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# Current methodology and future challenges of protected area planning and management frameworks

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As tourism is one of the world's largest and expanding industries (Tisdell, 1987, Lindberg, 1998; Mowforth & Munt, 1998, Hall & Page 1999, Eagles, 2002), various impacts of tourism are under lively debate not only in the scientific community but also among the managers of tourism. Environmental impacts have been focused especially because nature-based tourism is recognized as the most rapidly growing tourism sector (Fennell 1999, Buckley 2004) and protected areas are the most attractive destinations for nature tourism. Accordingly, visitor numbers of national parks and other protected areas have been multiplied during the last decades. For example, in northern Finland the annual visitor numbers of national parks has been tripled in the 1990's (A. Leivo / Metsähallitus, pers. comm., Siikamäki & Kangas 2006).

Tourist activities impact directly and indirectly on ecosystems. Globally tourism contributes to changes in land cover and land use, energy use, introductions and extinction of species, dispersion of diseases and changes in perceptions of environment (e.g., Gössling 2002). Ever increasing amounts of visitors and new types of use in protected areas cause environmental wear and deterioration, which can threaten the biological and recreational values of areas if the change is not under control. At the worst areas can loose many ecological functions and values, such as rare organisms and their habitats, which make them destinations in the first place. It has been argued that the single most critical component for long-term strategy for sustainability is to maintain protected areas in a reasonably intact and functional state (Buckley 2004).

Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that unplanned tourism may lead to severe ecological and social problems in tourist destinations (Inskeep 1994). Contrary, when tourism is environmentally sensitive and well-planned, it can both benefit the local communities and also promote nature conservation, i.e. tourism and nature conservation can be mutually supportive (Hall 1998, Butler 1999). At present, the relative importance of tourism as a year-round source of income is constantly increasing in northern Scandinavian, and the income from tourism exceeds the one from agriculture

and forestry in many rural municipalities in Finland (Saastamoinen et al. 2000). This trend emphasized the importance of sustainable development of tourism industry.

Indeed, growing interest in sustainable development and sustainable tourism has been paralleled with the concerns about the ability of protected areas to absorb tourists. Budowski (1976) started scientific debate on the relationship between nature protection and tourism discussing about conflict, coexistence and symbiosis between tourism and nature. Lately the key trends that described the evolution of relationship between tourism and protected areas revealed a shift from protection against people towards managed with and for people, and from national to international concern (Nelson 1994). Due to these shifts and the integration between nature protection and tourism development, the objective of planning and management of protected areas is to compromise between these two activities and to have a symbiotic relationship between them. Nature-based tourism using national parks as tourist destinations is today in fact a vehicle for nature protection in many places. For instance, the initiative to establish the Syöte national park (municipalities of Pudasjärvi, Taivalkoski and Posio) came from the local community to enhance and promote the tourism development in the region. This bottom-up process was reflected also as positive perceptions of local residents towards nature protection and tourism development (Törn et al. 2007).

In this paper I focused how environmental impacts of tourism are measured, analyzed and taken into account in the management of tourism. I will have an emphasis on the tools and methods that have been used for the management and planning of tourism and recreation use of protected areas. The development of methodology and tools for the management of protected areas has been in the front line because of the apparent need for compromises between tourism use and nature protection to ensure the primary purpose of nature protection areas. Firstly, I review the currently used definitions, frameworks and indicators used in wilderness recreation management. Additionally, I focus on the challenges of taking into account the scales of ecological entities as well as the incorporation of ecological sustainability to the other dimensions of sustainability.

# Definitions and tools of sustainable tourism

Although the concept, theory and practical indicators of sustainable tourism development (STD) are currently widely studied, currently there is no universally accepted definition of sustainable tourism (e.g., Honey 1999, Blamey 2001, Saarinen 2006). Definitions of sustainable tourism typically emphasize the ecological, social and economic elements of tourism in order to achieve a 'balanced' or 'wise' use of natural resource. On one hand, social sustainability and the integration of the local community into the sustainable development of tourism have been emphasized more and more in the planning process of tourism (e.g. Milne 1998). On the other hand, deterioration of environment and erosion are mentioned frequently as the most negative impacts of tourism by local residents emphasizing the role of environmental element of sustainability (e.g. Rämet et al. 2005; Hynönen & Kutilanen 2004). Recently, a fourth dimension, the institutional one is seen essential to achieve a balance among the three classic dimensions of sustainable tourism (Eden et al., 2000; Spangenberg & Valentin 1999).

