Institute for Sustainable Innovations of the Netherlands' Technical Universities

Tourism and Natural Resources: a victim or cause of social conflicts?

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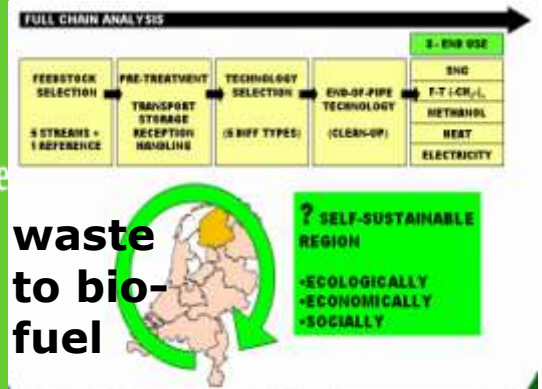
Renewable energy | **Water use** | **Spatial quality**



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Framework

- Tourism considers itself victim of conflicts.
- Destinations suffer from violence, but
- Tourism : €5.500 billions income, 4.5% growth

- Socio-cultural and environmental tension
- Planning and clean technology are possible

- Issue: present tourism generates violence

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Hydraulic societies

- Platonov: waterworks need authoritarian regime
  - Belomor and Wolga-Don canals
  - Millions forced workers most of them died
- Wittfogel: “hydraulic societies” in the Orient
  - water is a strategic resource for agriculture
  - infrastructure needs huge efforts
  - despotism for enforce labour
- The strategic role of water diminishes
  - changes from agriculture to manufacturing
  - better and cheaper water technologies

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Hydrocarbons societies

- Oil became the strategic resource
  - Rewarding oil reserves on a few spots
  - Corridors for oil pipelines

- Oil flow is a major sources of social conflicts
  - violence at most of the oil winning spots
  - violence all along pipeline to the EU
  - vulnerability high on political agenda

- Strategic role of oil diminishes
  - energy-efficiency in EU 2% a year
  - better renewable energy technologies

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Natural Monopolies

- Key natural resources are concentrated on spots
  - winning reserves needs strategic possession
  - distribution requires huge infrastructure
- Economies of scale determine the costs
  - monopolies emerge to reduce the costs
  - market monopolies, like in oil
  - (semi-)state monopolies like in water
- Economics shift from manufacturing to services
  - tourism is a major and fast growing service
  - amenity is the key tourism resource

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Amenity in tourism

- What is the tourism amenity?
  - not backpacking and nature-experience
  - 85% of tourists at seaside in organized way
- The main destination is warm, humid areas
  - in (sub-) tropics warm vapour is natural
  - otherwise warm vapour in wellness centers
  - hypothesis: warm vapour the key resource
- Mass, organized tourist flows to warm vapour
  - pockets outside settlements are destinations
  - Is warm vapour a relaxation or “rebirthing”?

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Tourism organisation

- Tourism largely in “all inclusive” arrangements
  - accommodation, foods, retails, sports, events
  - economies of scale determine the costs

- A group of arrangements becomes a destination
  - bottom-line a few millions visitors
  - investments are multi-billion euro’s
  - “greenfield”, outside traditions settlements

- Organisation tends to ‘natural monopoly’
  - Investment exceed regional economies
  - Integration in the tourism chains

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Destination life cycle

- All have the stake to recover from investments
  - no balance of power implies corruption
  - mass cash flow implies robbery
  - strict policing is necessity

- Grazyna Przybyl parable on destination
  - nature forest spot arranged with paths
  - attractive tree climbing with safety belts
  - nature education supported with tricks
  - flourishing international centre, “end”
- I go on
  - fun came, then violence, thus policing
  - tourists do not policing and go away
  - much empty space remains

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Alternative options

- Is the natural monopoly unavoidable?
  - eco-tourism: high mobility, degrades nature
  - huge 'vapour centres': social perversion

- Alternative available patterns
  - SME and environmentalists contra monopoly
  - Digitalization of nature with sensors & ICT
  - Unique designs of the high value services

- In conclusion
  - options to prevent natural monopoly trap
  - innovations in right direction are needed

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Ultimate tourism innovation

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Thank you for your patience

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