Environmental Ethics and Biodiversity Policy in Tourism: The Caretta-Caretta Case in Greece

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The radical tourism development and its adverse environmental impacts have revived the discussion about Environmental Ethics and the emerging Biodiversity Policy. The aim of this research paper is to explore the relationship between environmental ethics, the current Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism Development policy-making, and the tourism industry. More specifically, the conceptual analysis adopts an environmental ethics' and environmental politics perspective. Based on the example of caretta caretta case in Greece, the EU Habitats Directive and the tourism development at the area, it is concluded that public consensus and discourse prove to be essential for a shift to a more attentive and less anthropocentic ethical approach by policy-makers and tourism actors' in a multilevel governance society.

INTRODUCTION

The physical environment plays a significant role in shaping and being shaped by tourism. In the past few years, regions of the Southern European coast, where tourism is a product-led industry, have experienced drastic changes due to tourism development and its marketisation. Mass tourism projects often entail losing control of natural resources to private, state, and/or supra-state interests, and, also, cause the gradual or immediate disorganization of ecosystems, incuding the disruption of biological processes and a radical decline of biodiversity. (Kousis, 2000).

Consequently, the consideration of tourism as a "clean industry" has recently been outdated. There are tourism-related sources and activities, which create ecosystem offenses, such as marine and coastal pollution,

noise pollution, damage to flora and fauna, and sometimes a general destruction of local ecosystems. The offenses in turn lead to a wide range of impacts which include negative aesthetic, recreational, economic and ecosystem impacts. The above constitute parts of the process of ecological marginalization (Kousis, 2001). Most parties are aware of the possible negative impacts and see the need for discussion and action (Plan Blue, Mediterranean Action Plan, UNEP, MCSD, 1998), where sustainable tourism and biodiversity should not be examined so much in itself, but also within a context of an environmental ethical perspective, which may work as a basis for global, national and regional policies, programs, activities and attitudes (UNEP 2000), and, also, in accordance with the complex of relations within which the organisation and the development of tourism are located (Selwyn and Boissevain, 2004 & Selwyn, 2004).

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion on tourism in relation to environmental ethics and the relative biodiversity policy. Subsequently, the primary focus of the paper falls upon the interaction of all the intervened actors with the non-human environment and its relation to "environmental ethics" approaches. More specifically, it aims to present new evidence and discuss concepts and issues of sustainability and tourism in Mediterranean regions concerning the implementation of the EU Habitats Directive, as applied in the case of Caretta-caretta on Zakynthos and Crete and the emerging interactions, collaborations and conflicts, of all the relevant actors at an international, national and local level. The data come from the EC, DGXII funded project on "Participatory Governance and Institutional Innovation" (Contract No. 505791), and also from Conference Reports, Minutes of Meetings, studies, secondary sources, internet sites, press releases and interviews.

IN A NEED OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The changes in nature induced by human action have led to a questioning and reevaluating of ethical positions towards it. At this concept, tourism-related negative environmental impacts have also led to increased pressure for all the interrelated actors to evaluate their positions towards nature and environmental ethics, which focuses on redefining the boundaries of obligation to the environment and evaluating the human position towards it (Holden, 2003:39). As a result, this growth in environmental concern, particularly since the late 80's, when environment has finally entered the arena of pressure group politics, may be atrributable to other influences, in which tourism is included. At this

framework, as Urry argues (1992), tourism is also able to contribute to a growing awareness of the value of nature, and, hence, to public support for the protection of the environment and biodiversity. Yet, to comprehend the existing behaviour towards the environment and, in addition, the one demanded, it is necessary to understand more fully the several notions of nature, and the ethical approaches towards it.

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics is not only concerned about the human interactions and relationship, but also, as Robbinson and Garrat suggest (1999), has a key role to play in defining the human-nature relationship. As a result, the emphasis has now become to find agreements of how humans behave towards the natural environment and examine the concept according to which their attitudes to nature have been formulated and shaped.

In most cultures, religion has been a major influence on how ethics have been applied to the environment, especially in developed societies. The notions of 'dominion' and 'stewardship' are central in the Muslim and the Christian faith, as well. Within these doctrines, humans are obliged to act as stewards of nature, a fact that underlines the human's moral superiority over the non-human, animate and inanimate objects. Within this ethic, their value is limited to the pleasure and the profit they bring to humans. This anthropocentric view, based on the non-human's external and instrumental value for human use, consists of the ethic of "instrumentalism"(Simons, 1993).