Figure 1 shows some examples of the wide array of the tools used for sustainability analysis. The development of management frameworks for protected areas initiated with a search of certain carrying capacities just as generally for the whole tourism industry. However, as the limitations of the concept of carrying were becoming increasingly apparent, the question was directed from the use numbers to appropriate or acceptable conditions of tourism destinations (e.g. McCool & Lime 2001). Even though several authors have identified numerical carrying capacities for specific tourist destinations (e.g. Saveriades 2000), the relationship between use level and biophysical and/or social impacts seems not to be a linear function between them. In general, even very little use leads to disproportionately large increases in impacts (e.g. Hammit & Cole 1987, Leung & Marrion 2000, Tolvanen et al. 2001, 2004). Instead, impacts are largely a function of tourist behavior, developers practices, sensitivity of environments and other variables. Because of the failures to find carrying capacities, a variety of new planning frameworks have been developed to address the issues of visitor impacts. These new planning frameworks include Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS; Clark & Stankey 1979, Brown et al. 1978)), a Process for Visitor Impact Management (VIM, Graefe et al 1990), Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP, National Park Service 1997, Manning 2001) and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC, Stankey et al. 1985). These all are based on protecting certain conditions rather than finding numerical carrying capacities. Several reviews and evaluations of these frameworks are described in the recent literature (e.g. McCool & Cole 1997, Nilsen & Tayler 2000; Manning & Lime 2000, Leung & Marion 2000, McCool et al. 2007).

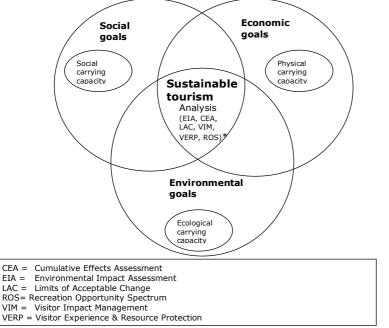
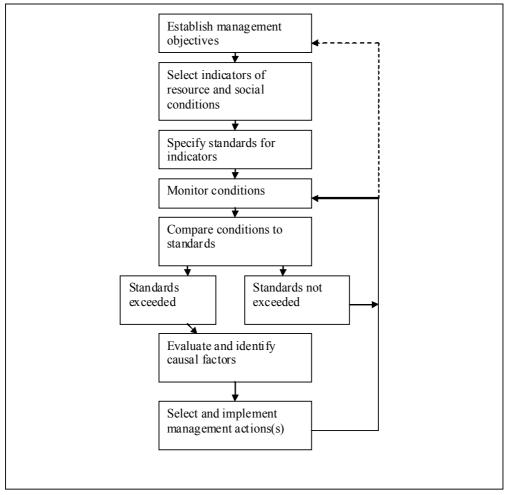


Figure 1. Tools for sustainability analysis (modified from Wight 1998)

These frameworks have several common themes and issues even though they all do have their unique origins (Nilsen & Tayler 1998). The basic steps of the management and planning process are quite similar in each of the frameworks (Fig. 2) even though the language and the terminology they use vary considerably. Basically, the wilderness mandates are transformed into objectives that can be implemented and evaluated with standards. Limits of acceptable conditions are defined by the standards that are monitored with the selected social and environmental indicators. If standards are exceeded, appropriate and effective management interventions are evaluated by a problem analysis.



*Figure 2. Diagram illustrating the basic stages of management planning frameworks* (modified from Leung and Marion 2000)

# Impact indicators

Because a common approach to achieve management goals is to use of indicators in the monitoring, the criteria and selection of effective indicators has received increasing attention in the wilderness recreation literature (e.g. Merigliano 1990, Manning & Lime 2000). Indeed, critical components of almost all management frameworks

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are judicious selections and periodic monitoring of indicators. Good indicators reflect desired conditions and include for instance the following characteristics:

- 1. Relevant.
- 2. Specific. Indicators should define specific rather than general conditions.
- 3. Objective. Indicators should be measured in absolute, unequivocal terms.
- 4. Reliable and repeatable.
- 5. Related to visitor use. Indicators are related to level of use, type of use, location of use or behaviour of visitors.
- 6. Sensitive. Indicators should be sensitive to visitor use over a relatively short period.
- 7. Amenable to management. Indicators should be responsive to and help to determine the effectiveness of management actions.
- 8. Directly observable and easy to measure. As indicators should be monitored on a regular basis, they should be relatively easy and cost-effective to measure.
- 9. Reflect appropriate scales.

