The Margins of Texel

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This paper analyses the sustainable development of tourism on the island of Texel, The Netherlands. It utilises the so-called ‘corporate response model to the macro-marketing environment’ to conceptualise the multi-dimensionality of the sustainability concept. This model differentiates among four ‘margins’ within which a tourism region operates. These margins are ‘profit’, ‘risk’, ‘ecological’ and ‘socio-cultural’. The paper discusses a number of issues that are particularly relevant to the sustainable development of tourism. These include economic over-reliance on tourism, environmental management, land use conflicts and liveability. These issues are positioned at the interface between adjoining margins, and they represent spatial practices, conceptualisations of these practices as well as struggles over the symbolic construction of Texel. The analysis also reveals some existing strategies for sustainable development of tourism that are transferable to other regions. Although the case of Texel presents interesting practices and strategies of sustainable tourism, the overall balance in terms of results is still meagre.

Keywords: sustainability, liveability, Texel, corporate response model

Introduction

In the wake of the Brundtland report Our Common Future (WCED, 1987) and Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992), the tourism sector has gradually embraced the concept of sustainability. Texel, a small island in the northwest of The Netherlands, is one of the forerunners in The Netherlands with respect to sustainable development. It tries to position itself as a ‘sustainable island’ in general and as the island of ‘sustainable tourism’ in particular. This paper discusses the way the Dutch island of Texel implemented the concept of sustainability in the area of tourism development. It reviews topical sustainability issues on the island. In order to assess these topical issues, 234 households on the island were interviewed to measure the way they perceive tourism development on the island. Respondents answered questions on their household composition, on local politics, and examined statements about tourism on Texel (Duim et al., 2001). Further, 22 administrators, entrepreneurs, managers of holiday resorts, politicians and representatives of special interest and pressure groups were interviewed to reveal their perceptions, as well as practices and strategies. A literature study and a review of articles in the local newspaper De Texelse Courant completed the research. After the fieldwork, preliminary results were discussed in two workshops. Local interest groups were included in the project.
from the start to guarantee public participation in the research process (Duim et al., 2001).

The paper first discusses the concept of sustainable tourism development and introduces the so-called ‘corporate response model to the macro-marketing environment’ (Dam, 1997). This model is used for identifying topical issues related to sustainable tourism development on Texel. Second, it highlights tourism development on Texel. Third, the paper discusses sustainable development of tourism on Texel in terms of the profit, ecological, socio-cultural and risk margins as discerned by the model of Dam (1997). Finally, the paper concludes with the main results and seeks to generate a learning curve which might benefit other regions in the world coping with the socio-cultural, economic and environmental consequences of tourism.

Tourism and Sustainable Development

Ten years after the Rio Summit, the concept of sustainability has become both popular and disputed. Almost all levels of government policy and almost every economic sector of society now call for new forms of growth, which incorporates aspects of environmental awareness, integration of economic and social development and equitable economic development. However, there is little agreement on how to achieve these objectives. Tourism researchers and policy makers have been relatively slow to respond to the concept of sustainable development and have remained somewhat detached from the continuing debate on the interpretation and implications of sustainability (Butler, 1999; Hunter, 2002). For example, in The Netherlands, this discussion started 10 years ago. In 1994, the Dutch Council for Nature Policy (1994) provoked the first debates in their report ‘Are we going too far?’ In this report they posed the following central question: ‘Do we have to go and see everything which seems attractive and interesting to us, and at what price do we allow ourselves the space and freedom to do so?’ In subsequent years intergovernmental ‘task forces’ were founded, and reluctantly the Dutch tourism sector admitted that a percentage of international tourism could be seen as a non-sustainable pattern of production and consumption. Since then, however, we have seen the emergence of substantial literature on sustainable tourism, in The Netherlands as well as abroad. Publications diverge from attempts to, conceptually, reconnect the concerns of ‘sustainable’ tourism with those of sustainable development (Hardy et al., 2002; Hunter, 1995, 1997; Sharpley, 2000) to management-oriented literature including approaches and tools to better integrate tourism development and the protection of the natural (or cultural) environment at tourist destination areas.

