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Editorial

WHATEVER THE NAME IS, THE CONCERN IS FOR PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENTS

When looking at recent debates on sustainability one can observe that implicit within these debates is a criticism against the values, attitudes, and tools by which most of the built environment has been produced over the years, that has led to social alienation and environmental depletion. Several definitions of sustainability correspond with this criticism, where some definitions focus on environmental criteria while others integrate socio-cultural aspects into environmental concerns. The main idea behind the notion of sustainability is to create an effective system of resource distribution and utilization with a long term perspective in mind (ECE, 1996). A sustainable society in this respect is one that can persist over generations, one that is far sighted enough, flexible enough, and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support.

Within the scope of sustainability, sustainable development was defined in international declarations made by many international bodies as *the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. As this is a very general statement, it is necessary to elaborate the definition further based on the literature that has been developed over the past fifteen years (Lyle, 1993; Stern et al., 1992; Rees, 1990). The concept of sustainable development, with emphasis on environmental sensitivity, has presented a great challenge to both developed and developing nations. It has an essentially relative and normative character, which makes it difficult to put into practice. In this kind of development, socio-economic objectives are balanced with the constraints that nature sets. Thus, it is based on the principles of self reliance, fulfillment of basic needs, and an emphasis on the quality of life. The implications of this understanding in ecological, social and economic terms for design, planning and management of human settlements are to be framed into a number of aspects that include appropriate technology and ecologically based designs; low energy consumption; selective and efficient use of resources; ecological principles to guide land use

planning; participatory design, community involvement; and waste and urban recycling. *The questions that should be raised here are: What exactly is eco-tourism? and what is the relationship between its underlying practices and sustainable development?*

Tourism as a global phenomenon has emerged as a relatively new social activity. Before the emergence of tourism as an industry, interaction between different societies took place through commercial trading, wars, or migrations. Thus, cultural exchange was relatively limited. With the development of communication and transportation means people began to travel for the sake of traveling, which launched a process of cultural globalization that has been accelerated in recent years by further developments of the information industry. Concomitantly, tourism has become a major source of impact on the social, cultural, built, and natural environments. It is an attractive phenomenon that affects both the hosts and the visitors. According to TIES-The International Eco-Tourism Society, tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. More and more countries are recognizing this and are developing measures to ensure that tourism should not have negative impacts on cultural and natural environments (WTO, 1996; WTTC, 1992). Thus, the latest trend in the travel industry is ecotourism, a newly emerged type of tourism that combines preserving natural environments and sustaining the well being of human cultures that inhabit those environments. Ecotourism, said to be first devised as a term by Hector Ceballos Lascurain, promotes environmental responsibility and ensures that visitors take nothing but photographs, and leave nothing but footprints (Ceballos Lascurain, 1996).

In answering the second question, one can argue that the relationship between ecotourism and sustainable development can be found in the many interpretations of ecotourism discussed in this issue. They avow that ecotourism is a sub component of sustainable development. Thus, it should be regarded as a key player in the understanding of human history and its interaction with natural environments. As well, it should be viewed as a key mechanism in the spread of environmental knowledge and awareness (Salama, 1998).

The problem with five-star resorts in ecotourism

destinations, or in out of the usual places is how they are being supported. The answer is that an outsider develops a property, profits go to the developer, and locals are hired often at minimal wages for the service they provide to tourists. This immediately creates a barrier between the locals and the tourists. Other problems arise too: What is done with the waste that is generated? Water and food: Where do they come from? How do people arrive? Is overuse destroying the immediate surrounding? What overall impact has this resort made? All these questions are challenges to traditional tourist facilities.

The socio cultural impact of traditional tourism is also a crucial issue. When tourists arrive at their destinations, they bring with them different beliefs and behaviors, which influence the host culture. The influence of tourists on the societies they visit is much stronger than the opposite (Anton, 1999). The majority of tourists come from affluent countries and dominant cultures, which, relatively, unaffected by visitors from smaller local cultures. One problem is that foreign cultures, as portrayed by tourists appear out of context. On the other hand, tourists, while on vacation, change their styles of socializing. As a result, the view that local people receive of the culture of the visitors is not only strange to them, but also inaccurate (Salama, 2000).

