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3 Sustainability and Tourism Growth

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Introduction

An implicit assumption in much of the tourism planning literature is that the market requires increasing economic growth. According to the prevailing pro-growth mindset, more is better, despite the fact that tourism's obsessive drive for expansion is destroying the very natural and socio-cultural environments that attract visitation. Indeed, a focus on economic issues has led to the relative neglect of the costs of tourism growth to the socio-cultural fabric of destinations, as well as to the quality of environmental resources that are important attractors of visitation. Tourism planning typically consists of a SWOT analysis, followed by strategies to build on strengths to promote growth, address weaknesses to growth, counter threats to growth, and capitalize on opportunities for growth. Moreover, in the World Travel and Tourism Council's *Blueprint for New Tourism* (WTTC, 2003), which purports to address sustainability issues, tourism growth is lauded as an important goal for all destinations. Similarly, an explicit growth ethic also underpins numerous UN World Tourism Organization publications that promote tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability (see: http://www2.unwto.org/), as well as the bulk of the destination competitiveness literature in which better attractions and better management imply greater demand for tourist industry products and services.

Despite this pervasiveness of the 'growth ethic' in policy and practice, its appropriateness remains a largely unexamined issue in the tourism research literature (Dwyer, 2018). This is arguably surprising given that markets are social institutions that typically do not produce optimal economic social or environmental outcomes. More specifically, market failures of various kinds mean that actual market outcomes are not efficient. Hence, while acknowledging that tourism growth is often associated with economic benefits to a destination, it is important to note that it can also generate income inequalities, destroy local industries and create greater dependency of developing economies on developed ones, with adverse effects on small business. Local-level negative effects include increased prices of consumer goods and services, increased price of land and housing beyond local affordability, increasing inequality between rich and poor and increasing demands on public services and facilities. At the same time, however, the mounting evidence that economic growth, measured by growth of GDP, does not measure quality of life, social progress, human development or happiness, continues largely to be ignored (Sharpley, 2009; Kubiszewski *et* *al*., 2013).

The question is, then: Can these two contrasting dynamics be reconciled? Or, more precisely, can tourism be developed in a way that contributes to economic development, employment and poverty reduction without destroying culture and damaging the environment? Given that significant increases in global tourism growth in the future are forecast, there is considerable urgency to exploring and implementing new sustainability approaches, not least because there is a growing consensus that *sustainable* tourism is possible only if stakeholders take serious account of the interactions between economic, environmental, social and cultural factors.

The Problem with GDP

Studies of economic growth in tourism have traditionally focused on its ability to increase a destination's GDP, levels of employment, foreign exchange earnings and so on. GDP in particular has long been the world's yardstick of economic progress; it is widely employed by policy makers, economists, international agencies and the media as the primary scorecard of a nation's economic health and well-being. The assumption underpinning the use of GDP to assess well-being is that the higher the level of economic production, the better people are able to satisfy their needs. However, GDP was never designed to measure social progress or social welfare (Kubiszewski *et al*., 2013; Kubiszewski and Costanza, 2015). Several of its limitations may be listed as follows:

- GDP is merely a gross tally of products and services bought and sold, with no distinction between transactions that enhance well-being and those that diminish it.
- GDP has a narrow focus on economic production. The more a nation depletes or degrades its natural resources or culture to produce goods and services, the more the GDP increases. In the GDP measure, every transaction is positive as long as money changes hands.
- Higher GDP is associated with increased carbon emissions, environmental problems and congestion, leaving people with lower economic welfare and lower levels of happiness.
- GDP ignores a number of factors that are important for well-being because they take place outside the market. It thus ignores the crucial economic functions performed in civic engagement and in the household and volunteer sectors, as well as transactions in the informal (non-cash, barter) economy. Many of these omitted activities are of essential importance in tourism worldwide (for example, when households host VFR travellers or when locals volunteer to organize special events or when locals act as informal guides or escorts).
- GDP makes no adjustment for leisure time that is widely regarded as essential to human well-being and an important objective of productivity increases in any tourism destination.
- GDP measures the quantitative output and consumption of goods and services, ignoring quality attributes that can satisfy and enhance consumer well-being.

