; Cocklin, 1987; Linder, 1989).

Sustainability is essentially about resource management. It recognises that if the earth's resources are used, this will inevitably bring about some form of 'change', with the objective being to manage this 'change' within acceptable limits. However, how this will actually be achieved remains the subject of much discussion, and what may have appeared simple at first, becomes more complex and controversial upon closer inspection. Despite this problem, sustainability has achieved 'buzzword' status (in spite of numerous definitions and points of view)¹ in virtually all areas of discussion concerning economic activity and the environment. The tourism industry has not been immune to this trend, and while the WCED report does not actually mention tourism, this concept has seemingly been endorsed as the new ideal to arrest the industry's damaging effects.

Since the late 1980s the idea of sustainable tourism¹ has subsequently achieved virtual global endorsement as the new industry paradigm. However, this has been achieved at the expense of almost becoming a platitude, and now represents virtually all things to all people. Ironically it is this universal acceptance which casts doubts on the validity of the concept, representing both its strength and weakness as the new environmental ethos. As a strength, sustainability has become a general issue and represents a catalyst for change, but as a weakness it is used by both governments and industry to justify or legitimise current activities and policies.

Much of the confusion *surrounding sustainable* tourism is based primarily on the pre-occupation of some to avoid the *mass tourism* label which "functions in this context as a repulsive point of reference" (Gazes, 1989, 123). In trying to be different, common phrasing and synonyms such as soft,² *post-industrial*,³ *alternative*,⁴ *responsible*,⁵ *appropriate*,⁶ *green*,⁷ *rural*,⁸ *low-impact*,⁹ *eco*¹⁰ and *nature-based*¹¹ have all been applied. To some, sustainable tourism is all about new products or market segments, to others it is a process of development, while to others it represents a guiding principle to which all tourism should aspire.¹²

Thus like the general concept of sustainable development, what is really meant by *sustainable tourism* is also the subject of some discussion.¹³ While there exists a number of definitions, the key objectives and rationale underpinning these many different terms have been similar, and generally can be placed within one of two broad 'schools of thought' (Godfrey, 1993). One tends to support sustainability as representing an alternative to, or replacement of conventional (evil) mass tourism with new (good) green products (the product approach). The other argues that mass tourism is inevitable, due to sheer tourist demand, and what is needed is a way to make all tourism more sustainable (*the industry approach*).

Much of what has transpired in the literature and in practice exemplifies the former product approach, resulting in an examination of 'either-or' choices, particularly in 'natural' and rural environments (e.g., Krippendorf, 1982; Lane, 1988 and 1990). Frequent reference is made to issues concerning concentration vs. dispersion of development; the scale (*small vs. large*); degree of control and ownership (*local vs. 'foreign'*); rate of development (slow vs. rapid); types of tourists (*high-spend vs. low-spend*); and the type of interaction taking place within the destination area (*hosts and guests vs. tourist anonymity*) (see *Table 1*).

Hard, Mass, Non-sustainable

*Soft, Green, Sustainable,
Alternative, Rural*

GENERAL CONCEPTS

- rapid development
- uncontrolled
- without scale
- short term
- quantitative
- remote control
- growth

- slow development
- controlled
- in scale
- long term
- qualitative
- local control
- development

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

- development without planning
- project-led schemes
- district level planning
- concentration on 'honey pots'
- new building and new bed capacity
- development by outsiders
- employees imported
- urban architecture
- first plan, then develop
- concept-led schemes

- regional co-ordination of district plans
- fine landscapes preserved
- pressures and benefits diffused
- local developers
- employment according to local potential
- vernacular architecture

TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

- mass tourists
- little or no mental preparation
- little time
- no foreign language

- singles, families, friends – travel
- some mental preparation
- much time
- language training

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shopping - nosy - loud - unlikely to return | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bring present - tactful - quiet - repeat visits |
|--|--|
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Table 1. Product Approach- Elements of Sustainable vs. Non-Sustainable Tourism
 (after Krippendorf, 1982; Lane, 1989, 1990)

Alternatively, the latter industry approach suggests that while there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the development of new small-scale 'green' products, this alone fails to address a number of inherent aspects of tourism such as its diversity, scale and ownership, none of which operate in isolation.¹⁴ Instead it is suggested that while there are many positive qualities in the product approach, endorsed by the industry-wide view, this somewhat shallow comparison between new green products as good and different from traditional or conventional holidays is naive and misleading. In addition they do nothing to address the continued erosion of resources consumed by mass tourism activity (e.g., Butler, 1989; Wheeler, 1991 and 1992). It is argued that the real value of this softer outlook does not lie in replacing mass tourism, which it could not in any case, but rather in helping to reform the tourist establishment and mass tourism from within (Cohen, 1989; de Kadt, 1990).