An alternative version of the anthropocentric position is the one underlined by J.Rawls (1971), who emphasizes on an ecological conservation for the benefit of human kind and on our moral responsibility to ensure that future generations will inherit an undiminished bank of natural resources. This "conservation ethic" position was arguably the dominant ethic of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992, aiming at the preservation of the world Biodiversity (Natura 2000, 2004).

Additionally, Peter Wenz's "concentric circle theory", according to which the non-sentient beings enforce humans with responsibilities towards them, and Joel Feinberg's "behavioural theory of justice" are included in the same anthropocentic view, adopted by the policy makers (Dragona-Monahou, 1995). One step further is made by Taylor and his theory of "restitutive justice", as he suggests that humans should prioritize the protection and the preservation of the ecosystems as entities, rather than as individual beings (Georgopoulos, 2002).

Nevertheles, these anthropocentric approaches refute the intrinsic value of nature and its rights, which consist of the focal point at the ethic "of the environmnet". The "libertarian extension" of this perspective accords all non-human entities the same moral standing as human beings. All non-human animals are worthy of a moral and ethical status based upon the function of their existence and, subsequently, they should be given an uninterrupted freedom of existence, as well as, the same rights as humans, despite the fact that they cannot speak and fight for them (Simons, 1993). This argument may be a motive for many environmental friendly groups', and, also, state and supra-state bodies' activation, in an attempt of supporting their interests and rights.

An alternative "ecological extension" of this ethic emphasizes on the moral standing's attribution to the whole ecosystem, rather than the individual. This option constitutes "eco-holism", and is also stressed in Aldo Leopold's "land ethic", where a 'biotic right' is recognised to every separate member of the ecosystem. He considers an action to be right, when it preserves the stability and integrity of the biotic community (Georgopoulos, 2002).

However, this 'watershed' in the conceptualization of environmental ethics, either anthropocentic or not, but, also, the complexity of tourism industry, where the human interaction with the environment remains unavoidable, gives us a motive to explore the kinds, the ways and the grade that these theories have been or could be adopted and implemented by all the political and professional actors involved in tourism. It also gives us a chance to exemplify this concept in the case of the loggerhead sea turtles on the greek islands of Zakynthos and Crete, which, over the past 20 years, have experienced a fast growing tourist industry, a fact that exerts significant pressure on the Mediterranean Sea Turtles' (caretta-caretta) nesting beaches (Katselidis & Dimopoulos 2000), which are of vital significance for the sustainability of this endangered species (Greece in brief, 2004).

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN BIODIVERSITY AND TOURISM POLICY-MAKING

In terms of establishing the framework for stakeholders' interaction with environment, an analysis of the policy at an international, european and national level and its relation to environmental ethical approach seems essential for its major influence in shaping tourism industry.

At an international level

Biodiversity Policy was first used in 1985, then taken up by the National Forum on Biodiversity in Washington DC in 1988, and included in the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992 at the "Rio Earth Summit". This Convention was born out of the growing concern for the deterioration of nature, more specifically, the extinction and decline of species. This argument has been translated to promote conservation of biodiversity, which includes "diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems" (UNEP 1999:1).

Despite the fact that the arguments against biodiversity's further loss referred to both the intrinsic or "non-use" value and its utilitarian or "use" value, the convention's objectives were not only limited to the conservation of biodiversity, but also to pursue the sustainable use of its components and to promote a fair and "equitable sharing" of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources (UNEP 1999:1). Consequently, the convention was not only concerned with ecological sustainability, but also with social and economic sustainability, whose inclusion in the concept prove to be necessary for an effective implementation of Biodiversity Policy at a lower (sub-national) level. This concept of sustainability is an indicator of an anthropocentric "conservation ethic" approach towards environment, which mandates that the human interference to the conservation policy should not be neglected.

This ethic for sustainable development upon an international policy for tourism development was clearly illustrated at the 2nd UN General Assembly Special Session held in New York in 1997. According to the official record of the proceedings, "the expected growth in the tourism sector highlights the need for special attention to the relationship between environmental conservation and protection and sustainable tourism" (Osborn & Bigg, 1998:169), a thesis which shows little evidence to suggest a further paradigmatic movement in tourism policy making towards recognizing the intrinsic value of nature.

At an EU Level

Biodiversity has also been gaining significance in the "politics of life" area, since 1992, when the EU's 5th Environmental Action Programme recognised tourism as 'a good example of the fundamental link which exists between economic development and environment (European Commission 1992:2). Therefore, sustainability had been based on the need to examine environmental and tourism policy patterns in

conjuction, since what really drives change in the latter is the overall commitment to environmental concerns on the part of public authorities at both European and national levels (Pridham, 2001)

Consequently, most proponents of sustainability take it to be the maintenance of the existence of ecological conditions necessary to support human life at a specific level of well-being through future generations (Baker, Kousis, Richardson and Young, 1997) As a result, while the concept of sustainable tourism is focusing on the impacts of tourism, the debate gradually widened beyond environmental issues to include economic, social and cultural matters. It seeks to reduce tension created by the complex interaction between the tourism industry, visitors, the environment and the communities which act as host to holiday-makers (Pridham, 2001).