- GDP measures ignore income distribution, despite the fact that a dollar's worth of increased income to a poor person produces more additional welfare than a dollar's increased income to a rich person.
- A destination's GDP ignores intrinsic development factors, such as lifestyle choice, environmental quality, life expectancy, standards of healthcare or freedom from oppression.

Consequently, at a time when new political narratives are necessary to identify how our societies should develop, prominent economists now advocate a shift of emphasis from a 'production-oriented' measurement system to one focused on the well-being of current and future generations; that is, toward broader measures of social progress (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009). In this effort, new measures of economic, social and natural wealth are required that go beyond the narrow GDP measure.

Sustainability

'Sustainable development' is that which is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, meeting the needs of the present without compromising the welfare of future generations (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005). For sustainable tourism development, a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions (environmental, social and economic) to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Yet, while tourism's economic impacts have long been studied intensively, the economic pillar of sustainability has been relatively neglected. This chapter aims to remedy this gap, at least partially.

Economic approaches to sustainability frame the issue in terms of human well-being (utility). Historically, economists have argued that what determines the ability of a given set of humans to improve their well-being (utility) is the quantity and quality of capital assets (wealth) available at the time. Hence, a simple intergenerational rule is that development is sustainable if it does not decrease the capacity to provide non-declining per capita utility into the indefinite future. The capacity to provide utility is conceptually embodied in four forms of capital: built, human, social and natural.

- *Built capital (Kb)*: the tools, machines, buildings, technologies and infrastructure that enhance productivity.
- *Human capital (Kh)*: the skills and knowledge of the workforce, including ability to develop and innovate and employ new technologies.
- *Social capital (Ks)*: concerns the relationships between individuals, between institutions (including government), and between individuals and institutions (languages, institutions, educational system, laws).
- *Natural capital (Kn)*: the value of the goods and services provided by nature, including renewable components such as clean air and water, ecosystems and solar energy, and non-renewable stocks such as mineral deposits, biodiversity and fossil fuels.

Wealth creation is the process of using these four types of capital in combination to produce the flows of goods and services that people want or need. The condition for sustainable development is that each generation leaves the next generation a stock of productive capacity, in the form of capital assets and technology, that is capable of sustaining utility or well-being per capita at a level no less than that enjoyed by the current generation. Notationally, $dK/dt \geq 0$, where $K = Kb + Kh + Ks + Kn$. This implies that the change in the real value of aggregate assets at a point in time, dK/dt, must be at least zero in the aggregate. However, an underlying assumption is that changes in the constituent components of the overall stock, K, can be traded off for each other. In other words, if some part of natural capital, Kn, is depleted, then this is consistent with sustainability as long as adequate investment is made in other forms of wealth, such as human, social or physical capital.

Since sustainability depends on the maintenance of the capital stock, an important issue is whether it is the total stock of capital that must be maintained, with substitution allowed between the different capital forms, or whether certain components of capital, in particular natural capital, are non-substitutable, in that they contribute to welfare in a unique way that cannot be replicated by another capital stock (Ekins *et al.*, 2003; Dietz and Neumayer, 2007). This has led to the discussion of different degrees of sustainability, with two major positions being taken up by researchers, namely: ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ sustainability.

Weak sustainability

Weak sustainability is about maintaining total capital stock ($K = Kb + Kh+Ks + Kn$) where different types of capital are assumed to be perfectly substitutable. According to proponents of weak sustainability, any one form of capital can be depleted provided ‘proceeds’ are reinvested in other forms of capital. Growth occurs when $dK/dt > 0$. This assumes that any type of capital is perfectly substitutable for natural or social capital as an input to production. From the ‘adjusted net savings’ standpoint, for example, a nation which reinvested all of its profits from the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources in the formation of physical capital (for example, telecommunications or road systems) or human capital through its educational system would impose no net opportunity cost on the country’s future citizens. By implication, therefore, if $dK/dt > 0$, then any degradation (-Kn) of natural assets or social capital (-Ks) can be compensated for by investments in built or physical capital making the investment ‘sustainable’. In other words, Kn or Ks can be destroyed as a result of growth provided one or both of Kb and Kh are increased to compensate.

The weak sustainability thesis, which is broadly associated with neo-liberalism, is limited because, quite evidently, there are some unique assets crucial to well-being and, perhaps, the survival of all life forms on earth that have no substitutes. These include, for example, the basic life-support functions associated with various ecosystem services provided by the atmosphere, land and the oceans. Thus, some components of Kn must not be allowed to decline given the potentially catastrophic consequences that could follow.