Key points of the industry approach suggest that planning for sustainable tourism requires development to take place within the context of all local socio-economic development and be considered as an element of land-use planning alongside other development options. Its long-term goal is to enable a comprehensive development process where products draw from, and add to, the quality of local resources, based on a sound understanding of market demand and motivations. It should also communicate with, and involve the local population in planning and management decisions, while offering a fair distribution of the benefits and costs among tourism businesses, promoters and the host community.

These principles, however, are not necessarily new and have been promoted for nearly twenty years.¹⁵ As Taylor (1991) suggests, despite this 'new' thinking, little has actually been done to come to grips with the problems and develop practical and acceptable solutions. The fundamental problem has been the lack of ability or willingness to undertake both the qualitative and structural changes in the way tourism is planned and managed overall (see *Table 2*).

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| <i>Comprehensive</i> | where social, environmental, economic and political implications are fully analyzed and understood as part of an holistic approach to planning; |
| <i>Iterative and Dynamic</i> | planning that is continuous, responding to changing circumstances, and able to make adjustments within the context of an adapted policy and strategy; |
| <i>Systematic</i> | possible impacts are assessed with actions set to counter negative effects; examine visitor demand and motivations, combining this with local capacities to develop products which enhance the integrity of local resources; |
| <i>Integrative</i> | planning and management that places tourism within the wider socio-economic and land-use planning process of the destination, so decisions taken with influence over tourism are fully considered and understood; |
| <i>Community</i> | communicate with and involve the local community in oriented planning and management activity, where all those affected have a structured opportunity to put their views forward; also encourage maximum participation of residents in the supply of tourism services; |
| <i>Renewable</i> | managed as a renewable industry where natural and cultural resources maintain their integrity for continued and future use; limits to acceptable change and the capacity to absorb tourism become primary objectives of all tourism planning; encourage products which draw from and enhance the integrity of local resources; |
| <i>Goal-oriented and Implementable</i> | clear recognition of what tourism development can realistically achieve through policy; development strategy and action programmes specifically adapted to achieve tangible goals; and offer a fair distribution of the benefits and costs amongst tourism businesses, promoters and the host community-now and in the future. |

Table 2. Industry Approach - Key Elements of Planning for Sustainable Tourism
{After IPU, 1989; Globe '90; Inskeep, 1991; Godfrey, 1993}

Thus, while precise definition may remain somewhat elusive between these two broad views, the general concept suggests that sustainable tourism is essentially an issue of tourism asset management, where development activity guarantees the integrity of the resource on which the industry is based, while maintaining economic viability (Godfrey, 1994 and 1995). Both demand and supply components of tourism are balanced within a framework of maintaining social and environmental objectives (Inskip, 1991). Therefore, planning for sustainable tourism is not an end in itself, but rather one of several tools of *national* and *local* resource management. In a wider context, this suggests tourism planning should be undertaken on the understanding that it is not a unique or isolated procedure, but an interdependent function of a wider and permanent socio-economic development process.

Tourism Planning and Development in Cyprus

Following independence in 1960, Cyprus was faced with the serious task of restructuring its economy. The Government of the day established a series of five year plans aimed at full utilisation of its productive resources, rapid and balanced economic growth and regional development, a sound balance of payments, full employment and improved social services and quality of life (Andronicou, 1979). However, Cyprus was not an industrial society, it had little potable fresh water, and mineral reserves were modest. Another approach was necessary and, in common with many other Mediterranean countries, tourism was considered a viable alternative to aid its economic development.

In 1960, Cypriot tourism was un-developed, with only 21,000 visitor arrivals and 4000 beds, nearly half of which were located in the Troodos hill resorts. Most visitors arrived from the Middle-East during the summer months, to take advantage of the relative coolness provided by the island's hill resorts. The five coastal towns (Kyrenia, Famagusta, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos) catered primarily for the local population and visitors associated with the colonial government and armed forces (Ioannides, 1991). Accommodation in these towns accounted for less than one-third of all tourist beds, with the remainder in the capital, Nicosia. To support growth the government established a series of economic measures (incentives/disincentives) to encourage rapid development of hotels in prime coastal areas. Although government actions were intended to generate rapid development of the industry, policy was aimed at attracting high- and middle-income visitors which were seen to provide the greatest benefit to the economy, to the virtual exclusion of mass tourism (Andronicou, 1979, 1983; PIO, 1995).

In 1969 the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO), a semi-governmental agency was established, charged with the full responsibility for tourism development and promotion aimed at making Cyprus competitive with other Mediterranean resorts. The results were dramatic, and contrary to any efforts to

achieve a balanced development, spectacular growth in tourism was the result (Daveronas, 1992). Between 1960 and 1973 international visitor arrivals rose by an average of 19% per year to 250,000 (a 900% increase overall compared to 175% globally) (Witt, 1991). Development was concentrated in the coastal areas of Kyrenia and Famagusta and, by 1973, these two resort areas accounted for just over 70% of all international arrivals and similar level of the island's total bed capacity. In contrast, Larnaca and Paphos attracted little attention with only three hotels in the three to four star category between them (Ioannides, 1992; Lockhart, 1993).

