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“I have difficulty in accepting that western biocentric values should take precedence over local values”

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Club News

We warmly thank [Jorth Consult Limited](http://www.jorthconsult.co.uk) (UK) and [Pacuare Lodge](http://www.junglelodgcostarica.com) (Costa Rica) for renewing their Sponsorship, and warmly welcome Amazonat and Elephant Valley as ECOCLUB Ecolodge Members in Brazil and India respectively.



Amazonat Jungle Lodge, 100 miles east of Manaus, in Brazil, is hidden within 3,500 acres of pristine dry forest containing an unknown number of undiscovered tree and plant species, part of the vast Amazonian rainforest, the lungs of the planet.

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► <http://ecoclub.com/elephantvalley>



ECOCLUB.com Earthday Photo Competition



To celebrate the launch of our new Gallery and Earth Day 2006 we are holding the 1st ECOCLUB.com Earth Day Photo Competition.

The prize is a 5lt tin of highest quality Organic Olive Oil, produced by a cooperative in Greece, and selected by the ECOCLUB.com Shop <http://ecoclub.com/shop>

Thirteen finalist photos are posted in the ECOCLUB online Gallery, in the special Competition Section, and Members can vote for them online until 19 March. The winner will be announced on Earthday, March 20, 2006 at a Live Event at the ECOCLUB.com [Live Chat Centre](http://www.ecoclub.com/livechat), at 15:00 GMT

► <http://www.ecoclub.com/gallery>

ECOCLUB.com Ecolodge Awards 2005 – Second Winning Project Completed

Jem Winston of [3 Rivers Ecolodge](http://www.ecoclub.com/3rivers) in Dominica, reports that the second prize winning project has been successfully completed.



“On February 11th, as planned we ran the ram pump installation workshop at the Dominica’s against drugs building in Castle Bruce. The workshop was a tremendous success. It was attended by the office helper for *Dominicans Against Drugs* (DADS), the maintenance man for the property and a handful of local members and helpers, as well as a student from Vermont University who is here on a studies abroad programme. The students were first taught how the pump works in theory in the classroom.

Then the group went in the river and learnt how to measure the head and flow rate of the river, which is essential for determining whether the pump can work, and how far / high it can pump the water. In general, the class were told that such a pump can, in general, pump water about 5 times higher than the head of the feeder to the pump. After this, a suitable position was found in the river for setting the catchment area, and then a feeder pipe was run down the river to the place where the pump was to be installed. After running a couple of tests to ensure everything was functioning correctly, the pump itself was installed, sending water up the hill to the position of the water storage tank.

The idea is that the pump will be used to fill the tank, which can then serve as a supply for both the green house and the rabbit house, as well as serving as a back up supply for the main building. The students finished the day having gained not only a good understanding of the ram pump, but also having learnt how to measure the river for both ram pumps, and the same routine is used for measuring rivers with a view to hydro installations. The man responsible for maintaining all the equipment for DADS was there, and was taught in extra detail how to monitor and check the pump, so that if a fault does occur, he is able to fix it quickly.

As well as being very educational, a good time was had by all, and by the end of the day, the water was flowing. The staff at 3 Rivers, and the members of DADS wish to say a huge thank you to the ECOCLUB and all of its Members.

► <http://ecoclub.com/3rivers>

THE ECOCLUB INTERVIEW

Prof. Trevor Sofield:

“I have difficulty in accepting that western biocentric values should take precedence over local values”