Table 1 summarizes the main results related to the definitions and the role of indicators from Nilsen and Tayler's (1998) comparative analysis on several planning and management frameworks. The role, the importance of indicator system and the degree of emphasis is placed on factors, indicators and standards vary a lot between different management frameworks. These differences reflect variations on the objectives of frameworks, questions being asked, the type of research and analysis that follows and the decisions that are being made. VAMP and VERP have their emphasis on strategic level planning and management having a broad range of factors. These strategic decisions then form a basis for developing the indicators and standards. In contrary, VAMP emphasizes social indicators and standards from a visitor's viewpoint and is then complemented by an environmental impact assessment and natural resource management.

Additionally, the starting point of the managing frameworks seem to differ – ROS, VERP and VAMP put stress on the recreational opportunities and are more comprehensive and holistic whereas LAC and VIM are primarily issue-driven and narrower in focus. In LAC and VIM the first steps in the process are the definitions of issue and management objectives which guide the selection of indicators and standards.

All these above mentioned frameworks are developed for the management needs of wilderness areas and national parks in the USA and Canada by the managers and researchers as a response to constantly growing recreation use. They are principally concentrated on impacts and/or setting limits for use and based on a range of indicators and indicator system. Public participation and engagement of the communities have has quite a minor role in the development of frameworks. Consequently, in the assessments of experiences on these frameworks, the need for collaborative planning is regularly emerged (McCool et al. 2007). There are several other frameworks developed worldwide like The Tourism Optimization and Management Model (TOMM) that has emphasized more holistic approaches with optimal and sustainable outcomes fro tourism and community. TOMM was developed in Australia in the 1990s to monitor and manage tourism in Kangaroo Island (Manidis Roberts Consultants 1997).

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Recreation Opportunity Spectrum ROS	Process for Visitor Impact Management VIM	Limits of Acceptable Change LAC	Visitor Experience Resource Protection VERP	Management Process for Visitor Activities VAMP
Setting indicators	Physical impacts	Indicators depend on the	The following factors	Factors for developing
- Access	<ul> <li>Soil density, pH,</li> </ul>	goals and desired	are considered:	indicators and standards
<ul> <li>Remoteness</li> </ul>	compaction,	conditions defined in the	<ul> <li>park purpose</li> </ul>	include:
- Visual characteristics	productivity	first step of LAC	statement	<ul> <li>visitor activity</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Site management</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Amount and depth of</li> </ul>	process.	<ul> <li>statements of park</li> </ul>	profiles (kind,
<ul> <li>Visitor management</li> </ul>	litter and dust	Examples:	significance	quantity, diversity,
<ul> <li>Social encounters</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Area of bare ground</li> </ul>	Resource:	<ul> <li>primary interpretation</li> </ul>	location, experiences
<ul> <li>Visitor impacts</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Area of campsites</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Trail conditions</li> </ul>	themes	sought, support
	<ul> <li>Number and size of</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Campsite conditions</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>resource values,</li> </ul>	services etc.)
	fire rings	<ul> <li>Water quality</li> </ul>	constraints and	<ul> <li>stakeholder profiles</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Number of social</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Air quality</li> </ul>	sensitivities	<ul> <li>resource values,</li> </ul>
	trails	<ul> <li>Wildlife populations</li> </ul>	- visitor experience	constraints and
	<ul> <li>Visible erosion</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Threatened /</li> </ul>	opportunities	sensitivities
	<b>Biological</b> impacts	endangered species	- resource autionles lor	<ul> <li>existing legislation,</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Soil fauna and</li> </ul>	Social:		policy, management
	microfauna	<ul> <li>Solitude while</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>management zones</li> </ul>	directions, plans
	<ul> <li>Ground-cover density</li> </ul>	traveling		<ul> <li>services and facilities</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Diversity and</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Campsite solitude</li> </ul>		- satisfaction with
	composition of plant	<ul> <li>Conflicts between</li> </ul>		service offer
	species	visitors		
	<ul> <li>Proportion of exotic</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Conflicting traveling</li> </ul>		
	plant species	methods		
	<ul> <li>Plant species height,</li> </ul>	– noise		
	vigous and diseases			
	- Trees - mutilation,			
	seeding regeneration,			
	Wildlife mode			
	diversity, abundance			
	<ul> <li>Indicator species</li> </ul>			