The success of tourism, its pattern of development, and international arrivals, however, changed abruptly in 1974. Following the Turkish invasion and occupation of 37% of the island's territory, one-half of the island's manufacturing capacity, two-thirds of its main agricultural areas, one-half of all catering and entertainment facilities, four-fifths of all accommodation, and virtually all new hotels under construction were effectively removed from the Cypriot economy (Andronicou, 1979). In addition, the main international airport at Nicosia was closed to commercial traffic and visitor arrivals seriously declined.

Cypriot tourism faced potential collapse, representing a serious blow to the government's attempts to restructure the island's economy. In response, the new Greek-Cypriot government (of the south) instigated a series of Emergency Economic Actions Plans designed, in part, to re-establish the southern part of the island as a major tourist destination, particularly from 1976 onwards. To maximise tourism development potential a number of new measures were established, including low interest loans, free government land in coastal areas, duty-free imports of equipment and other material for the hotel industry, the relaxation of planning controls, development easements, and other economic and fiscal incentives and tax benefits, all designed to encourage the private sector to take a leading role in rebuilding the island's tourist economy (CTO, 1994; Ioannides, 1991). Large sections of the coast were zoned for tourist purposes with high plot ratios and the rehabilitation and expansion of the Larnaca airport was undertaken to re-establish international air transport links. Although the conflict had an immediate effect on visitor arrivals, this was comparatively short lived. Visitor numbers slumped in 1975 to 47,000, but by 1976 these reached 172,000 and by 1979, visitor arrivals surpassed pre-invasion levels. Growth rates were dramatic and faster than in any other Mediterranean destination.

Cyprus was fast becoming a 'sun-lust' destination for visitors from Central and Northern Europe/Scandinavia. Mass charter tourism brought visitors from the UK, Sweden, (West) Germany and Switzerland to the sun, sand and sea of a Cypriot Mediterranean coastline. These countries have between them represented at least 50 percent of total tourist arrivals to Cyprus since 1970, and apart from the interruption of tourism following the 1974 invasion, this 'singular tourist market' has accounted for up to two-thirds of all arrivals since the early 1970s (Lockhart, 1993,

PIO, 1995). However, it should be noted that the dominance of these markets in holiday travel to Cyprus was not merely by chance, but due to the deliberate targeting of these markets in the initial Emergency Economic Action Plans (Ioannides, 1991).

Despite the government's intentions for regionally balanced economic development, great emphasis was placed on building in coastal areas to meet the demand, and mainly in places with very little previous experience with tourism. Mass coastal tourism was taking over, with the Troodos resorts providing only a minor counterbalance to the vast growth in tourist beds and visitor arrivals along the coast (Lockhart, 1993). While the rate of growth had effectively fuelled the country's economic recovery, there was a price to pay. The island's free-market economy and "prevailing *laissez-faire* attitude put the desire to maximize profits at the top of priorities and the respect of the physical and built environment somewhere at the bottom" (Daveronas, 1992). Architectural pollution, ribbon development, traffic congestion, water pollution, litter, and increased noise levels were evident in and around resort areas, primarily due to a lack of investment in infrastructure and the absence of adequate planning and regulation (Ioannides, 1991; CTO, 1994).

Consequently, the government set about establishing a new set of incentives and regulations in the early 1980s, to try to bring development back under control. Three key objectives for tourism were to underpin its approach:¹⁶

- continued growth of tourism's contribution to GDP;
- protection of environmental and cultural qualities of Cyprus; and,
- attraction of higher spending tourists.

A special fund and investment incentives were set up particularly in the hill resorts for priority projects such as five-star hotels, 'tourist villages', and camping facilities to encourage development away from the beach areas. Existing legislation was again amended to establish greater control over the planning process, with new emphasis placed on environmental protection and the design and character of buildings. Local development plans were introduced which would take account of local resource availability, and act as the basis for all future development activity. Finally, the CTO redoubled its efforts to promote the island as a prestige destination for middle- and upper-income tourists, who they felt were least likely to cause stress and strain on traditional culture and the environment (Andronicou, 1986).