Dr Trevor Sofield is Professor of Tourism, School of Leisure and Tourism Management, University of Queensland. Dr Sofield has been appointed to numerous professional positions over the years. He was Coordinator of the Australian National Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism (STCRC) for Western Australia (1997-2000) and Tasmania (2001-2004), which links 16 universities around Australia in partnership in one of the largest tourism research programs globally. He is one of eight Directors of the Australian Tourism Research Institute based in Canberra; a director of the International Council for Tourism Education and Research based in France; a founding member, Executive Board Member and Australian National Representative of the Asia Pacific Tourism Association based in Korea; a member of the International Institute for Sports Tourism based in Ottawa, Canada; and an International Expert for UNESCO, Bangkok, on World Heritage Sites (tourism management). He was head of a task force for the World Tourism Organisation on STEP (Sustainable Tourism as a tool for Eliminating Poverty), Madrid, Spain; is State Representative to the Australian Council of Universities for Tourism and Hospitality Education; and an expert for the Australian Minister for the Environment's National Task Force on Heritage Tourism. He is currently Team Leader for the Mekong Tourism Development Program, Cambodia and Vietnam, and Technical Director, Sustainable Tourism, for the STCRC/GRM International consulting consortium. He is a former Editor-In-Chief of *"Pacific Tourism Review"*, published in New York; and is currently a Resource Editor for the world's leading tourism academic journals, *"Annals of Tourism Research"*, *"Journal of Sustainable Tourism"*, *"Journal of Ecotourism"*, *"Tourism Recreation Research"*, *"Tourism Review International"*, *"Anatolia"* and *"Journal of Sports Tourism"*.



Dr Sofield gained his BA (Hons) in social anthropology from the University of Western Australia, studied international economics through the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and completed his PhD in Environmental Science at James Cook University, Qld.

Prior to joining the ranks of academia in 1990, Dr Sofield was a senior diplomat in the Australian Foreign Service (with postings in Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Singapore, New Zealand, Solomon Islands and Fiji, amongst others, the final six years at ambassadorial rank). On leaving the Foreign Service he went into partnership to develop an island resort in Solomon Islands, a venture he still part-owns today. He has a wide first-hand experience of tourism issues in the Asia/Pacific having undertaken more than 70 consultancies and research projects in Australia, China, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and 12 Pacific Island countries. Recent projects in China include as team leader for an Ecotourism Strategy for Nature Reserves in Yunnan; as International Expert on formulating the Tourism Master Plan for Hubei Province (site of the Three Gorges Dam across the Yangtze River); as International Expert to assist in assessment of tourism potential in Southeast Tibet; and as ecotourism and community based tourism expert for a new tourism strategy for Xinjiang Province, focusing on the Minorities Tuwa and Kazak peoples along the borders with Kazakhstan and Russia.

Dr Sofield's research interests are eclectic and cover sustainable tourism development, community based tourism and cultural minorities, natural and cultural heritage tourism, (especially ecotourism and protected area management), environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts, government tourism policy, and tourism planning. He has more than 200 publications on these topics. His most recent publications include seven training handbooks on Community Based Tourism (2004) for the UN Commission on Trade and Development; and *'Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development'*, (2003, 401pp), the seventh volume published in the prestigious Tourism Social Science Series by Pergamon, London.

Dr Sofield was born in Perth, Western Australia but grew up in Tasmania. He is married with three children. His personal interests include all sport (he was a representative hockey player for 12 years) reading, writing poetry, gardening, photography and wildlife trekking. In an earlier life he was a keen film-maker with more than 30 state, national and international amateur awards for his productions.

(The Interview follows:)

✿ ***You have worked in many countries of Asia and Pacific, with different or even opposing systems, economies, national interest, ideologies. Would you feel that the majority of tourism development projects are: (1) politically neutral, (2) promote government interests or (3) promote "western" values (free trade, democracy, capitalism). And in fact, how dissimilar are the countries you have been working at? Does one size fits all, when it comes to implementing "sound principles" and time-tested guidelines?***

Pr. Trevor Sofield: In attempting an answer to this question it may be useful to note that countries in which I have worked include African, Asian, European and South Pacific states, whose politico-economic systems include centrally controlled economies, economies in transition, free market economies, micro-island states (eg Tuvalu, population 10,000 (yes, ten

thousand only), Cook Islands, 26,000), mono-economic states (e. g. Nauru, popn 8,000, sole industry: phosphates, mined out between 1901 and 2002), and the world's most populated state (with a mixed economy), China.

The answer(s) to this question are country-specific. Depending upon the dominant political ideology prevailing at the time that tourism development is undertaken, the majority of such development projects may be politically neutral, or they may promote government interests, or they may promote "western" values. In virtually all cases, however, economic benefits are the dominant motivation: "triple bottom line" accounting and accountability still has a long way to go. Conservation of the environment, biodiversity, and cultural heritage, sustainability, community development, decentralization, poverty alleviation, and other conceptual policies lag behind the economic determinant even in those cases where such 'good' policies may be advocated as the reason for tourism development and/or intervention. In saying this, however, I am not simplistically decrying the economic, materialistic motivation: it is necessary to understand the fundamental role of economics: if there is no economic activity that provides minimum financial benefits then there can be no sustainable tourism. There must be a mix of all factors, and trying to get the balance right so that one particular factor does not dominate to the exclusion of other needs is the vital requirement.