Increasingly, people are abandoning traditional vacation for a new type of tourism that gives them the sense of nature. Trekking in mountains, bird watching, archaeological digs, desert and photo safaris, scuba diving are some new types of vacations that attract tourists to travel to relatively remote and unspoiled areas. This type of travel is referred to as nature-based travel, ecotourism, or environmentally sustainable tourism. These terms are used interchangeably to reflect this trend in the travel industry. While many studies continuously attempt to differentiate between the terms used to reflect this type of travel, the general concern is to address the dialectic relationships between the natural and the man made, the visitors and tourists and the local population, and tradition and modernity.

The generic concept of environmentally sustainable tourism has emerged in parallel to the realization of the potential benefits in combining peo-

ple interest in nature with their concern for the environment. It is a responsible way of travel; an alternative to traditional travel, but it is not for everyone. It appeals to people who love nature and indigenous cultures. It allows those people to enjoy an attraction or a locality and ensures that local cultures and environments are unimpaired. As the environmentally sustainable tourism industry expands world-wide, well planned, ecologically sensitive facilities are in high demand that can be met with ecolodges: small scale facilities that provide tourists with the opportunity of being in close contact with nature and local culture.

In response to this theme, research papers in this issue of *Open House International* attempt to answer the primary question: **How much change in or alternations of natural and cultural environments will be acceptable?** They explore sustainable planning and design for tourism by debating, analyzing, and visioning a wide spectrum of issues, with a focus on the developments taking place in biologically sensitive areas, whether desert, forest, tropical coasts, or rural environments. Interestingly, they cover the planet Earth from Australia through the Arab World and Turkey to Argentina and Chile. An important shared aspect in these papers is that emphasis is placed upon integrating people, nature, and local economy into responsive development processes while offering lessons on how such integration may take place.

The work of AHMET EYÜCE in his paper on learning from vernacular settlements suggests that ecologically fit built form is an outcome of harmonious modes of interaction between the man-made and the natural environment. Drawing on examples from traditional environments in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia, his paper categorizes a number of building aspects that should be considered when planning and design environmentally friendly facilities for tourism. These include relationship to the ground, characteristics of building masses, features of the building envelop, and roof performance aspects. Z BROMBEREK on the other hand analytically describes the main characteristics of coastal tropics as a climate as well as a destination for eco-tourism. Analyzing the notion of comfort, BROMBEREK's work articulates differences between eco-tourists and the host residents. Based on his extensive previous studies in the field, cli-

matic factors influencing comfort limits are analytically discussed. His work concludes with a number of recommendations that aim at delivering indoor conditions to climatic preferences of environmentally conscious users, an approach that would ultimately minimize the impact a tourist facility would have on the surrounding environment.

Three examples in three different settings highlight the notion of place in different manners. On the one hand, from Chile, the work of ALVARDO, TREBILCOCK, and ASCUI offers a critical review of a hot spring spa located in the south of the country. The spa is *Termas Geometrica* is presented as an example of an architectural intervention that overlays subtle ecological design principles in a place of outstanding natural beauty. In this example, sensitivity to the characteristics of place and implementation of sustainable design principles are articulated through the use of local materials and local labour, and energy conserving strategies. Their conclusion offers insights into the understanding that this approach while achieving a surprising commercial success it integrates sustainable design principles into the experience of place.

The second example offered by CERIDWEN OWEN on the resort town of Yulara, Central Australia is discussed based on exploring the concept of regeneration which differs dramatically from the hot spa example of Chile in terms of the level of intervention in the environment. OWEN argues that the low impact approach while having its merits, it misses the opportunity of engagement in a more productive relationship with place. Thus, she bases her argument on questioning the potential challenges and opportunities of the design eco-tourism facilities. Her work identifies the social context and consideration of spatial practice as a key area of opportunity for the built environment to contribute to the ecotourism goal of interpretation, awareness, and education.