To some, these new measures and policy decisions were regarded as landmarks for the CTO and seen as a first step towards a rational balanced

development. The key purpose was to curtail the rate of growth of new hotels, place greater emphasis on improving the current product, and shift demand away from the coast. Initially the new measures were effective and new hotel development applications fell from 120 in 1982 to 17 in 1985 (Andronicou, 1986, Ioannides, 1992). However, the reprieve was short-lived, and throughout the 1980s, the average annual increase in visitor arrivals attained pre-conflict levels, rising to 1.4 million by 1988 (up by 700% from 1976, whereas globally international arrivals only rose by 83%). Tourism's contribution to GNP rose from 6% in 1983, to 8.3% in 1988 (Witt, 1991). At the same time, average length of stay declined with a corresponding increase in Inclusive Tours (IT) from the UK and western Europe. Again, contrary to the government's efforts to push growth into the hill resorts, almost all new development took place in coastal areas with a shift to self-catering hotel apartments. Ayia Napa, once described as a 'sleepy village but now turbo-garish' (Wickers, 1994), accounted for 34% of all tourist beds in the Republic (CTO, 1994). Between 1981 and 1990, bed capacity in the Republic grew from just over 15,000 to nearly 60,000 (PIO, 1995).

This quadrupling in the supply of accommodation presented a major shift in the spatial distribution of tourism and began to seriously undermine the CTO's efforts to portray the island as quality destination (Gillmor, 1989). By 1990, nine out of every ten tourist beds were located along the island's southern coast, reinforcing the country's dependence on beach-based 'sun-lust' tourism (Ioannides, 1991). Tourist enclaves in Paphos, Limassol and Larnaca, lacking adequate resort infrastructure (i.e., sewage disposal, pedestrian areas, landscaped open space, street furniture and parking) were becoming 'placeless-could be anywhere' resorts. Extensive exploitation of the coastal zone and this singular tourist market suggested tourism was becoming a mono-activity, assuming the role of pacemaker in the island's economy at the expense of agriculture and other industry (CTO, 1994). While the sun, sand and sea image plus the comparative cheapness of goods and services were still evident, the CTO was beginning to recognise that unless they could upgrade the island's infrastructure and achieve a wider spread of facilities, then they may have some difficulty in maintaining their share of the quality tourist market.

Once again the government and CTO began to re-think their strategy and, in 1988, with the help of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), a *Comprehensive Tourism Development Plan for Cyprus* was prepared (see WTO, 1994a & 1994b). The new plan proposed a much wider analysis of economic, social and environmental issues in the planning stage. Like previous government/CTO strategies, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/WTO plan suggested controlled growth through consolidation of the product in existing areas and environmental improvements (Kammas, 1991). This supposedly would provide much greater diversity in facilities, activities and product improvement to attract higher spending visitors and lengthen the current season.

Successful implementation would depend on the government's ability to regulate

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the quantity, type and location of development through a combination of institutional structures and incentives/disincentives to promote the development of complementary products and infrastructure (WTO, 1994a & 1994b). Subsequently, in fear of the island becoming a massive tourist camp, the government took its most decisive actions to-date. In June of 1989 a temporary moratorium was placed on all further tourism development, not just to stop the rate of growth in the industry, but to give the government and CTO time to prepare a new policy for the industry (CTO, 1994). It was lifted in December 1990 with the enactment of a new Town and Country Planning Law and National Tourism Strategy. Essentially the basic philosophy of this new approach, as opposed to past efforts, was the recognition of the need to re-organise and improve the environment of existing tourist development; to regulate and direct new development to places where there was spare capacity; and the need to diversify the product supply with a similar broadening of market demand (Daveronas, 1992).

The Town and Country Planning Law (1990) was designed to provide a new legal framework for the preparation and implementation of comprehensive land-use development plans at three levels: town-wide plans in urban areas; policy statements for rural and countryside areas; and small-area detailed plans within rural or urban areas. The primary objective of all development plans was to restrain the growth of the industry in areas already congested, and to govern the location and scale of development in other areas. The new law essentially represents a series of development control measures which place restrictions on new development such as building height and appearance; protect culturally significant structures and areas; and place greater attention to detail on setting and site context (see *Table 3*).

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1. All new developments restricted to much lower densities (plot ratios, height restrictions and required open space) than previous development. Policies concerning product quality and environmental content also aim to limit the quantity of provision of facilities in different areas.
 2. Aesthetic control of building style, materials used, and site to reflect the environmental and social context of the setting.
 3. Detailed area/site studies focusing on landscaping, infrastructure provision, beach quality and access, and other basic infrastructure.
 4. Preservation, protection and enhancement of cultural heritage through the use of preservation orders and protective zoning (buffer zones).

5. Town centre renewal schemes which seek to re-establish functional neighbourhoods, and encourage traditional leisure activities in the central business district. In rural areas, the creation of 'listed building' status will help maintain the cultural context of structure used for tourist purposes.
 6. Protection of the natural environment through the creation of nature reserves, areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs), and a national park.
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Table 3. Tourism Elements of Town and Country Planning Law (1990), Republic of Cyprus
(source: CTO, 1994)

Key aims of the National Tourist Strategy (1990), on the other hand, were to provide for an improvement and diversification of the current tourist product. It also sought to encourage new forms of tourism which would build on a region's cultural and natural assets. Based on the creation of broad regulatory measures, the strategy focused on directing both the quality and quantity of new development and, where possible, diverting investment into ancillary facilities and improved infrastructure. In particular, the strategy placed restrictions on a minimum plot size for new hotels; encouraged the development of supplementary facilities such as golf courses, and set capacity standards for beach quality; and continued to promote the image of a quality destination through the development of new small-scale tourist facilities and attractions in rural locations (see *Table 4*).