Not surprisingly, in this growing literature, there is disagreement over the exact nature, content and meaning of ‘sustainable’ tourism. As Mowforth and Munt (1998) make clear, sustainability is used by a variety of interests in a variety of ways as a means of supporting and enhancing their basis of power. This ranges from the activities of the tourism industry to the interpretation adopted or foisted upon Third World governments or the discourse adopted by the myriad of environmental organisations. In short, sustainability and ‘sustainable’ tourism reflect a discourse that is contested and through which power circulates (ibid: 324). The discourse entails various topics. The first topic is the relation between
sustainable development and ‘sustainable’ tourism. Hunter (1995) in particular stresses the importance of a broader approach, whereby the remit of ‘sustainable’ tourism is re-conceptualised primarily in terms of tourism’s contribution to sustainable development. The predominant sustainable tourism approach is overly tourism-centric and parochial (with a very limited view on scope, scale and context). As a consequence, practical measures designed to implement ‘sustainable tourism’ are failing to address many of the issues critical to the concept of sustainable development. They may even actually work against the general requirements of sustainable development (Hunter, 1995: 156; see also Butler, 1999; Duim, 1997, 2001; Sharpley, 2000). Second, there are weak and strong interpretations of sustainability that can be traced back to the argument between anthropocentric and eco-centric stances (Hunter, 1997). Third, measurability of sustainability is also challenged. In recent years concepts like ‘environmental utilisation space’ (Weterings & Opschoor, 1992; WRR, 1995), carrying capacity or Ecological Footprint (Hunter, 2002; Wackernagel & Rees, 1996) have been introduced in an attempt to pin down the (maximum permitted) damage to the environment. However, measurement of sustainability is seriously hampered by both statistical and more fundamental uncertainty (Caalders et al., 1999; WRR, 1995). Fourth, the scale of sustainable tourism is also contested, focusing on the discussion between mass and alternative tourism (Butler, 1999) and on the global-local nexus.

This paper, however, focuses primarily on the question of scope. Recently the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment published the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (VROM, 2002). Apart from the fact that tourism is not on the agenda of this National Strategy, it was also criticised for not being focused enough. According to the SER (2002) it lacks a sense of urgency. It does not address the question of which problems are more critical than others, nor does it provide strategic choices and solutions. The National Strategy motivated The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (the WRR) to go one step further. They urged the Government to go back to the basics (WRR, 2002). The National Strategy attempts to systematically weigh the ecological, socio-cultural and economic aspects of almost every policy domain. As a result all governmental policy should be weighted against sustainability criteria. This makes sustainability a meta-concept, a principle that acknowledges that all values, needs, institutions, time- and spatial-scales are connected. As such it favours an integrated approach. In contrast, the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy prefers an approach that starts from sustainability as a new value expressing the belief that the ecological foundation of our world should not be endangered. The Brundland report ‘addresses problems in the North as well as the South and exceeds conflicts of interest between developed and less developed countries. The strength of this new value is the reference to the fundamental partnership between rich and poor, now and later, through a common ecological foundation’ (ibid: 14; authors’ translation).

The discourse on sustainability should indeed not be free floating; rather it should concentrate on urgent issues and provide strategic choices and solutions. However, going back to the basics as suggested by the WRR (2002), unacceptably curtails the discussion on sustainable tourism development. One of the main achievements of blending the sustainability debate with tourism is
that sustainable tourism development is now an integral part of the political agenda of many international governmental and non-governmental organisations (like UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, WTO, CSD, etc.), as well as part of regional and local discourses. In these forums discussions about tourism are linked not only to ecological issues, but also to other sustainability issues, such as poverty, culture, land use, gender, liveability and the rights of indigenous people. Moreover, tourism as a service industry is not only based on an ecological foundation, but also on a socio-cultural base (Duim, 2002). Cultural products (like monuments, architecture, heritage, etc.) as well as cultural processes are essential parts of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1995). The latter designates the social field of the production of meaning and the realm of ideas. The sustainability discussion focuses on the way and the extent to which tourism impacts on the processes through which people make sense of themselves and their lives. Therefore, this paper asserts that sustainable tourism should be a complex and multi-faceted notion (Caalders et al., 1999). To explain this multi-dimensionality to the participants of the workshops during the research process and to structure the research findings (see Duim et al., 2001), the so-called ‘corporate response model to the macro-marketing environment’ (Dam, 1997) was used (see Figure 1). This model differentiates among four ‘margins’ within which enterprises, or in this case tourism regions, operate. These margins are ‘profit’, ‘risk’, ‘ecological’ and ‘socio-cultural’.