Subsequently, we may also identify that an anthropocentric 'conservation ethic' approach towards environment remains the central explicit theme of the 'sustainable development' concept. Moreover, there might be a techno-centric approach towards conservation policy, since the environment is treated in an externalised and scientific way, with emphasis being placed upon providing a solution to environmental problems through the employment of improved environmental management and technological controls, rather than a re-evaluation of human interaction with it. Such a technocratic approach typifies the industry's strategy towards conservation and can be clearly recognised in the basic mechanisms and instruments used during the two phases of EU environmental policy. (Holden, 2003:30)

More specifically, at the 1st phase (1993-1998), EU efforts relied heavily on legal and financial instruments such as the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), which necessitates that member states create Special Areas of Conservation that constitute the *Natura 2000* program. (Archelon, 2005 & The LIFE-Environment Programme "Zantecoast").

Remarkable weaknesses were revealed in the use of the Habitats Directive, since a number of member states, Greece included, questioned the political and legal basis of the community action in this area, biodiversity conservation not being a traditional area of EU policy and were reluctant to comply with EU legislation (Baker, 2003). Moves to include tourism among the EU's common policies, after the 5th EAP of 1992, have been opposed due to differences in national interest in the tourism sector.

At the 2nd phase, *Natura 2000* falls under the first theme of EC Biodiversity Strategy (Baker,2003). The EC commenced once again infringment procedures against the member states, among which the greek government is included.

At a National Level

Tourism is immensely important for the Greek economy and for the reason that Greeks are keen on the notion of sustainable tourism (Pridham and Konstadakopulos, 1997). As the loggerhead turtle is listed in Appendix II of the Bern Convention (UNEP/IUCN, 1990) and the Council of Europe, as early as 1986, placed Zakynthos high on its agenda, the Greek Government was obliged to enforce existing legislation and proceed with the establishment of stricter laws and, finally, of the National Park (Council of Europe, 1998).

The frame law 1650/86 for the protection of the environment, a Ministerial Decision in 1987 and a presidential Decree in 1990 further strengthened the 1984's legal status of the nesting areas, imposing some main restrictions related to tourism activities. With much struggle and bureaucratic delays, the legal structure for the conservation was put in place with a series of Presidential Decrees, Laws and Marine Regulations (Archelon, 2004). Amidst the turmoil, the Greek State signed a Presidential Decree (Gov. Gazette-G.G.-No 906D/22-12-99) declaring the creation of the Zakynthos National Marine Park (NMPZ) (Venizelos L., Corbett K. 2005), which, eventually, not earlier than 1999 and after the greek NGOs' pressure, was established.

The creation of such a park profoundly changes local life, as protection for the ecosystem requires control on anthropogenic activity. As a result, there is always the concern of limiting the number of visitors and, above all, of stopping them from walking wherever they please (Pascual, 2004). National parks enable development to be regulated and managed in line with the needs of the environment and its people, rather than share holders or other private interests. Certainly, what a park needs is the sensitive bringing together of scientific expertise, political will, and involvement by those living and working there. This utopic idea resting on the assumption that it is indeed humanly possible to organise economic and social life for the benefit of people and the natural environment, which can be rarely satisfied (Selwyn and Boissevain, 2004), imposes once again an anthropocentric and extremely technocentric environmental ethical option.

As a result, not only all these measures, but also the EC's infrigments and accusations against the greek government proved to be ineffective, as restrictive measures were coupled with the incompetence of the authorities to enforce legislation and a reluctunce to provide alternatives for the affected landowners (Dimopoulos, 1991). The instrumental value and the economic use of the environment is so important in the adoption and implementation of the conservation and sustainable tourism policies,

that results in a devaluation and complete ignorance of the value of nature 'in-itself', which may be based, either on the animals and nature's personal fight for life, or on the consideration of natural environment as a work of art which we owe to respect for 'what it is'.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN TOURISM INDUSTRY IN GREECE: THE CARETTA-CARETTA CASE