National Tourism Strategy

1. Enforcement of moratorium on tourism development in municipal areas not yet covered by a local plan.
2. Designation of two broad zones, urban and rural, in coastal areas. Desired types and minimum sizes for new tourist enterprises defined.
3. Increased land requirements for new facilities: 20,000 sq. metres for hotels; 15,000 sq. metres for tourist villages; and 10,000 sq. metres for tourist villas - to promote a better quality of accommodation and service.
4. Implementation of a special policy within development boundaries of some coastal areas which permit a wider range of establishments such as small family units which do not conform to the new general restrictions of plot size.

5. Use traditional buildings for tourist use, with controls placed on the extension of existing establishments which do not conform to the current National Tourism Strategy.
 6. Discouragement of hotel apartments and their replacement with 'tourist villages'
 7. Exploration of the opportunities for developing tourism in hill resorts and village settlements.
 8. Improvement of hotel occupancy through an extension of the tourist season and possibilities of winter tourism because of the temperate climate.
 9. Correct the current regional imbalance in tourism distribution through easements and other incentives.
 10. Encourage development and classification of 'luxury villas' for tourists in the form of village clusters, which will cater exclusively for tourist family needs of highest order with private facilities such as tennis courts and swimming pools.
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Table 4. Main provisions of National Tourism Strategy (1990), Republic of Cyprus (source: CTO, 1994)

Both the new Law and Strategy were designed to encourage a more 'sustainable' tourism industry, which would take account of environmental tolerance in development, and which avoids economic disruption in other sectors of the economy (CTO, 1994). To test their applicability and to demonstrate a new resolve to mitigate the negative effects of tourism on the island, two pilot projects were established: the Alternative Rural Tourism Initiative; and tourism development in the Akamas Peninsula (including the Laona Project).

The Alternative Rural Tourism Initiative

The rural tourism initiative, launched by the CTO in 1991, has been designed to provide tourist accommodation and facilities in 50 hill settlements, to attract visitors away from the coast, and to help stimulate village economies. Its key activities concentrate on the renovation and conversion of traditional small-scale buildings to some form of tourist use such as accommodation, catering, crafts or exhibition space. Broadly, the programme has six key objectives:17

1. To revitalise rural communities through tourism, not as an economic substitute, but rather as a supplement to local income. It is hoped this will help reduce the problem of out-migration to coastal areas and abroad.
2. To restore village settings, including traditional architecture, street scenes, public space, and points of interest. The intention is to try to retain a 'sense of place' in villages (which has virtually disappeared in many coastal areas), adding to the quality of life of residents and hopefully proving attractive to visitors.
3. To enable suppliers of village accommodation and catering facilities to attain CTO ratings and classification. The CTO has implemented a programme of financial assistance and design which reviews and monitors all projects for restoration to maintain product quality in both structure and levels of service.
4. To establish a marketing and promotions campaign, on a co-operative basis with project participants and village authorities, and set up a central bookings and information office solely for this scheme. The CTO believe that if it is to establish quality standards and avoid loss of control to the large tour operators, then this element of the programme must be compulsory.
5. To provide technical advise and guidance to local craftsmen on the restoration of traditional forms of architecture. The CTO is pursuing a public relations and education programme to increase local awareness of the value of cultural heritage and how this can be used to attract visitors. They have also begun a seminar programme for participants on tourist operations and customer care.
6. To co-ordinate potential visitor activities and attractions on a regional basis in an attempt to establish the identity of different village clusters, including local festivals, archaeology, flora and fauna, arts and crafts, and wine making.

By the end of 1994, the CTO believed this initiative had been successful, citing the constant flow of applications to the CTO for plan approval and financial assistance to aid restoration and renovation of facilities, without the influence of speculative development (Katsouris, 1994). In addition, the programme has also led to an enhanced awareness by Cypriots in both rural and urban settings as to the intrinsic value of cultural heritage itself (Katsouris, 1994). However, success in terms of actual investment and subsequent returns from tourism activity remains uncertain, as the full programme has yet to be launched on the tourist market and the total supply of properties and facilities is incomplete.

Tourism Development in the Akamas Peninsula

The second and related programme emerging from the new Law and Strategy

concerns Cyprus' last 'unspoilt wilderness', the Akamas Peninsula. Forming an elongated plateau in the north-western section of the island, the Akamas Peninsula represents probably the last relatively pristine area in the Republic. Formed by a series of raised terraces carved with deep ravines and canyons, the Akamas region is different from many other parts of southern Cyprus. Pocket beaches and coves form its northern flank, with sand dunes and long sandy beaches on the south-west. It hosts over 60 different vegetation types, and supports in excess of 165 species of birds, plus numerous other reptiles and insects. It is an important breeding ground for the rare Griffon vulture, and Lara Bay on its western flank is a key breeding ground for the endangered Green and Loggerhead turtles. In addition, its cultural heritage includes Neolithic, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine remains, as well as boasting the mythical baths of Aphrodite.