In one sense, I would suggest that ALL tourism development projects promote government interests because they must go through a governmental process of approval in the final analysis and any project that failed to meet required conditions or standards would not eventuate. Many tourism development projects will be embarked upon with no particular political objectives or political agenda in mind; but the very fact of having to obtain approval (eg through regulatory mechanisms, issue of licenses, etc) necessarily marries them to the government policies of the day. Even where NGOs are able to operate in an environment of little direct control by government agencies, generally there will be a perception by many third world (and second world) governments that only those NGOs which support their policies will be allowed to undertake activities in their countries. Open democracies are a different case.

In terms of whether tourism development promotes western values, one area where **I have difficulty is in accepting that western biocentric values should take precedence over local values.** I have experienced situations in a number of countries where western conservationist values are put ahead of people's survival, and when working with subsistence livelihoods adoption of an exclusive conservationist approach, a 'lock-them-out mentality' from resources that are essential to daily survival, then I deplore the lack of balance. Different world views hold differing values, and I have difficulty sometimes with 'western' aid donors, development agencies and/or NGO's pushing western values as the answer to a particular tourism development situation because in my experience, if there is no cultural 'fit' then no matter how sound an approach may seem from a western interventionist perspective, it may be so disruptive as to be counterproductive. I say to all of my students: **'Before you undertake tourism policy formulation and planning in a country different from your own, ensure that you understand the culture and the politics before writing a single word.'** In my view one reason why so many development policies and plans sit on shelves gathering dust is that they are impossible of implementation because the authors have failed to take into account the social, cultural and political parameters within which they have dropped their reports. Those factors determine the practicality of tourism planning and while ideals and best practice standards are essential to set the scene, if anything is to be accomplished often a certain pragmatism that requires some adjustment of the ideal must be incorporated; otherwise effort is simply wasted. Far better to achieve a beginning that points in the right direction than to have a planning and development exercise rejected because of socio-cultural or political boundaries that have not been taken into account.

☼ *And you have worked with indigenous communities, from the Australian Aborigines to countless tribal and ethnic groups in Asia, in tourism and beyond. From your experience, how accurate is the notion that indigenous communities are community-minded?*

TS: Often in my view 'community' as holistic is a myth. Many indigenous communities are 'community-minded' – but the degree to which they may subordinate individual or family 'rights' (which may itself be an imported concept) to broader community interests will vary from society to society and country to country. Different forms of community leadership will influence to a significant extent the capacity and/or willingness of a community to operate as one. For example, in Melanesian societies where there are few inherited leadership positions but rather a loose conglomerate of 'bigmen' who rise and fall according to their abilities ('achieved' leadership, as distinct from 'ascribed leadership' where lineage ('royal blood) determines who shall be village chief, as in Polynesian societies) a community will often be riven by deep seated rivalries and competition; and trying to implement 'community-based tourism' as if one were working with a single entity is often a fallacy. Additionally, in most communities there will be members with greater entrepreneurial sense or skills than others, and there will be those who are more community-minded than their neighbours – in other words in virtually all communities there will be a spectrum, a wide range of skills, abilities and propensities to act in different ways. This is the reality that needs to be understood: an idealistic view of community-as-one may be simplistic and naive.

☼ *In what is the equivalent of inner city work in developed countries, some tourism projects in developing countries, target urban underprivileged groups, such as slum dwellers, with the noble aim of providing "equal opportunities to all". So what happens when improved education and raised expectations, fail to translate into a higher standard of living - due to unforeseen socio-political barriers in these countries - does turmoil ensue? And is this a necessary evil, or does it defeat the purpose of the exercise?*

TS: Your questions again defy a simple answer. On the one hand there is the story of the young man who was walking along the beach and he saw in the distance an old man constantly bending down, picking something up from the sand and throwing it into the water. As he drew closer he saw that the beach was littered with a million starfish that had been stranded by the falling tide.

