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Sustainable Tourism IV

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Preface

Sustainability is nowadays a concept that requires explanation because of the subjective way in which it is understood by different parties. People almost always refer to the idea of maintaining the proper use of natural resources, but ‘good’ use also appears to be a subjective term. What may appear a sensible sustainable application to one observer may not be such when looked at from a different perspective. The idea of a sustainable system is, however, well defined and formalized in ecological theory (the exploitation rate of a system must be less than its turnover) and, moreover, the concept of natural resource has also been defined.

A natural resource from society’s point of view can be defined as any manifestation of matter, energy or space that man can use. Matter, for instance, could consist of non-renewables such as minerals as well as renewable resources of which timber is perhaps the best known example. The energy resource appears to be the most important in the current debate on sustainability – the amount of energy actually required by ‘modern society’ and the importance of the supply thereof from renewable sources, such as wind, solar radiation or tides.

The current economic crisis has highlighted the importance of sustainability and the end of the system on which modern society has been organised for the last three centuries. It also indicates the dawn of a new era with a more rational use of materials and energy. It is also to be hoped that in the future resources will be shared more equally amongst the world population. Not long ago Jeremy Rifkin predicted that “in this century, less than 5% of the population will provide the goods and services that the rest will consume”, so that a massive labour force will not be required. This statement may not be much of an exaggeration. The scenario is set for a different type of society, one in which three conditions converge: planning and occupation of space; the natural and cultural landscape being considered as a resource and a suitable amount of leisure time becoming available.

Leisure and recreation will be very different from what we know today, given the society envisaged by Rifkin. We will not need to be largely engaged in production,

but rather in the development of knowledge and this will become a major activity generated both at work and in leisure. Society must be able to organise its leisure time while enjoying a landscape encompassing education, culture and nature.

The landscape to be enjoyed is both the natural and the cultural one. There are natural landscapes in the world which will require a higher degree of protection. Biodiversity should be cherished and the subject of our constant attention. The cultural landscape will blend within this vision creating a process of constant education and knowledge production. It is in this context that cities and metropolitan areas seek the emergence of new perspectives, such as in the case of the metropolitan area of New York which is striving to become one of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. Traditional industrial landscapes are also an important source of education in a new technological world. All these pose challenges for experts in leisure and recreation, who should consider in their work the importance of education and knowledge.

These ideas are the basis of the Series of International Conferences on Sustainable Tourism which has now become a well established forum for discussion of new developments in this important field. The Conference has been successfully held in Segovia (2004), Bologna (2006) and Malta (2008). This volume contains most of the papers presented at the 4th meeting held in the Campus of the Wessex Institute of Technology in the New Forest, UK. The meeting – as well as all the others – was co-organised by that Institution and the Complutense University of Madrid in Spain. The Editors gratefully acknowledge the support of both as well as the help provided by the members of the International Scientific Advisory Committee and other colleagues who helped review the papers published in this book.

The Editors

New Forest, UK, 2010

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