Following the 1974 conflict, the Akamas area was effectively 'cut-off' from the capital and the island's only international airport, and its poor road network and 'wild' terrain meant the peninsula was relatively inaccessible and 'isolated' from the rest of the island. The twenty years subsequent have witnessed a declining economy and depopulation on a more pronounced scale than other regions of the country (DTPH, 1994). Most of the Akamas (Laona) villages have been affected by declining employment opportunities, low agricultural productivity (due to poor soils and lack of water), a general scarcity of retail shops, medical care, clubs and community associations, with a majority of its buildings in a poor state of repair (DTPH, 1994).

Development of the peninsula is now at the centre of a passionate debate.¹⁸ Given the extent of over-development in other parts of the island, it is not surprising that this area has recently come under the scrutiny of developers. While conservationists and *Friends of the Earth* have called for a more sensitive approach to development, developers and, in particular, members of the local community want their share of the 'economic miracle' which has been experienced elsewhere on the island.

However, with the experience of past mistakes and renewed development pressures, the authorities decided to act. In 1988, a Local Plan was prepared by the *Government* for the greater Akamas region. Strict zoning regulations were enacted which became part of the *Countryside Policy*, established under the new planning law. Four elements of the local plan are specifically related to tourism.¹⁹ Foremost, it recommends that the first national park on Cyprus should be established on the peninsula, with an emphasis on nature conservation and landscape preservation. Park use should conform to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recommendations of inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes. While this suggestion has been accepted in principle, it remains a politically sensitive issue with strong lobbies, both for and against, which has delayed any final decision.

Second, the plan recommends a scheme of fiscal and investment incentives

designed to aid Laona villages in the regeneration of their communities, similar to the rural tourism initiative in the hill resorts. Third, it suggests that specific programmes should be set up to conserve and protect various different ecosystems in the area that may not fall within the proposed park boundaries, but are equally significant to the ecology and context of the region. This has resulted in the 'cancellation' of a tourist development zone planned for Lara Bay (the Green Turtle breeding grounds), and indirectly to the continued protection of the last refuge of the Mediterranean Mouflon (a species of wild sheep believed unique to Cyprus).

Finally, the plan recommends that new forms of 'mild tourism' should be developed on the peninsula. It suggests that a similar approach to the 'rural tourism initiative' would be the most appropriate. The *Laona Project*, with its technical and financial assistance to enable villagers to restore property for visitor accommodation and other associated small-scale activity is considered to be "a good alternative to 'mass tourism', which had destroyed other areas of the island" (DTPH, 1994). 'Mild' forms of tourism are described in this project as *agrotourism*, the encouragement of *small family run hotels, walking and hiking, scientific tourism* (university students and special interest fieldwork such as archaeological and nature studies), and the opportunity to experience traditional *Cypriot culture*.

Although the government and CTO recognise that these actions will not bring about dramatic changes in the short term, they do feel that they will help limit tourism development to levels compatible with available resources, and lead to a general improvement in product quality. Both the government and the CTO believe that their planning and management initiatives, based on the promotion of new 'mild forms' of tourism, will provide for a more sustainable form of economic development. "Existing traditional village houses and small family hotels and other supporting facilities will provide the necessary impetus for the envisaged sustainable tourism development" (DTPH, 1994, 6).

While recognising that it may take years of effort and investment, and prove both politically and economically unyielding, the CTO believes that it is only by taking a long term view of development that they will be able to "prevent total and terminal frustration of all investment in tourism which is the inevitable result of over-exploitation of the human and natural resource of the country" (CTO, 1994, 10).

The Future of Tourism in Cyprus: Towards Sustainability?

In theory it would seem that many of the changes in Cypriot tourism planning and development, particularly since the late 1980s are, as claimed by some "an interesting example of formulating future developments strategies for sustainable tourism in an already substantially developed and successful tourist destination...." (WTO, 1994b, 120). However, while the new strategy and planning law may imply a more thoughtful and measured approach to tourism development, two key issues remain: first, while actions such as the promotion of 'agrotourism' and the rural

tourism programme are, theoretically at least, both socially and environmentally sensitive in their approach, these alone will do little to address the overall 'sustainability' of tourism for the island as a whole; and second, while modification of the land-use planning laws is perhaps more significant for the nation, this too may have little effect on controlling the scale and location of future tourism development, particularly as past plans and policies had relatively little influence over the direction of much development which has taken place to-date.