Laughingly he said to the old man: "There are millions: you can't make a difference!" Without pausing, the old man bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it back into the sea, saying: "Made a difference for that one." On the other hand there is my personal experience of the 1971 insurgency in Sri Lanka when 30,000 graduates took up arms against the Bandaranaike Government and brought the whole country to a standstill for 12 months, with estimates of deaths ranging from 2,000 to 20,000. A major motivation for many rebels was that even with a degree there was no gainful employment. With a degree in economics after eight years wait you might be offered a job as assistant stationmaster on a small railway station in the tea country; or with a degree in education and a graduate diploma in teaching perhaps after ten years waiting you might get a job as junior teacher in a primary school in some tiny village where there was no electricity or water, and no paper or pencils for your students.

The difference is that starfish cannot think and act together; but in the case of the JVP in Sri Lanka, they were able to mobilise, obtain weapons and attempt an armed insurrection.

Now that is an extreme; but where a society lacks the capacity to absorb its educated people and raises expectations that cannot be met, then there can indeed be the risk of turmoil. In the case of Sri Lanka, the 'damage' was enormous: perhaps 10,000 young lives lost, large numbers of defence force personnel killed; communities destroyed; and the estate economies for tea, rubber and copra devastated for a year so that several million, including many village communities, were inflicted with economic hardship.

In Tanzania, in the 1960s and 1970s, President Julius Nyerere went against accepted orthodoxy about the advantages of universal education and set in place policies which would only educate about 60% of the population to primary school level, about 25% of that 60% to high school level; and about 10% of those for tertiary education. His rationale was simple: as an impoverished developing state with few resources, education for all would raise expectations that simply could not be met and result in social upheaval and destructive destabilization. His concern was that thousands of people would emigrate from their rural villages to the towns and cities which had no capacity to employ them gainfully, whereas by remaining in their village communities they could continue to be useful, making a contribution that was essential to family survival and also maintenance of cultural tradition. The alternative in his view was not rural-urban 'drift' but a rural-urban 'torrent', and destabilization of the whole country at far greater cost could occur. This was a very hard call: it denied – from our western perspective – the right of every child to be educated, and therefore able to make a choice; yet I would argue that Nyerere was also right in that for many there was no real choice because the society at that time could not provide alternatives.

Here in Cambodia I confront a similar dilemma. There is a NGO working with the 30,000 people who are scavengers on Phnom Penh's rubbish dump. The conditions are appalling: heavy air pollution from constantly burning wastes (including tyres), no hygiene, health risks from rotting rubbish, hospital wastes, etc, no running water, and slum dwellings, and very high levels of child labour (as young as five or six). Our western sensibilities are highly offended by such appalling conditions and my initial response was to give strong support to the NGO which has established a school for rubbish dump children and in the past five years has put more than 5000 children through its classrooms. It has developed a hospitality school and it produces some of the best trained restaurant workers and semi-skilled hotel workers in Phnom Penh where the industry quickly employs numbers of them.

On deeper thought however, I now have several questions swirling around in what passes for my brain that cause me to pause:

First, to get the parents to release the children from scavenging duties, the school provides the family with enough rice for a month. This is 'compensation' – it is not earned in any way. There is no requirement for the parents to do anything other than send little Sokha off to school five days a week. It takes place in a country where at all levels of society, paying bribes to get things done is accepted. One might argue that the morality of the greater good justifies the means, but the question can be asked: In effect is not the NGO playing the same game and assisting the perpetuation of the vicious cycle of corruption? Are not these children learning – at the age of five or six - that if you pay something you get what you want (in this case the NGO 'paying' their parents?) If they went to a public primary school they would learn at the age of five or six that they would need to give the teacher 200 riels once or twice a week if they were to get pen and pencil because the government cannot provide enough supplies for all pupils in its school. And if their parents are too poor to provide the 200 riels, they still learn the same lesson: they miss out because they cannot pay. This is not the 'user pays principle' in action; rewards are not based on merit; equity does not exist. It is setting in place a core value that is learned at a tender age – you can get what you want by paying for it. And this permeates all levels of society.