Strong sustainability

In contrast, strong sustainability does not regard economic, social and environmental capital as perfectly substitutable. Rather, strong sustainability assumes a very limited degree of substitution between human and natural capital stocks, its proponents arguing that much of the stock of natural resources and ecological functions is irreplaceable. This fact implies that there are inherent limits to growth faced by human economies. Consequently, strong sustainability means treating natural capital (Kn) separately since it cannot ultimately be substituted for physical or human capital. Putting it another way, physical capital cannot, regardless of price, replace the services and amenities provided by nature, particularly basic life-support services such as the ozone layer, climate regulation, the food chain, the balance between alkalinity and acidity, clean water and so on. By implication, therefore, investments in built infrastructure (Kb) cannot adequately compensate future generations for losses of complex ecological communities and other 'critical components' of natural capital. That is, if Kn is degraded beyond threshold levels, the unique services of ecological systems have no substitute, resulting in irreversible harm to global biodiversity and the long-term collapse of essential ecosystems. Hence, many proponents of strong sustainability require that natural capital remains constant in aggregation, but allow one form of natural capital to be substituted for another, subject to certain ecological constraints (Dietz and Neumayer, 2007).

Researchers have developed various operational rules to ensure the sustainable management of natural capital stocks (Ekins *et al*., 2003). More specifically, several driving principles underpin the strong sustainability principle, limiting the reduction in natural capital Kn. These include the *Responsibility Principle* and the *Precautionary Principle*, both of which drive the stewardship perspective in respect of tourism development. The Responsibility Principle affirms that access to environmental resources carries attendant responsibilities to use them in an ecologically sustainable, economically efficient and socially fair manner (Lenzen *et al*., 2007). This principle supports the notion that, in all cases, resident values should be important in determining the type and scale of tourism development. Similarly, the Precautionary Principle affirms that the combination of irreversibility and scientific uncertainty should make us cautious about depleting natural and social capital (Fennell and Ebert, 2004). In a tourism context, the Precautionary Principle would preclude development actions that impose potential irreversible effects on natural and sociocultural environments, both in the present and future.

It is likely that the strong sustainability thesis will evolve over time to distinguish between types of natural and social capital that could be destroyed or degraded without large costs and those that should not be changed in any respect given the risks involved. Thus, Kn may comprise types of natural capital Kn1, Kn2 and so on (Kn1 may, for example, be a complex ecosystem while Kn2 is a small swamp). Similarly, social capital Ks may comprise types Ks1, Ks2 and so on (Ks1 may be the degradation of a unique culture, while Ks2 relates to a small job loss). This would give stakeholders the opportunity to develop and apply threshold levels essential to maintain the integrity of different types of natural and social capital stocks, according to their importance to both present and future generations. The strong sustainability rule applied to different types of economic, natural and social capital can then be written as follows:

Strong economic (built plus human) sustainability: $dK/dt \geq 0$; $dKb1, dKh1 \geq 0$ - - - Strong environmental sustainability: $dK/dt \geq 0$; $dKn1 \geq 0$ - - -
Strong social sustainability: $dK/dt \geq 0$; $dKs1 \geq 0$ - - -

Economic, social and natural capital are strongly interactive. As the stock of natural assets declines, social unrest is more likely to occur as individuals and groups seek access to fresh water, unpolluted environments, more productive farmlands and more stable weather systems. This will affect economic growth. In turn, social capital can lead to environmental improvements by way of volunteerism, participation in the sharing economy, common property regimes and other social behaviour to reduce resource exploitation and levels of negative externalities.

Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the plan of action for global sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda calls for all stakeholders to act in collaborative partnerships to implement the SDGs, while explicitly encouraging businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges. The UNWTO has argued forcefully that the tourism industry shares with local residents, governments and communities the obligation to protect and maintain the natural and cultural heritage resources of our planet, both to sustain economies and to be passed on unimpaired to future generations. Tourism is explicitly mentioned in three SDGs: 8.9, 12.b and 14.7, while it is also considered to be very relevant to the achievement of the other goals. The implications for tourism meeting the SDGs are listed in Box 3.1.