The growth in Cypriot tourism and its concomitant impacts on both the social and physical environment have been closely associated with the rapid and somewhat unrestrained growth in the island's bed capacity along its coastlines. Yet one primary response so far has been to propose new small-scale development in the countryside. While the CTO is conscious that excess development away from the coast may just transplant coastal problems to the hinterland, they are also determined not to allow speculative development in the Akamas or other rural areas. To achieve this they have recommended that restrictive measures be established, in particular, to control further bed provision in already congested resorts. On paper, the introduction of these stronger 'development control policies' does recognise the need to take a more pro-active approach in managing the island's tourism resources. However, whether this will actually limit new development remains uncertain, for a past experience has shown, despite the 1989 moratorium on all new development, bed capacity rose by a further 20% by 1993 due to the large number building permits granted prior to 1989 but not then acted upon (PIO, 1995).

In addition, a similar issue concerns the proposal to relax planning restrictions in some rural and coastal areas which currently have only minimal development (such as the Polis region on the north edge of the Akamas Peninsula). Here the CTO suggests such a preferential locational policy should be reinforced with additional incentives to encourage development activity (CTO, 1994). However, many of the problems evident in other parts of the island are closely associated with, if not the direct result of, relaxed planning provisions. The offer of significant development incentives made to invite investment in favour of expedience would seem to contradict other aspects of the tourism strategy, and instead invite potential development conflict to the region. Whether the development of tourism in these areas will maintain the character and integrity of the local resource, and not follow the typical development cycle experienced on other parts of the island²⁰ remains questionable, unless these 'relaxed' provisions are strictly related to the renovation and redevelopment of existing properties and structures.

A further problem with this rural tourism initiative and the new planning law, particularly in the Laona villages of the Akamas region, concerns the likelihood of any plan implementation. Since the 1960s, the state has claimed to have been an active player in the island's tourism development, not through intensified state controls, but through encouragement of the private sector (Andronicou, 1979) .

While the government and CTO may have established policies and legislation to direct development along desired paths, the pressure, trends and pace of development soon outstripped the planning process. The government's willingness and/or ability to enforce regulations and implement strategy has been hampered by a number of factors, including: "the greed of local and foreign investors for quick profits" (Daveronas, 1992, 52); the economic intervention through incentives/disincentives was limited mainly due to the prevailing free-market approach which allowed for alternative means of finance (Daveronas, 1992; DTPH, 1994); local governments were not technically or professionally prepared to deal with the speed and level of development (Andronicou, 1979); enforcement was ineffective due to the small population base which heightened "the inevitability of personal contacts and thus, probable nepotism" (Ioannides, 1991, 7); and regional planning guidance and comprehensive programmes to encourage development away from the coast were not developed (CTO, 1994). Now the CTO is faced with the additional problem of convincing local inhabitants that slow/restrained growth is better in the long-term than the rapid development experienced elsewhere on the island (Ioannides, 1995).

While many governments are beginning to prepare what they see as 'sustainable' tourism plans and policies, the case of Cyprus shows that these alone will not ensure success without the full implementation and enforcement of rules and regulations designed to limit potential problems. As in other aspects of economic development and resource exploitation, it has not necessarily been tourism per se causing the problems, rather it has been the unplanned and mismanaged activity, lacking policy direction and comprehensive development strategies representing the root cause. Thus despite claims that "there were adequate controls at the national level" (Andronicou, 1979, 264), and a development policy designed with the intention of 'excluding mass tourism', this shows that legislation can only set the framework for development control; the problem lies in the way in which authorities actually then define and enforce their national objectives. While Cypriot tourism planners hope their new development control policies and tourism strategy will put them in a better position to protect the industry's competitive ability (DTPH, 1994), past experience of plan implementation and enforcement suggests otherwise.

Finally, it would seem that unless the further expansion of bed capacity is restrained, with 'development' energy re-directed at improving the quality and diversification of current infrastructure through re-modelling rather than 'new build', it is very likely that these latest efforts to manage the island's tourism industry towards sustainability will fail to meet their objectives. However, whatever the response and whatever the criticism, the true sustainability of these actions will not be determined in the immediate future, for as the concept implies, their validity will only really be tested through the course of time.