Another aspect to this point is that the provision of rice to the parents could be interpreted as unsustainable. The NGO school is not self-supporting, it has no income-generating activities. It relies entirely upon donations for its survival and while many organizations have demonstrated very great endurance over many years through continuous external generosity, here there is a need for a constant cash stream and a constant flow of volunteers to provide the necessary education and training and administration. This results in tensions and lack of quality control over its operations.

I then have another question about this initiative. In a society which cannot provide enough jobs for everybody with education and training, and where in most cases a living wage is not paid, does this intervention really provide choice for the individuals? For example, the average wage for clerks in the government service is less than US\$40 per month, and many restaurant and hotel staff earn less than US\$30 per month. A living wage is assessed by the UN as being more than US\$100 per month.

And here is the rub.

As an uneducated rubbish dump scavenger a ten year old child averages US\$4 per day, or US\$120 per month. With a family of five so engaged, a monthly income of US\$500 is standard for many. The rubbish dump ‘Thirty Thousand’ are not impoverished in a monetary sense. Even the dwelling standards of some are better than many others living off the rubbish dump and they have erected substantial houses in the wasteland. Certainly the living environment is adverse and health standards are very poor: but the level of incomes provides a capacity for these people to obtain medical treatment that hundreds of thousands of other Cambodians cannot afford, so even in this aspect there is a compensatory factor. What choice, therefore, does education offer? For some, certainly the opportunity to live away from the rubbish dump – but in relative poverty!

There is yet another question that may be asked. In a city and a society which cannot afford western standards of garbage disposal, the Thirty Thousand make an extraordinary contribution to environmental management: there is a very high level of recycling of plastics, paper, and metals as a result of their efforts. In the medium term there is no alternative to this aspect of what they do. The NGO to which I have referred is NOT trying to close down the rubbish dump in its present form, and itself is a very strong supporter of re-cycling; but its intervention nevertheless has the paradoxical outcome of reducing the labour available for recycling

So where do I stand? On balance, I would favour the starfish approach: such assistance can make a difference for a few. But I would also try to adapt the current directions of the NGO to lessen concerns in other directions. I would also caution against applying our own western values about such a rubbish dump and its population because in Cambodia at the present time it could be argued cogently and logically that the Thirty Thousand are making a vital contribution to the capital city’s health and environment and that with incomes many times higher than other Cambodians they themselves make rational assessments of where the benefits lie. They are in effect empowered through their income levels if not through their levels of education. We should not rush into making a judgement about the Thirty Thousand along the ones of: “Sure, they are making a contribution – but at what cost?” based on our own standards. There are times when the emic (insider) approach is more apt than an etic approach (outsider assessment of what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in a given situation, based on foreign values and considerations).

✿ *Size matters: To some, large-scale tourism development projects are grandiose, unsustainable and impossible to coordinate, while others call small-scale projects timid, doomed and not coordinated. Are perhaps micro-projects inherently better for alternative forms of tourism and large projects more suitable for mass tourism?*

TS: As the old song goes: “It ain’t necessarily so!” Generally, the proposition is one I would agree with: micro-projects are usually better for alternative forms of tourism. But we do have examples of large projects which utilise mass tourism for the benefit of the environment, and the society and culture in which they operate. For example, Jiuzhaogou World Heritage listed National Park in Sichuan Province, China, last year received more than 1.3 million visitors. They contributed more than US\$24 million in entrance fees and Jiuzhaogou has in place an outstanding regime of environmental management that is better than most I have seen in so-called developed countries. For example, its toilets are waterless, chemical, and in a fleet of buses that are driven out of the park every evening to a waste treatment plant 20kms from the boundaries of the park to prevent pollution; and those buses are only driven in and out each morning and evening when there is no tourist traffic inside the park. The millions in revenue from mass tourism have been harnessed in best practice strategies that provide outstanding experiences. For the six indigenous Tibetan communities (about 1,100 people) who reside in the park poverty has been completely eliminated by a range of pro-active policies designed to help them receive direct benefits from tourism activities (homestays, guiding, handicrafts and artefact sales, cultural displays, food and beverage provision for all visitors, etc). No non-Tibetans are permitted to engage in these activities inside the park boundaries. From impoverished yak pastoralists twenty years ago, they are now empowered economically, socially, culturally and psychologically (their own assessment of their current situation, based on a detailed survey over a year by a New Zealand researcher).