At the beginning, on Zakynthos and Crete, for most people, except the environmental groups operating in the locations, sustainable tourism has a strong economic signification, to the point where it becomes virtually synonymous with continuous profit-making. For locals, the end of profitable tourism would automatically mean the end of the location's future. Thus, very often, in local public discourse, tourism is associated with images of 'life' and 'death' (Triandafillidou and Fotiou, 1998). Uninterrupted development and promotion of the tourist product is the indispensable element for the financial viability of the location. Consequently, political local actors and the industry had huge stakes in sustaining tourism. The key concern of the local industry was 'whether the state and the local actors would be quick and smart enough to attract as much tourism as possible for the next season'. This view goes against the main premises of the idea of sustainability, which is to take the wider and longer view. For instance, when economic interests have not been respected, the reactions have been both unpredictable and violent (Fotiou, 1998), since the areas adjacent to the sea turtles' nesting areas are privately owned. This attitude presents the actors' main interest in the pursuit of short-term financial benefits, which outweights any kind of value of the natural environment, biodiversity and their sustainability. The only extremely external value which may be recognized on behalf of them towards them is the earnings they may offer to tourism industry, if they are used as a leisure asset.

As a result, the inability of the greek state to enforce the restrictive for the land owners existing legal measures led the e-NGOs to the acquisition of the land adjacent to the nesting areas and the inevitable reactions on behalf of the local community (Charalambides & Katsoupas, 1994). Generally, the NGOs , whose ethic may extend implicitly if not always explicitly beyond conservation to eco-holism, have been operating either as a semi-institutionalised 'insider' exerting influence on government policy or as an 'outside' pressure mobilising public opinion (Pridham, 2001) Practically, they are attempting to implement some protective measures through the economic opportunities accruing from

the individual people's sentisization and some tour operators' willingness for co-operation. As a result, appropriate tourism forms and activities are often encouraged in these areas, the revenues of which will be used to support the administrative and management structures necessary to support their conservation strategy.

A significant example, which indicates a turn to a "conservation ethic" and, merely, technocentric approach towards sea turtles is given in Crete by the hotel companies GRECOTEL and also tour operators, such as TUI, APOLLO, HOTELPLAN, PURE CRETE, who saw sea turtles of Crete as an important source, that could be used to improve the tourist 'image' of the areas, thus helping to maintain a high quality product. More exactly, Grecotel, which attains a close co-operation with the greek NGO Archelon, have devellopped a comprehensive programme, which not only assists environmental conservation and sustainability on the nesting beaches in Crete, but directly contributes to its profitability. (Schofield G., Katselidis K., Hoff S., 2001) Brochures have been assessed with respect to sea turtles, presentations and animation programs take place once per week during the tourist season, an opportunity of attending and watching the NGO's activities is given to their clients (interviews pa & vm, 2005). Thus, the owners of tourism accomodations and facilities have also started to realise that, in the future, they will be among the first groups most adversely affected by the decline in the environmental quality, which had been the tourists' attractive motive (Kousis, 2000). They have realised that the turtles can act as an indicator of the healthy environment and may also satisfy the demands of a greater mass of tourists, who may be interested in sea turtles or generally in a clean natural environment. As a result, the turtles have been included in the tourist product (Archelon, 2004), a fact that, in addition, underlines an ethic of "instrumentalism" or the "use of the environment" (Simons, 1993), based upon an anthropocentric view that the resources of the earth are solely used of instrumental value for human use. However, the previously referred fact has also led some big tourism organisations to participate in seminars and threaten for boycotts unless protection measures are implemented (e.g. TUI) (Euroturtle, 2005), a fact that gives some "conservation ethic" elements to their anthropocentric approach.

A certain explanation for this change in attitude may be the growing pressures from the international market for environmental quality. In other words, the realisation that destruction of nature is "bad" for tourism bussinesses has had a major influence upon directing sustainable development policy. Most of all, large companies and tour operators have felt this pressure and, therefore, have been showing signs of responding to ST requirements, when crisis erupted and their interest were directly

threatened. While tour operators have a low vested interest in long-term sustainability, they have paradoxically a high potential to influence tourist behavior, hence playing a pivotal role in pushing forward ST. On the other hand, small local bussinesses, in spite of having been motivated by other players to adopt similar practices in an attempt of improving the benefits of tourism (Buhalis and Diamantis, 2001 & Archelon, 2004), lack the appropriate resources or skills to respond to the new market demands. Consequently, they may not necessarily follow the logic of tour operators (Pridham, 2001).

According to the local understanding, green practices in tourism appear to make sense only to the extent that they can convince actors that they will generate future profits. In Zakynthos, the need for environmental preservation was institutionalised once the benefits were translated into economic profits and political and managerial power (Fotiou, 1998). Tourism has been of major importance to the economic development of these regions, but it has had disastrous effects on the environment in different ways, a fact recently recognised at governmental level. Significantly, there has been a gradual change in consumer demands with tourists insisting on a clean environment. As a result, tourism professionals' basic premise has become that a clean and healthy environment has an instrumental value for the furthering of tourism. Nevertheless, as Pridham argues (2001), changing tourist demand forms part of a general cultural change that not merely challenges suppliers of tourism but must, ultimately, have implications for sustainable policies in the future.