Notes

1. John Pezzey found over 60 definitions of, or commentaries on, sustainable development and related concepts; the bias and tone of these definitions often dependent on the background of the writer. See *Pezzey, J. Definitions of Sustainability, Discussion Paper no. 9*, Institute of Behavioral Sciences, University of Colorado, 1989.
2. For example see: Krippendorf, J. Towards New Tourism Policies: The Importance of Environmental and Sociocultural Factors, *Tourism Management* 3 (3): 135-148, 1982; and Kariel, H.G. Tourism and Development: Perplexity or Panacea, *Journal of Travel Research*, 28: 2-6, 1989.
3. For example see: SEEDS, *The Last Resort: Tourism, Tourist Employment and Post-tourism in the South East*, South East Economic Development Strategy (SEEDS), Stevenage, Herts, pages 90, 1989.
4. For example see: Gonsalves, P. and P. Holden (eds.) *Alternative Tourism: A Resource Book*, Bangkok: Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism, 1985.
5. For example see: WTO, *Seminar on "Alternative" Tourism: Introductory Report (SEM/ALG/89/IR)*, 1990; and *Seminar on "Alternative" Tourism: Final Report (SEM/ALG/89/FR)*, 1990; and Haywood, K.M. Responsible and Responsive Tourism Planning in the Community, *Tourism Management*, 9(2): 105-118, 1988.
6. For example see: Singh, T.V., Theuns, H.L. and F. M. Go (eds.) *Towards Appropriate Tourism: The Case of Developing Countries*, European University Studies, series X, vol. 11, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989.
7. For example see: Bramwell, 8. Sustainability and Rural Tourism Policy in Britain, *Tourism Recreation Research*, 16(2): 49-51, 1991.
8. For example see: Lane, B. The Future of Rural Tourism, *Insights*, (English Tourist Board), pp. O5.1-DS.6, 1989; and Lane, 8. Developing Sustainable Rural Tourism", a paper presented at the Irish National Planning Conference - *Planning and Tourism in Harmony*, Newmarket on Fergus, County Clare, April, 1990.
9. For example see: Lillywhite, M. and L. Lillywhite, Low Impact Tourism, in *World Travel and Tourism Review*, Hawkins and Ritchie (eds.) 162-169, 1991.
10. For example see: Boo, E. *Ecotourism: Potential and Pitfalls*, Washington, D.C.: World Wildlife Fund, 1990.
11. For example see: Fennell, D.A. and P.F.J. Eagles, Ecotourism in Costa Rica: A Conceptual Framework, *Journal of Parks and Recreation Association*, 8(1): 23-34, 1990.
12. Personal communication with Prof. Geoff Wall, University of Waterloo, 1992.
13. Richard Butler suggests there is a difference between *sustainable tourism* and *sustainable development in the context of tourism*. The former he suggests is: *tourism which is in a form which can maintain its viability in an area for an indefinite*

period of time. The latter he argues is: tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community, environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment (human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and wellbeing of other activities and process (see Butler, 1994, 29). While theoretically this may or may not be correct, in practice, both government and industry are unable or unwilling to differentiate between the two. When referring to *sustainable tourism*, anything from new 'green' products to new tourism development control policies, and anything in between are the focus of their discussions. For these reasons this paper does not seek to separate the two as such, but rather refers to the parallel concepts of a 'product' vs. 'industry' approach to 'sustainable tourism' as discussed in this paper. (see also note 1 and note 14.)

14. For a more detailed discussion on this debate see Godfrey, K.B. *Tourism and Sustainable Development: Towards a Community Framework*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford Brookes University, 1993.

15. See for example the Manila Declaration (WTO, 1980); the WTO/UNEP *Joint Declaration* (WTO, 1982); *the Tourism Bill of Rights and the Tourist Code* (WTO, 1985); *the Hague Declaration on Tourism* (IPU, 1989); and *the Globe '90 Action Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development* (Globe :90). Each of these documents have stressed the need for a more environmentally sensitive and socially responsible approach to tourism planning and development.

16. See WTO, *Aviation and Tourism Policies: Balancing the Benefits*, A World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Publication, London: Routledge, 1994a; and WTO, *National and Regional Tourism Planning: Methodologies and Case Studies*, A World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Publication, London: Routledge, 1994b.

17. See Katsouris, P., *The Development of Rural Tourism in Cyprus: An Alternative Form of Tourism*, paper presented at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Economic Commission for Europe, Committee on Human Settlements, 18th Meeting of Experts on Human Settlements Problems in Southern Europe, Nicosia, Cyprus, June 6-8, 1994.

18. See the discussion in Ioannides, D. A flawed implementation of sustainable tourism: the experience of Akamas, Cyprus, *Tourism Management*, 16(8), 583-592, 1995; and Yiordamli, A.C. The starry eyed need not apply, *Tourism in Focus*, no. 16 (summer issue): 11-12, 1995.

19. See DTPH, *The Akamas Peninsula: Tourism, Sustainability and Conservation Management*, a paper presented by the Department of Town Planning and Housing, Nicosia, Cyprus (DTPH) at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Economic Commission for Europe, Committee on Human Settlements, 18th Meeting of Experts on Human Settlements Problems in Southern Europe, Nicosia, Cyprus, June 6-8, 1994.

20. See Ioannides, D. *Tourism Development Agents: The Cypriot Resort Cycle*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(4): 711-731, 1992.

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~~National~~ *National and Regional Tourism Planning: Methodologies and Case Studies*, A World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Publication, London: Routledge, 1994b.

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