I could provide other examples, but space and time compel me to limit my response to my opening generalities.

✿ *Perhaps a taboo topic: Stories of consultants not being paid by other contractual parties, with the excuse of not delivering - or not delivering on time - are not uncommon, although it is usually a hush-hush issue, as the reputations of ability (and indeed confidentiality) may be blemished. So would you feel there is a need for some more international 3rd party monitoring and transparency or is it impractical, for commercial reasons?*

TS: It is probably impractical to set up some sort of international third party monitoring system. Consultants have a ‘duty of care’ to perform professionally and if there are shortcomings in their work, then legally binding contractual obligations will normally provide processes for both parties to sort out the problem. However, there are instances where the legal apparatus is not sufficiently strong enough to provide protection and occasionally unfair outcomes result: work may have been completed on time: it may have been professional; it may have provided solutions for the client - but for whatever reason payment is avoided. This is a much broader issue than tourism development of course, and bedevils much investment and development activity whether it is in the mining sector, the manufacturing sector or the service sector in some countries. All one can do really is to carry out a risk assessment before commencing a particular exercise.

✿ *You have a uniquely multi-faceted, first-hand experience of small island states, acquired through diplomatic service, resort operation, academic research and consultancy. So, do small islands merit the world's attention (and funding)*

as special cases and convenient experimentation labs, or do they make a disproportionately large noise as most of them now are, or may soon be, independent states, with useful UN votes?

TS: As usual a question with many hooks. From my vantage point as a former Australian diplomatic head of mission to several South Pacific states, I would say yes, often small states are wooed by larger states and bestowed with largesse out of proportion to their actual populations and needs because there are political advantages for their benefactors (e. g. they do have a vote in the UN (that is a bit cynical but if we look at what Taiwan is currently doing around the South Pacific where it has used 'chequebook diplomacy' and provided millions of dollars to get states to withdraw recognition of China and recognize them instead, it is an argument with some validity).

However, often we cannot apply normal benefit cost analyses to their needs because if we did we would never do anything! Niue is a good case in point. Back in the 1970s, lacking modern communications with the outside world, a feasibility study looked at building a port (the island is an uplifted coral atoll with 20m-50m high cliffs all around, not a single beach or harbour) or an airport. The port would have cost millions, blasting a huge artificial harbour across the wave cut platform into the cliff, so the airport - much cheaper - was built. Previously, with only one ship every six weeks and a passenger capacity of less than 30, few islanders could migrate to New Zealand (about 300 per year). With the airport and weekly flights, within three years the population had halved, within five years it was down to one quarter, and now 20,000 Niueans live in NZ and only 1500 on the island. The air connection could not provide an alternative to the ships which still had to carry heavy cargoes (lighters were used to get them through a narrow cleft in the reef and then they were hauled up the cliff face by a crane), and Niueans should not have been denied access to modern transport and modern international connections, but the upshot of a policy based on a narrow benefit-cost analysis resulted in a disastrous outcome for the country, which can no longer support basic services like a small hospital, or even schools. Agriculture has ceased. It has regressed in every way, although tourism keeps it going - just. But all over the world small island countries face dilemmas and must move away from a narrow economic appraisal to try and consider social and cultural impacts before we undertake some forms of development. Western approaches to resource management are not always applicable on small islands where 'smallness' imposes its own dynamics and economies of scale simply cannot be accommodated if a service or some other venture is to be attempted. Something as simple as an access road may not be feasible when viewed in strict economic terms because of small populations to be serviced by it and lack of economic returns from whatever resources may be present. But without that road the population in question may be condemned to never participating in 'development' benefits (however defined, such as ability to get children to a school, or sick people to a clinic).

There are also constraints of 'indivisibilities' caused by smallness. One cannot fly half a plane even if it is only half full. Many of the air routes to island countries are classified as "thin" routes and lack the capacity to generate higher capacity loads. The tyranny of distance is a compounding factor for many such countries.

Could I be a little self-serving on this question, and direct readers to my book, "Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development" which examines the entire issue of island tourism with five detailed case studies from the South Pacific? (T. Sofield, Pergamon, London, 2003).