# Table 1. Indicators and standards used in different planning and management frameworks

In Finland, Metsähallitus is currently developing and testing a management framework for Finnish national parks and protected areas. This Finnish version is based on LAC framework and is guided by the nine principles for sustainable nature-based tourism (Metsähallitus 2007). The indicators, standards and management actions of the pilot version are mainly defined by the manager not through a process with the involvement of different stakeholders and local residents.

# Future challenges for management frameworks

# The scale of management – use of ecosystem approach?

The scale of management and planning in all management frameworks are mainly defined by the needs of the managers and planners. This may lead to scale-mismatches between ecological entities and management regimes. Although in fragmented urban landscapes scale mismatches can be even more pronounce than in most other social–ecological systems (Borgström et al. 2007), these mismatches are most likely problematic in other systems as well. Ecological scales can be described using a three-part classification: spatial, temporal, and functional scales (Lee 1993). Spatial mismatches occur when the boundaries of management and planning do not coincide with the boundaries of the ecological entity (Christensen et al. 1996, Hobbs 1998).

When important ecological functions and processes, and their connections (Lugo et al. 1999), as well as disturbance regimes (Engstrom et al. 1999, White et al. 1999) are recognized, the functional scales of ecosystems are matched with management. Instead, a functional scale mismatch includes the neglect of interactions of ecosystems, and largely ignores the basic characteristic of an ecosystem as a complex adaptive system (Christensen et al. 1996).

In the context of planning and managing the recreational use of protected areas, ecological entities and processes that needed larger scale management approaches are for example following:

- ecosystem services like pollination, nutrient cycling, pest control
- animals with large home ranges such as large carnivores, birds of prey, moose
- ecological processes: migration, colonization, succession
- disturbance regimes

It seems that current management and planning frameworks for recreation in wilderness and protected areas do not recognize temporal, spatial and functional scales of ecological entities (i.e., ecosystems, habitats, landscapes). Within these frameworks ecological entities are often seen as resources for recreation. This viewpoint has lead to situation where management and monitoring are emphasized on the direct impacts of recreation and nature-based on resources. Consequently, the monitoring and indicators is stressed on visible impacts on soils, vegetation, trails and campsites which all are relatively easy to measure. Furthermore, they seem to neglect the complexity, interconnectedness and dynamic characteristics of ecological systems which may lead to a gradual reduction in the capacity of the ecosystems to provide ecosystem services.

## Participatory planning and comanagement

As already mentioned above, the lack of public involvement and participation is quite common weakness of several planning frameworks that are currently implemented at protected areas. A proper solution for nature resource planning may not be achievable by an authoritarian regime (top-down) nor an exclusively community-based approach (bottom-up). It is also notable that participation of stakeholders does not automatically guarantee the sustainable use of natural resources (e.g., Butler 1999). The development of cooperative relationships with local stakeholders and sharing the burden of management responsibilities have emerged as a potential way of comanagement of protected areas (Lane 2001). Protected area managers have proved that decentralized, participatory approaches are the most effective management strategies (e.g. Western et al. 1994). Although in conflict situations stakeholders by definition hold divergent views, the fundamental assumption behind comanagement is that resource management will be enhanced by the sharing of authority and decision-making. The central objective of comanagement is to develop strategies to ensure the collaboration of park managers and different stakeholders. Local inhabitants may have traditional knowledge and holistic views about the area concerned, while managers and decision-makers may rely more on rational and specialized facts. The sharing of ideas among different stakeholders in a long time period can thus result in a deeper understanding of the issues, and should result in more legitimate and sustainable policies (Salmi 2000, Castro and Nielsen 2001).

## The need for adaptive management

Due to uncertainties both in the development of recreation and nature-based tourism and in our knowledge of ecosystems and ecological processes, the management and planning involves the need to emphasize monitoring, feedback, learning and adaptability. Whatever management framework is implemented and used, it should be also developed and processed according to feedback and enhanced knowledge. Furthermore, by adaptive management process also the scales of management can be better fitted to ecological entities.

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