The work of LUCIANA REPISO, NATALIA RAVEGNINI, and EMMA PUCH SLEIVE presents an application of sustainability criteria to the planning and design of an archaeological park, located in Quebrada de Humahuaca (a World Heritage Site in Argentina). This is based on the argument that keeping the spirit of each place is the greatest challenge posed by the interventions in

heritage sites. Their aim is to expose the planning and sustainable design process at different projecting scales, from the general zoning to the technological resolution of the park's facilities. Through their exploratory process they reached two important conclusions: While the first argues that design allows the transfer of ecotourism principles to the physical planning level of the tourist activity, the second asserts that success in dealing with heritage destinations heritage should be based upon the degree of suitability of sustainable design measures at each intervention scale.

While the work of ASHRAF SALAMA, AZIZA CHAOUNI, and YASSER MAHGOUB relates to the Sahara and the deserts of the Arab world, each offers a different experience. SALAMA argues that ecologically sensitive facilities within the context of the Red Sea, Egypt are in high demand that can be met with ecolodges. His work reports on a collaborative process for developing an ecolodge demonstration project for the Tourism Development Authority. The results of this process were incorporated into a final planning alternative that is envisioned as a tool that guides the professional community in Egypt toward the development of sustainable tourism facilities in the region. CHAOUNI's paper focuses on the Northern Saharan region as an area of study by contextualizing ecotourism in the Sahara within the larger history of tourism in the region. She identifies a number of attributes that include a comprehensive resource and waste management strategy; sustainable building methods; community involvement; and nature conservation and education. These are utilized to investigate three cases from the Egyptian context. Both papers assert the urgent need for integrating local materials, new energy, and water harvesting and preserving technologies into a design and building processes that establishes a new paradigm for environmentally friendly tourist facilities in Egypt. MAHGOUB on the other hand discusses the impact of informal desert tourism activities on the desert sustainability in Kuwait. His work explores successful examples from the region in order to highlight aspects of successful interventions that blend in with the desert context. The work is concluded by suggesting sustainable measures for planning and designing ecotourism facilities in the desert, with the aim of protecting the fragile

desert environment from deterioration and eventual extinction.

Introducing sustainable rural tourism within the context of Antalya, Turkey and within Bafra's region of Northern Cyprus two papers appear to have common characteristics. The work of SEDEF ALTUN, GÜLIN BEYHAN, RECEP ESENGIL offers a framework for diversifying tourism the region. Their work explores Akseki district as a case study within the context of the project. The goal of the project is to provide maximum efficiency in the economical, social, and cultural dimensions of tourism with sustainable development practices in order to dispel the incongruities of regional development. As a result of the survey carried out in the region, the "Sarihacilar" Village, located 4 km away from downtown Akseki, was chosen as the sample for application because of the unique physical environment (natural and built) that it enjoys. Through a collaborative planning process, the framework is introduced while exploring possibilities of alternative tourism and of accelerating progress in rural areas of this region. Within the context of the Bafra region in Northern Cyprus and in light of current discourses on sustainable tourism, ÖZLEM OLGAÇ TÜRKER and ÖZGÜR DİNÇYÜREK offer an alternative to the mass tourism activities currently taking place in the region. Their work proposes sustainable tourism planning for a unique traditional rural settlement - Bafra Village- which is located in close vicinity of this heart of tourism. The continuity by conversion of existing traditional housing stock of Bafra village for tourism purposes is critically proposed, analyzed, and discussed with the aim of minimizing the potential threats of increasing tourism demands.

The arguments and examples presented in the papers of this issue avow that sustainable tourism or eco-tourism is not an option anymore, especially in countries that enjoy unique richness in natural and cultural resources. A true ecotourism and ecolodge culture has to spread out amongst different decision making sectors in those countries so that all key players (local authorities, NGOs, private sector, professionals, local communities) are properly and actively involved, and are benefited from the process (Salama, 2000, 2004). While some countries have already developed their own guidance documents for sustainable

tourism development, one should emphasize that the creation of appropriate regulations and guidelines does not mean the end of the process. Guidelines do not provide blue prints on how sustainable tourism can be implemented or how environmentally friendly facilities can be designed and built. Awareness and intensive and extensive training programs are needed in the fields of sustainable development for tourism purposes with the participation of architecture and planning schools in this process. There is a real need to positively develop the attitudes of our future professionals toward the responsibility to the environment.

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