

## Summary

Pre assumptions of the author concerning sustainable development of rural areas, with tourism as a tool, led to the following line of thought:

- *Stakeholders* involved in the issues; *sustainability, rural development and tourism*, can be expected to have *demands*. According to marketing theories product market combinations (PMC's) could then be created that fulfil the requirements of optimal benefits for all stakeholders concerned, thus forming a *supply*. This supply creates, depending on the chosen *conditions* and *instruments*, *impacts*. Adjustments of conditions and instruments should maximise positive impacts and minimize negative impacts thereby creating PMC's that offer satisfying benefits for all the stakeholders.

Based on these assumptions a literature review was done on the keywords sustainability, rural development and tourism. The main concepts found in this literature review formed the theoretical background of this research, which led to determination of core elements. These together with findings out of the author's practical experiences, described as case studies, were used to evolve an integrated development strategy to use sustainable tourism as a tool for rural development (STAARD), of which the initial framework was developed by the author in 1998.

The most important conclusions were:

1. Sustainability is a paradigm of which the defining entirely depends on the point of view taken by the respective stakeholder. However defined there is always a strong emphasis on balance between socio-cultural wellbeing, ecological quality, economic welfare and the necessity of sustaining the environment for the benefit of all.
2. Great parts of the world are used for agriculture but world-wide changes in agricultural and environmental policies have resulted in decreasing economic importance and employment in agriculture, leading to unstable perspectives for **rural communities**. Therefore intervention seems necessary to stop depopulation and degradation. If the focus of the intervention is sustainable development, there is a need for; careful planning, involvement of stakeholders, using the appropriate instruments before and during implementation and awareness of possible impacts.
3. By combining elements out of the sustainability and tourism concepts, a synergetic effect could be created in the form of a potential product market combination "sustainable tourism". This effect can be found in the optimal combination of key factors out of the following dimensions; **economical** (*yielding benefits*), **social** (involving *residents*) **environmental** (the long-term social and environmental health of areas) and **cultural** (without adversely affecting the cultural environment).
4. However difficult it might be, all stakeholders that might have even the slightest costs or benefits from the intended development should be identified and consulted throughout the development process.

5. From whatever angle you shed light on the phenomena impacts, there never seems to be only positive impacts. Although what one could strive for is optimise positive impacts and minimize negative impacts. Thus these required impacts will form the necessary conditions under which tourism might be a sustainable tool to develop a rural area.
6. By choosing instruments and methodologies, which are focused on development, it implies change which in its turn leads unavoidably to empowering of people.
7. Taking the conclusions and core elements out the literature review and the case studies into consideration the author developed the following process (The STAARD process) to prepare and implement any comprehensive development strategy making optimal use of available **instruments**. A process that gives a eminent position to stakeholders and their participation in development processes as well as to the crucial role of facilitators.
  - a. Analyse together with obvious stakeholders all other stakeholders
  - b. Discuss the synergetic effect of group effort versus the power of an individual
  - c. Helping them to form a coherent group of stakeholders → **comm. Dev**
  - d. Discuss the economical, environmental and socio-cultural **conditions** and the possible impacts of the stakeholders actions
  - e. **Facilitate** them by developing their **policy**
  - f. Facilitate them in developing and implementing a decision making process
  - g. Let them chose the goals and **impacts** they would like to reach
  - h. Facilitate them in choosing the most applicable **instruments**
  - i. Providing the support and help of specialist and by doing such **integrate** them in a **network**
  - j. Start up a pilot which can also be used as a demo project
  - k. Facilitate them in the **marketing** of their **product market combination**
  - l. Aid them in **monitoring** and **evaluation**

Based on the findings in the theoretical background and the cases STAARD was visualised in a model. But although basically showing all the relevant elements, it lacks visualisation of intertwining and correlating effects as well as a description of the methodology to be used. Therefore the author decided that only a combination of the STAARD process and the STAARD model could lead to an integrated development strategy to implement sustainable tourism as a tool for rural development.

The final conclusion of the research is;

Implementing STAARD seen as the process + the model means accepting its main condition, the core position of the stakeholders, and thus accepting their chosen policy. This could imply that (sustainable) tourism can only be implemented as a tool for rural development if that is their chosen policy.