✿ *From your experience, what is the best way for ending up with self-supporting, sustainable small scale tourism operations: grants, loans, soft loans, subsidies or no loans?*

TS: The simple answer is: there is no 'one-size-fits-all'. In different circumstances, any one of these approaches - or indeed a combination of several approaches - may lead to a better outcome in terms of sustainability. A common problem with many small scale tourism ventures is an under-estimation of annual income generation, cash flows and the length of time it may take to become visible in the market place. This last is very serious for many such ventures: they often lack the education/skills in marketing that are necessary, fail to appreciate that marketing needs to take them out of the local and into the global (especially in this electronic age), and fail to appreciate the costs of marketing in the first few years (a ball park figure may be as high as one sixth or 16% of total operating expenditure).

Grants unless carefully managed and awareness building created by the grantee can lead to situations where the recipients do not appreciate them as much as for a loan where they have to accept a greater degree of responsibility in order to service that loan. But loans can also hold back a development, especially where small impoverished communities are involved. There are pluses and minuses both ways.

I have worked in and with all situations and am a firm believer in finding ways to ensure that there is a very concrete contribution by the recipients so that they can develop a real sense of ownership. For example, I am happy to participate in a grant to a community to develop a small resort - but I will try to structure the grant so that it provides bags of cement and materials (steel, bolts, nails, glass, etc) not available to the community: but a bag of cement is useless unless someone mixes it with sand, gravel and water and expends a lot of 'elbow grease' (energy) to lay it. I will provide a qualified foreman, plumber and electrician to supervise construction, but the community are going to have to provide the labour, without which nothing gets done. In this way a grant can 'save' an impoverished community from the burdens imposed by a loan, but still have ownership and therefore acceptance of responsibility to operate and maintain the venture, creating a greater probability of sustainability. A soft loan coupled with this approach is also a good way to increase the sustainability probability equation.

✿ *To the outsider, the development fraternity (if it can be described as such), seems complex and mysterious: stereotypically including the young romantic volunteers working with the downtrodden, and paid in kind (food & shelter), and the older, high-flying consultants doing one conference a week. So, what really determines and justifies vastly different remuneration levels: The laws of supply & demand? And if so is it perhaps an oligopolistic market, with few agencies calling the shots, and weaving a complex web of sub-contractors, or is it a perfectly competitive market that guarantees value for money? In other words, is it a meritocracy, an aristocracy, or a democracy? The development fraternity - idealistic volunteers at one end to high paid so-called experts at the other? A meritocracy, an aristocracy or a democracy?*

TS: By now you will be able to predict my response - there are some good and some bad in all categories. I have seen a lot of good result from idealistic volunteers and I have also seen a lot of damage even if their interventions were well-meaning. But the same can equally be said of consultants paid to undertake a job professionally.

I occasionally have a problem with some volunteers and/or NGOs because while they claim to be more in tune with grassroots needs, live and work at grass roots, and claim to be following agendas set by local communities, when one examines their participatory awareness or decision-making models, sometimes they are in fact bringing their own values to bear upon proceedings. This is to be expected: a volunteer and most NGOs have a very clear set of guiding principles to which they adhere. They are motivated by ideals not monetary gain. And in very many cases their interventions produce benefits.

But sometimes they can affect outcomes in subtle ways. Who draws up the structure for a participatory meeting, who puts certain items on the agenda, who claims expertise not available locally, or simply by virtue of being an outsider is automatically accorded a particular status by a community (eg educated, therefore custodian of superior information, thus has 'views' that may be accepted unquestioningly), etc and etc.? And so outcomes are sometimes guided quite strongly, even if unintentionally, by the volunteer or NGO even as they claim that they are simply facilitators and allowing the 'true' voice of the community to come through.

In some cases volunteers do not have the skill set that is required in a particular situation and so create problems rather than solving them.