Can Tourism Succeed in Its Sustainability Agenda?

Achieving the SDGs will require significant and deep transformations in education systems, healthcare, energy use, land use, urban planning and the deployment of information technologies. Moreover, these transformations will require strong government leadership working in partnership with business and civil society, not least because integrating the SDGs by 2030 into national strategies, budgets, audits, procurement policies, regulatory and human resource management and other dimensions of public policy poses major challenges for both developed and developing countries. While some destinations are better at long-term planning and implementation, all need to improve their public policies and governance processes if they are to achieve all the SDGs by 2030. Success will require massive innovation, learning and sharing of best practices of governance within and among destinations. Some countries have established dedicated co-ordination units, action plans and accountability systems, while others lag behind on some or all of these dimensions.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/UNWTO, 2012) has identified tourism as one of ten economic sectors leading the transformation to the global green economy. Despite the optimism expressed by UNEP, however, we note that substantial adverse social and environmental impacts continue to be associated with tourism growth globally and, hence, current practice or 'business as usual' in tourism planning and management seems impossible to reconcile with sustainability. We would argue that the underlying causes of the unsustainable direction of tourism development are embedded in the type of mindset possessed by key tourism stakeholders – not only destination managers, industry operators and host communities but also tourists themselves (Pollock, 2015; Dwyer, 2018). To effect the serious change in practice required to achieve the SDGs, new ways of thinking and behaviour must replace the mindset that underpins the current destructive practices associated with tourism growth. There are three elements that are essential to a new mindset, namely: the necessity for new business models; an ecological perspective; and good governance.

The need for new business models

The prevailing neo-liberal paradigm regards business firms as principally responsible to their shareholders (profitability) and not to society as a whole, except regarding conformance to state laws (Friedman, 1970). This view that the firm has largely optional social obligations provides the rationale to ignore market failures, such as pollution, congestion and social problems, associated with production, and an incentive to 'externalize' as many social and environmental considerations as possible.

Box 3.1. Sustainable Development Goals and tourism.

SDG 1 – Eliminate poverty worldwide.

Tourism creates income and jobs at local and community levels. It plays an important role in national poverty reduction strategies and entrepreneurship development. Low skills requirement and local recruitment can empower relatively disadvantaged persons, particularly youth and women.

SDG 2 – Eliminate hunger, achieve food security and nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

Tourism can spur sustainable agriculture via production and supply to hotels, and sales of local produce to tourists. Agro-tourism can generate additional income while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.

SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all.

Tax revenue generated from tourism can be reinvested in healthcare and services, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality and preventing disease. Visitor fees collected in protected areas can contribute to health services.

SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning.

Tourism can promote inclusiveness. A skilful workforce is crucial for tourism growth. Improved education provides opportunities for direct and indirect jobs for youth and women, and benefits persons with special needs.

SDG 5 – Promote gender equality and female empowerment.

Tourism can empower women, particularly through the provision of direct jobs and income-generation in tourism and hospitality related enterprises. Tourism can be a tool for women to fully engage and lead in every aspect of social development.

SDG 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation.

Tourism investment in utilities can play a critical role in achieving water access and security, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. The efficient use of water in tourism, pollution control and technology efficiency conserves scarce resources.

SDG 7 – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable energy.

As an energy-intensive sector, tourism can accelerate the shift towards increased renewable energy shares in the global energy mix. By promoting investments in clean energy sources, tourism can help to reduce greenhouse gases, mitigate climate change and contribute to energy efficiency.

SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and employment.

Tourism is an important export earner globally, currently providing one in ten jobs worldwide. Quality work opportunities in tourism, particularly for youth and women, and diversification policies through tourism value chains, can enhance tourism's positive socio-economic impacts.

SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Tourism development relies on good public and private infrastructure. The sector can influence public policy for infrastructure development that is sustainable, innovative and resource-efficient, thus attracting tourists and other sources of foreign investment.

SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries.

By engaging local populations and a range of stakeholders in its development, tourism can be a powerful tool for reducing inequalities. Tourism is an effective means for economic integration and diversification, giving people the opportunity to prosper in their place of origin and contributing to urban renewal and rural development.

SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Tourism can advance urban infrastructure and accessibility, promote regeneration and preserve cultural and natural heritage, assets on which it depends. Investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport, reduced air pollution) will result in smarter and greener cities for residents and tourists.

SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The tourism sector needs to adopt sustainable consumption and production modes. Tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for tourism including for energy, water, waste, biodiversity and job creation, will result in enhanced economic, social and environmental outcomes.

SDG 13 – Take urgent action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change. By reducing their carbon footprint, tourism stakeholders can benefit from low carbon growth, and lead the global response to climate change.

SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Coastal and marine tourism rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems, promote the blue economy, and contribute to the sustainable use of marine resources.

SDG 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and address biodiversity loss.

Rich biodiversity and natural heritage of destinations are strong motivations for tourist visitation. Tourism can play a major role in fragile zones, if sustainably managed, not only in conserving and preserving biodiversity, but also in generating revenue as an alternative livelihood to local communities.

SDG 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, with justice for all.

Involving billions of encounters between people of diverse cultural backgrounds, tourism can foster multi-cultural and inter-faith tolerance and understanding, laying the foundation for more inclusive institutions and peaceful societies. Tourism can engage and benefit local communities and foster peace following crises.

SDG 17 – Enable robust global partnership for sustainable development.

Due to its cross-sectoral nature, tourism has the ability to strengthen private/public partnerships and engage multiple stakeholders – international, national, regional and local – to work together to achieve the SDGs and other common goals. Sound public policy and innovative financing are important for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Adapted from UNWTO/UNDP (2017), Table 1.

An alternative perspective rejects the conceptual validity and long-term performance implications of the traditional profit-maximizing, shareholder-centric view of business (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Mackay and Sisodia, 2014; Markman *et al*., 2016). Although continuing to seek financial returns, firms (so-called 'hybrid', 'conscious' or 'sustainable, ethical, entrepreneurial enterprises') should strive to create long-term value for all their stakeholders through the generation of various other kinds of societal wealth. In other words, this alternative approach to business, with roots in the social entrepreneurship literature, proposes that firms and organizations should seek social and environmental goals alongside financial goals; specifically, businesses must think beyond immediate, instrumental, self-interest objectives and consider a broader context of benefits to customers, employees, suppliers and communities as well as the social and natural environments of which they are a part. In short, the social and environmental impacts of firm operations should be built into business models, rather than being addressed as 'optional extras'.

In support of this approach, there is growing evidence that responsible businesses enjoy higher brand equity and profitability than those focused primarily on profit. In addition, other benefits include efficiencies and cost savings; improved market positioning; better stakeholder relationships; improved 'strategic' decision making; and 'wider' community benefits relating to destination competitiveness (Mackay and Sisodia, 2014). At the same time, improved environmental management can enhance the social reputation of the firm's products for which customers are willing to pay higher prices, with positive influence on financial performance (Dwyer, 2005).

There is a large research effort under way to explore the conceptual foundations of emerging alternative business models and to address their implications for industry practice. The social entrepreneurship approach recognizes the importance of each of the four types of capital that must be balanced under the strong sustainability perspective. By adopting a social entrepreneurship approach, tourism can act as a social force that promotes the SDGs through a wider vision of tourism's role in global communities.

The ecological perspective

Whatever the particular business model adopted, we would argue that it is essential also to adopt an ecological perspective to drive sustainable development. Indeed, there is evidence that such a mindset is gaining favour among planning and development. This reflects a broader perspective than that of conventional economics, which views the economy as a sub-system embedded in the larger systems of society and the biosphere with biophysical limits to growth. Biodiversity concerns must play an important role in destination planning and investment in respect of built capital formation and, from the ecological perspective which reflects the strong sustainability position, sustainability is achieved through those modes of production and consumption that fit within the constraints posed by ecological limits.

With respect to the economic lens of sustainability analysis, the emerging field of ecological economics has much to offer tourism research and practice with guidance as to how tourism can change current practice to achieve the various SDGs. The ecological perspective, characterized by a strong applied focus, encourages critical work that draws on and integrates elements of ecological science, economics and the analysis of values, behaviours, cultural practices, institutional structures and societal dynamics. From the premises of strong sustainability, it follows that economic policy has a responsibility to the greater ecological world and that sustainable development must, therefore, take a broader approach to valuing natural resources and ecological functions. Economic analysis should seek to stimulate provisioning processes that enhance the broad quality of life, standard of living, happiness, growth and development for the common good, while recognizing the conflicting and co-operative interaction within and between classes, genders, ethnic groups, species, institutions, nations and regions (Kubiszewski and Costanza, 2015).