In summary, hoteliers and local people started to realise that an anti-environmental attitude would entail loss of popularity of the location and consequently, loss of its competitiveness. The locals have begun to understand that the image of an environmentally responsible community is more attractive than one that is neglectful (Fotiou, 1998). And that, in touristically developed locations, environmental degradation can present a very real danger to local interests who are aware of abrupt turnabouts in tourist choice, often prompted by press coverage. (Pridham, 2001) Moreover, they have started to realise that a more modified and 'upmarket' oriented tourism-product will attract higher spending individuals who can replace the larger numbers of more sophisticated and higher spending budget-minded indivinduals. Theoritically, this would mean that the destinations' sustainability could be enhanced since fewer tourists would lead to reduced environmental impacts without reducing the economic benefits of the industry (Ioannides, Apostolopoulos and Sonmez, 2001).

We may assume that the tourism industry has already learned how important image-politics based on environment protection is for successful bussiness. In their view, sea turtles still remain one more instrument in a highly competitive market environment, since their protection would strengthen the ecological profile of Greece worldwide as well as promoting the islands at an international level. This arguement indicates an "instrumental ethic approach" as a basis of conduct for the use of nature. On the other hand, fortunately, there has also been a shift from this kind of environmental ethics towards a more conservation based ethic, usually adopted by the big tour-operators and organisations, in co-operation with other interrelated actors. Nevertheless, this shift remains rooted in an anthropocentric context, based upon the realisation that *laissez-faire* tourism development causes environmental problems, ultimately damaging the industry and the ability of present and future generations to sustain their livelihoods. The concept of the environment still remains as a scientific and externalised entity, largely devoid of any spiritual value (Holden, 2003:30).

CONCLUSIONS

We jump to the conclusion that environmental politics is action taken less on the environment than on society (Kousis and Eder, 2001). Given that an ethical shift has already taken place within an anthropocentric framework, a new environmental ethic would have to be positioned within a non-anthropocentric context, that is, from an "eco-holism ethic" perspective, which would act as a prescriber of human conduct with nature, emphasising upon the intrinsic value of species and ecosystems, as equal to humans.

"Eco-holism" would probably permit tourism development provided it would not harm the overall fuctioning of ecosystem, an aspect which may be thought to be in accordance with the idea of the"carrying capacity" of the area. As Rebollo argues (2001), the quality of the mass tourism product could be improved, if environmental and social carrying capacities were taken into account and means to develop alternative tourism forms were identified.

Nevertheless, the acceptance of non-anthropocentric ethics to govern our interaction with nature, at this juncture, seems unlikely in the immediate future, unless a conceptual shift in the belief system from a rationalised, scientific and externalized view of nature to a more inclusive and spiritual takes place. Before implementing such an approach for tourim development it is imperative that a high degree of social consensus

should be sought. As Kousis underlines (2000), crucial changes will take place, when mobilised new networks of supporters at a local level, including residential, citizen or neighbournood groups being in contact with other local ones or political parties' supporing environmental activists, appear.

For this reason, the literature on tourism and environment should probably be enriched with analyses of collective action that manifests itself in the form of local environmental movements against the industry, in its pursuit of a new non-anthropocentric environmental ethic approach and of the appropriate sustainable development. Thus, some groups of locals may challenge the state and the private enterprises holding them responsible for the occuring environmental damage.

At legal level of the current europeanization, a reorganisation of the rules of the political game is necessary. Legal directives, cultural principles, and national interests have to be co-ordinated and a not so much technocentric and anthropocentric approach seems essential. There is a necessity of balancing national, sub-national and sectoral interests and of choosing the right instruments to stimulate genuine changes in human behaviour, making them fully aware of their actions' immediate impacts on environment, but also on their well-being and their survival on earth. Yet, the EU has a significant role in shaping sustainable development within a more non-anthropocentric and respectful to the intrinsic value of species and ecosystems framework.

The intervened actors should move away from the prevailing view that tourism growth should continue at all costs. Instead, they should consider the adoption of quantity management strategies recognising that tourism must operate within a region's capacity limits, among which the sustainability of the endangered species Caretta-caretta and their habitats on the islands of Zakynthos and Crete, as reinforced by the EU Habitats Directive, must be taken into consideration. (Ioannides, Apostolopoulos and Sonmez, 2001).

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