The vertical axis – profit and risk – refers to ‘traditional’ practices. Profit and risk are those marginal boundaries within which, in this case, a tourism region operates. The profit margin is defined in terms of customer benefits: products have to
appeal to customers to enable a firm or a region to function and compete. Destinations should be attractive for tourists. In the case of a region, however, customers are not only tourists: local people in need of employment, employees, and local producers offering products to the tourist or tourism companies, banks and investors are also considered clientele. The risk margin is defined in terms of liability and accountability: legal regulations are important aspects of this margin. Closely related is the issue of politics, which is virtual terra incognito with regard to tourism (Hitchcock et al., 1993). Apart from the political and legal aspects, the risk margin also may be extended to cover ‘moral’ liability. Here the risk margin touches the socio-cultural margin. The two other margins on the horizontal axis are particularly relevant in the discussion of sustainable tourism development. The ecological margin refers to the environmental consequences of tourism. This issue relates to two fundamental discussions: the impact of tourism on the environment with respect to the degradation of water, soil and air, and the material and symbolic transformations of landscape (Ashworth & Dietvorst, 1995). The socio-cultural environment, including stakeholders and public groups, is designated as public acceptability. This is related to emotional responses and the public image and the debate on the social and cultural ‘costs and benefits’ of tourism development (see e.g. Kadt, 1992; Wood, 1993). Both margins on the horizontal axis indirectly influence regional tourism development. Although the macro-environment itself has no voice, the macro-environmental influences are expressed by various pressure groups. Each of them has its own perspectives on the sustainable development of tourism. ‘Sustainable development of tourism’ is – as stated above – a contested concept that is ‘socially constructed’ and reflects the interests of those involved. As a consequence there is no agreement on the exact nature, content and meaning of sustainability as different interests have adopted and defend their own ‘language’ (discourse) of sustainability (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). This is reflected in the practices of organisations on Texel.

**Tourism Development on Texel**

Texel is a small island, approximately 160 square kilometres in size and has a regular population of 13,450 inhabitants (2001). The island is situated in the northwest of The Netherlands, in the so-called ‘Wadden area’, the Dutch shallows (Figure 2). In physical–geographical terms, the Dutch shallows are part of a more elaborate wetland area, which includes the Wadden islands located north of Germany and west of Denmark. Texel is the westernmost island of this group. Much of the dune-area in the western part is a protected nature area (approximately 4000 hectares). The main village is Den Burg, with a population of approximately 7000. A village called De Koog attracts most of the tourists on the island. On the island internal disputes on land use between tourism, agriculture and nature conservation and external influences such as climatic change and its consequences for rising sea levels, EU policies, especially on agriculture, and the possible loss of control over developments due to globalisation processes are causing severe uncertainty. It is unclear how decisions about the future have to be made and by whom.

The agricultural sector economically, culturally and politically dominated the island for centuries. However, within half a century, tourism became the main
source of income for the island. In terms of gross turnover, tourism accounts for
about 91 million Euros, compared to 55 million Euros for agriculture and 32
million Euros for fisheries (WLTO/KAVB, 2000). Agriculture is now the second
source of income on the island although it occupies half of the territory. By contrast
with agriculture in much of The Netherlands, the intensive livestock breeding
industry is almost non-existent. Instead there is a mixed pattern of dairy cows,
sheep, bulbs, and some arable farming of crops. In line with developments in the
rest of the country, employment in this sector is decreasing, with the number of

As early as the beginning of the 18th century, travellers frequented Texel
(Ginkel, 1995). According to travel reports of Egmond van der Nyenbureg and
Heyman the people on Texel were ‘thrifty, restrained in tacking food and profit
seeking’ (Ginkel, 1995: 11; authors’ translation). By the end of the 19th century,
modern tourism had started. Publications of J.P. Thissse, which date back to the
beginning of the 20th century, inspired people to visit the island. Thissse worked
on the island as a teacher for 25 years and was impressed by the abundance of
flora and fauna. Many of his ideas on nature conservation were revolutionary at
the time but today are generally accepted. He promoted Texel in the early 20th
century as a paradise for naturalists: ‘In the whole world no landscape can be
found more important than the dunes. In terms of greatness and originality, the
landscape of the North Sea Island equals mountain ranges’ (Fey, 1992: 13;
authors’ translation). The initial work of Thissse had two major consequences:
Texel became an object for nature conservation as well as tourism. In 1896 a
beach pavilion was opened in De Koog and two years later the first ‘Guide for
Texel’ was published. In 1908 a beach hotel in De Koog opened and in the same
year locals founded the Vereniging voor Vreemdelingenverkeer (VVV), a local
tourist information office (Barnard & Rommets, 1998; Ginkel, 1995). Since the
Second World War, the tourism sector has grown tremendously (Ginkel, 1995).
Especially during the 1960s the number of visitors as well as number of tourism beds on the island ‘boomed’ (Hpart, 1990). Within a ten-year period, the number of registered beds increased from approximately 14,000 in 1960 to 33,000 in 1970 (Hpart, 1990: 5). The increase in the number of campsites was responsible, for the most part, for this growth. Against this background, the municipality of Texel issued the first ‘Basic Plan on Recreation’ in 1974. The plan stipulated the maximum number of tourism beds as 47,000. This figure is still used by all parties on the island as a reasonable ‘ceiling’ for tourism growth. The number of tourism beds currently amounts to approximately 43,000 (Figure 3).