The importance of good governance

Governance best suited to addressing sustainable futures is located at the local or regional scale where the significance of impacts on places with respect to their social, cultural and environmental specificities is unique. However, governance at the local level needs to be understood within the global framework of neo-liberalism that continues to promote a ‘growth first’ agenda (Peck and Tickell, 2002). In the specific context of tourism, the concept of sustainability is now deeply embedded in tourism policy documents and governance models across all scales from the global to the local (McCool and Bosak, 2016; Dwyer, 2018); the challenge lies in how to operationalize these ideas – and at what scale.

Challenges regarding governance for sustainability arise because political and economic systems are not readily conducive to the necessary collaborative decision making across the three pillars of sustainability (Westley *et al*., 2011). As Meadowcroft (2007, p. 313) reminds us, ‘[t] he sort of radical decoupling of economic activity from environmental burdens that sustainable development implies will require iterative processes of reform stretching over many decades’. More pessimistically, perhaps, the frustrations that emerge from three decades of research and discussion on sustainable tourism development have caused some scholars (for example, Sharpley, 2009) to conclude that the idea and applicability of sustainable tourism is at a dead end.

Recent tourism research has engaged with complex adaptive systems approaches (Baggio *et al*., 2010; Scuttari *et al*., 2016) and, in so doing, concepts such as ‘resilience’ have gained popularity, directing attention to shorter, more definable and achievable goals (Calgaro *et al*., 2014). Some researchers argue that attention to the concept of ‘resilience’ and its concern with responses to shocks, stressors and adaption, offers an alternative focus for destination-level governance compared to the fuzzier concept of ‘sustainability’ (Lew, 2014). However, Saarinen and Gill (2019) support the idea that, ‘resilience’ should be perceived as an integral part of the sustainability paradigm and a key element of pathway creation in the process of moving towards sustainable futures - a position supported by a high-level United Nations Report (UN, 2012).

The wider societal spread of disenchantment with the term ’sustainability’ may suggest a lack of awareness that sustainability is a long-term process, not an end state (Smith and Stirling, 2010). This is evident in the lack of progress in implementing the variously interpreted, ‘grand’ concept of sustainability, amid increasing calls for the adoption of more transitional approaches (Van Assche *et al*., 2014). The field of transition management has emerged over the past two decades in response to the challenges of developing large-scale societal transformation for sustainable futures. Grounded in the concept of complex adaptive systems, this field embraces a broad multi-disciplinary arena that addresses socio-technical, socio-institutional and socio-ecological domains (Loorbach *et al*., 2017). The core ideas of transition management approaches include: multi-actor dynamics; reframing the problem; the importance of experimentation; and the importance of continuous learning and evaluating (Loorbach *et al*., 2017). The aim is to create disruptive systemic changes within regimes, countering lock-in and creating new pathways towards sustainability.

Issues of tourism sustainability fall primarily within the socio-institutional approach to transition management, typically with a focus on the role of agency and governance, addressing such issues as power, politics and agency to support advocacy of strong sustainability. While much policy is place-based and enacted at a community and regional scale, understanding the governance of destination resilience through a socio-ecological systems (SES) lens requires consideration of multiple scales of complexity with interaction between system components that are subject to regulation and policies occurring through networks that transcend regional, national and international scales (Calgaro *et al*., 2014).

While the term ‘transition’ occurs frequently in the sustainable tourism literature, there has been relatively little attention to the extensive body of theory and practice of ‘transition management’ that has developed across many disciplines. The earliest work by tourism researchers is that by Gössling *et al*. (2012) who examine transition management as a tool for sustainable tourism involving stakeholder involvement and policy implementation processes. They conclude that transition management ‘provides a valuable theoretical framework, while the dialetics of stakeholder involvement and policy implementation are an essential precondition for successful governance’ (Gössling *et al*., 2012, p. 899). Utilizing Gössling *et al*. (2012)s framework, Scuttari *et al*. (2016) apply a complexity-based approach to examine sustainable mobility in the tourism context through an examination of stakeholder involvement and policy implementation processes. They highlight the public sector’s special role, the time demands of transition management and the value of both formal and informal partnerships. In a recent study of sustainability governance in the mountain resort of Whistler, Gill and Williams (2018) revealed that, although not overtly identified as such, transition management concepts and practices were embedded into the policy and practice of developing a new pathway to sustainability. In Whistler’s case, the immediate success of the sustainability planning process was subsequently impeded by changes in local politics. However, it is important to remember that the path to sustainability is not a linear one but subject to loops, stalls and readjustments of direction, with no steady state envisaged.