At least one can expect that where highly paid consultants are concerned if there is a transparent selection process without political intervention then their technical expertise should not be in question. Which is no guarantee of success! There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of examples of plans drawn up by experts sitting on shelves gathering dust because of a failure to provide 'pragmatic' advice. I tell all of my students that they are forbidden(!) to undertake tourism planning on a country until they are reasonably familiar with both the political and socio-cultural frameworks of that country. Or else to make sure that their planning team has such experts to assist them. Why? Because it is no use whatsoever producing a technically perfect 'solution' if it is unacceptable politically: it is no solution at all. Nor is it any use producing a technically perfect solution if it cuts across the fundamental values of a society and a culture, because they will simply reject it. The real expertise lies in finding ways to COMBINE the fundamentals of good science/economics/environmental best practice, etc and present them in ways which 'fit' culturally, socially and can be presented in a politically appealing form. Sometimes expert advice is not rejected because it is not affordable or not technically excellent but because it is unpalatable socially, culturally and/or politically. My rule of thumb is to decline an invitation to work in an unfamiliar sociocultural and political milieu unless the time can be built in to the project to allow me to develop a modicum of understanding in these key areas, or, on odd occasions, to have such experts join the team.

In terms your high flying one-week experts I term them 'parachutists' because of the way they just drop in and then take off again. Sometimes where the issue is clearly defined and has clear boundaries, 'instant trouble shooting' can work in delineating a solution, but where is the implementation?

Where there is a meritocrat bounded by idealism and the capacity to move between technical expertise and alien sociocultural value systems with due political sensitivity then you will have a good consultant.

✿ *Universities: It is nowadays common wisdom, that universities must be connected to the "marketplace", and offer their graduates real and real-time experience of "how the world really works", in the context of their studies. But does this risk producing young graduates who are far more "practical" and less "idealistic", and thus tilt the balance of a society towards more conservatism?*

TS: Where oh where has the 'search for knowledge for its own sake' gone? Most universities in the twenty-first century have had to adapt to a more business oriented model in which courses are often designed for jobs first, jobs second and jobs third before they raise themselves to higher levels. However, any institution which is to be called a university and accepted as such must in my view lift itself above vocational education and training (which is fundamental and absolutely necessary - I am NOT criticising the role they have to play in assisting all industries). And a simple way of judging such an institution is to see whether they offer higher degrees by research as distinct from higher degrees by coursework.

I have been involved with four universities which included research higher degrees, but also built research AND industry experience into their undergraduate courses. One successful model involved third year final tourism degree students identifying a problem which an industry partner wanted solved, and then spending six months working with that partner researching the issue. This was highly beneficial in a number of ways, including but not limited to the following: i). it exposed students to the

'real working world', ii). it allowed them to apply their theoretical knowledge in a real-life situation, iii). it benefited their career prospects by letting industry see that university tourism graduates had something to offer (especially when they produced a workable solution, as many of them did); iv). it gained significant credibility for the university because the undergraduates went out into cities, towns and communities all around the state and 'advertised' the university by their presence.

However, at the end of the day, while I work in applied knowledge, I am a conservative at heart and believe that our society is losing something because universities can no longer undertake as much pure research solely for knowledge's sake but must often bend to commercial (and commercialised) pressures and demands.

✿ *In the last 30 years, would you say that international tourism development projects have acquired a considerably higher degree of environmental sustainability, accountability, efficiency and transparency, or is it just the wording that has become wordier?*

TS: By and large, the key objectives of sustainability, accountability, efficiency and transparency are being met and applied. All of the major aid agencies incorporate such principles and are usually rigorous in monitoring and applying them e.g. the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Community, and many bilateral aid donor countries. Having had first hand knowledge of working with such agencies and countries I can say that often the demands for accountability and transparency seem onerous when one is in the field trying to meet various deadlines: but the structures for ensuring that these principles are followed is there and for good reason that require no justification by me.

There are still examples of poor outcomes, of course, and some developing countries only pay lip service to these principles (as do some local councils in western countries!). Environmental principles suffer most, as the hoary old counter argument says: "We must develop first: only rich countries can afford the luxury of environmental safeguards". I am appalled sometimes at what I call 'investor supply-side driven development' where the best practice foundations are blatantly ignored as short term dollars are vigorously chased.

✿ *Finally, in ten words what makes a good consultant?*

Prof. Trevor Sofield: Sorry, I need 25 words! Has the ability to combine technical expertise with socio-cultural understanding and political sensitivity to produce practical outcomes which meet best practice and are implementable.

✿ *ECOCLUB: Thank you very much*

For more information, contact Professor Sofield at tsofield@postoffice.utas.edu.au

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