As researchers have highlighted, transitioning towards sustainability is volatile as it is grounded in power and politics (Dredge, 2019; Hall, 2019). This, perhaps, represents one of the biggest challenges to the achievement of sustainability, requiring closer examination of the political dimensions of sustainability transitions (Meadowcroft (2011). Since politicians’ jobs depend upon meeting the immediate needs of voters, dominant forms of government, favouring short-term gains over long-term responsibility may not be especially conducive to sustainability planning (Bosselmann *et al*., 2008). Nevertheless, slow progress towards sustainability governance is advancing on many fronts, with the transition management approach offering a useful model for tourism researchers and planners to embrace more fully a strong sustainability approach to tourism development.

Measuring Sustainability: The MST Index

The UN World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) is exhorting the industry to adopt more sustainable practices. As part of this process, one critical challenge is to create destination-based reporting standards that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of local tourism impacts to assess whether sustainable development principles are being effectively applied in practice. Developments in tourism statistics, tourism satellite accounts, environmental-economic accounting and sustainability indicators have each served to advance the understanding of the measurement challenges and opportunities. With the support of the United Nations Statistics Division, UNWTO (2017, 2018a, b) has launched the initiative *Towards a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism* (MST). The aim is to extend the current statistical frameworks used in tourism beyond their economic focus, to incorporate environmental and social dimensions at relevant spatial levels: global, national and sub-national. The MST acknowledges the dependency of tourism activity on 'social' infrastructure, including a suitably qualified workforce, transport infrastructure and public facilities. The anticipated outcome is an international statistical framework for measuring tourism's role in sustainable development.

The MST project builds upon earlier work to achieve three primary objectives:

- Integrating the established measurement frameworks of the Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA: Recommended Methodological Framework) and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA Central Framework) to provide a platform for the measurement of sustainable tourism. The MST will provide a strong statistical base to support monitoring tourism progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Development Agenda.
- Developing indicators for global monitoring of sustainable tourism and promoting tourism within the SDG indicator framework. This will facilitate comparison of the performance of the tourism sector and the impacts of different policies on a consistent basis with other sectors in different destinations and countries.
- Advancing the development of sub-national tourism statistics, recognizing the importance of location-specific information in decision making on tourism. The MST will foster participation and growing commitment from industry and government stakeholders at all levels resulting in more co-ordinated and equitable commitments to achieve sustainable development goals.

The proposed MST will provide a basis for improving co-ordination in data collection and organization (including identification of data sources and data gaps), as well as for improving institutional arrangements for the governance and management of statistics on sustainable tourism. It will also provide a cross-functional platform for discussing the interactions and dependencies between economic and social development, environmental protection and mitigation of potential risks for the sustainable growth of tourism.

Development of the MST is in its early stages. Four extensions or adaptations of the index relevant to tourism are envisaged:

- extensions within the TSA framework for describing tourism industries;
- connections between SEEA based accounts for individual environmental flows (for example, water, energy, waste) and tourism activity;
- accounting for produced and environmental assets relevant to tourism; and
- spatial accounting for tourism activity applying the logic of SEEA-based land and ecosystem accounting.

While the current choice of indicators, based on TSA and SEEA measures, represents a good approximation of the important sustainability-related concepts, the selection will be improved in the future as better statistics become available. An ideal set of well-being indicators should come from an internationally harmonized data collection based on common definitions and survey practices, and collected as part of the official statistical system of countries. This will improve measures of society's well-being, prosperity and progress as well as environmental sustainability, appropriate to informing destination performance in achieving the SDGs.

In particular, development of the MST can be further informed by recent work on the development of social indicators as part of the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI). Given the limitations of GDP as a measure of economic well-being summarized earlier in this chapter, more comprehensive indicators are required to consolidate economic, environmental and social elements into a common framework to show net progress in development processes. The GPI consolidates critical economic, social and environmental factors into a single framework in order to give a more accurate measure picture of the progress (or lack of progress) towards enhancing the well-being of destination residents resulting from economic growth, including tourism-led growth (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009; Kubiszewski and Costanza, 2015). At both national and international levels, the development of statistics must respond to the needs of users. In the case of tourism, this will include both government and private sectors. Good governance requires that the various types of analysis and specific areas of focus within the broad coverage of sustainable tourism are undertaken with full participation of relevant stakeholders.

GPI accounts and applications are increasing worldwide (Bagstad and Shammin, 2012); If appropriately used and understood, the GPI can help chart and guide the course of development The component measures are monetized and, therefore, offer a substantial degree of objectivity. While not a tourism index *per se*, it has clear application to measuring the sustainable development of any destination tourism industry if used in association with TSA.

The Challenges Ahead

Achievement of a sustainable and desirable future for tourism development requires a shift away from 'business as usual' with its focus on maximizing production and consumption (GDP) towards improving genuine human well-being (GPI or something similar). This shift will require governance processes that give much more attention to environmental protection, full employment, social equity, better product quality and durability, ecological sustainability and greater efficiency in resource use. A strong sustainability perspective should be maintained in project and investment assessment, recognising pervasive uncertainties, responsible and cautious behaviour, and incorporating safe minimum standards (moving from egocentric to ecocentric behaviour). Alternative measures of progress, such as GPI, are continually evolving and being revised and refined (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009). A comprehensive suite of measures with particular relevance to tourism is under development within the MST framework.

The mission statements of firms and DMO should explicitly state socio-economic prosperity rather than tourist numbers or expenditure as key performance indicators. This will involve targeting 'ideal tourists' who are characterized by attributes such as, 'responsible', 'caring', 'involved', 'environmentally aware', 'culturally sensitive', 'seeking meaningful social encounters' and so on, in addition to being high spenders (Dwyer, 2016). The role of social norms, including fairness, inequity aversion and reciprocal altruism, in determining purchasing behaviour is now a growing research area in behavioural economics which links into behavioural science and cognitive and social psychology. This research has substantial implications for studies of tourist behaviour and sustainability practices (Dwyer, 2018).

For the new business models to be successful in tourism policy and planning, a deeper scientific understanding of the complex interactions between the four types of capital – built. natural, social and human – is needed. It is likely that a 'dashboard' approach with multiple indicators and comparing and interpreting them simultaneously will provide the best data to promote sustainable development. Only by better understanding the full range of impacts of our economy can we protect and maintain the planet's ecosystems. This does not of course preclude the use of standard economic performance measures, such as GDP, to determine (narrow) economic performance. However, the additional measures should serve to integrate current knowledge of how ecology, economics, psychology and sociology collectively contribute to establishing and measuring sustainable well-being. This will enhance their usefulness in charting and guiding the course of industry development including tourism.

There is a need to improve methods to value unpriced items that are not traded in any market, valuing costs and benefits of projects that occur well into the future and valuing the effects on species other than humans (Fennell and Ebert, 2004). As noted above, the challenges of steering the direction of sustainable governance lie in integrating conflicting values and dealing with risk, uncertainties and ambivalence. As a consequence, governance issues confront a wicked set of barriers to achieving sustainable tourism development.

Conclusions

The strong approach to measurement of sustainability requires analysis of the evolution over time of the different stocks of capital (economic, environmental, human and social) that sustain the various dimensions of well-being, particularly in respect of how decisions taken today affect these stocks. Over time, the types of variables that comprise progressive indexes, such as the MST and GPI, should be informed by each of the 17 SDGs. Developing integrated measures of progress attached to these goals offers the global community generally, and tourism stakeholders in particular, the opportunity to better understand the nature of sustainable well-being, how to measure it and how to achieve it.

In the context of tourism development, any new metrics must have the broad support of stakeholders. Good governance requires that any ‘top-down’ process of developing measures be complemented with a ‘bottom-up’ engagement of civil society that includes city and regional governments, non-governmental organizations, business and industry associations, environmental groups and other parties, including destination residents.

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