The levelling in the growth of tourism beds does not imply stability in tourism development in general. The importance of the sector increased in terms of turnover rate and employment. Moreover, from 1985 to 1990 the number of overnight stays on the island grew from 2.37 million to 3.5 million (Grontmij/BCI, 1994), an increase of nearly 50% in five years. Estimates of current overnight stays are approximately 5.7 million. Nearly 1.14 million people visited the island in 2000, of which 828,000 were tourists. The average length of stay is seven nights. Germans stay on average 9.9 nights on the island and account for 45% of all overnight stays. Dutch tourists, on average, have shorter visits (5.6 nights). While the average group size is three, most groups consist of two persons. Tourists spend on average 18.60 per day (excluding ferry and lodging costs). Growth has been possible due to among other things a change in accommodation types: bungalows have replaced accommodation capacity in campsites (Duim et al., 2001). In 1998, campsites made up approximately 42% of tourism beds and bungalows/summer houses about 38% (Gemeente Texel, 1998). Geographically, tourist accommodations are concentrated in De Koog, which is situated half way along the island on the west coast, and De Cocksdorp, located in the north. Smaller bungalow parks, campsites, and hotels are scattered all around the island.

In sum, compared to many other tourism regions in the world, tourism on Texel has grown more or less organically and it is embedded in the local economic structure. There are many linkages between tourism and the rest of the local economy and the ‘cultural distance’ between tourists (mainly Dutch and German) and locals is relatively small, although complaints about tourists are as old as tourism development.
Sustainability Issues on Texel

As Adams (1992:219) asserts, whatever its theoretical eclecticism and inconsistencies, there is no doubt that sustainable development has succeeded in drawing attention to a series of significant problems and real issues. Sustainable development is a discourse that should be lodged in practice, within the daily realities of people’s lives and the planning environments within which their conditions are structured. What are the real issues with respect to sustainable tourism development on Texel?

The results of the household surveys, interviews and workshops discern a number of issues, which are particularly relevant when discussing sustainable development of tourism on Texel (Duim et al., 2001; see also Lengkeek & Velden, 2000; Philipsen et al., 2003).

First, these issues are positioned at the interface between adjoining margins (Figure 4). So attention is drawn towards the synergy and conflicts that arise between margins due to issue interactions. For example, introducing environmental management systems for entrepreneurs deals with the ecological as well as the profit margin. The Dutch experiences have taught us that practices aimed at reducing environmental impacts need to have pay-off if they are to be successful. Second, various interest groups on the island represent the margins. Obviously the tourism industry voiced by the VVV Texel reflects the profit margin, although this position is challenged by the agricultural sector. The laws and regulations of local government articulate the ‘risk margin’. The Association for the Preservation for Nature (Natuurmonumenten) and the Forest Service (Staatsbosbeheer) personify the ecological margin. A local action group, called ‘Tien voor Texel’ (literally: a Ten for Texel), embodies the socio-cultural margin. Each of them has its own perspectives on the sustainable development of tourism.

Over-reliance on tourism

Texel is faced with the threat of the development of an economic monoculture. Although people on Texel are positive about the increase of wealth,
infrastructure and liveability that result from tourism development, almost 70% of the population believes there is too much economic dependence on tourism. Not surprisingly, 83% of the respondents support the existing suspension of further quantitative growth. In our survey, 19% of all employed members of the household had a job in tourism (Duim et al., 2001). Of all the employed respondents, 23% worked in the tourism sector. Official employment data (LISA, 2001) indicates that 22% of all jobs on Texel are in tourism (‘hotel and catering industry’ and ‘culture, recreation and sports’). However, seasonal employment in tourism is not included in the LISA-data. The seasonal demand for employment in tourism is estimated to be at least 1000 jobs (Kroon, pers com). Taking into account that other sectors will also have some seasonal demand and weighing the fact that tourism overall has far more part-time employment compared to other sectors, we assume that tourism is responsible for an additional 10% of employment, amounting to 32% overall. Indirect employment also significantly depends on tourism. Employment on the ferryboat, for example (listed in official statistics under ‘transport’) is to a large extent tourism-related. The number of shops on the island is much larger than the average in municipalities of similar size. The fact that ‘construction’ is well represented on the island is also due to tourism. If the estimate of many representatives on the island of 75% direct and indirect employment proves to be accurate, this would imply that over 60% of the ‘other’ (non-tourism) employment depends on tourism. This may very well be the case.

The dominance of tourism is generally more accepted by those who are economically dependent on tourism or own tourism enterprises. The impression is that many tourism companies on Texel are still in the hands of local entrepreneurs, and hence ‘leakages’ are smaller than in many other tourism regions. However, there are at least three developments that endanger local ownership and control. First, Dutch or German Othersiders (in Dutch Overkanters; literally ‘those from the other side’, referring to people from the mainland) own most of the bungalows in parks and most of the holiday homes. Second, the system of franchising is already quite common on the island and will increase in the future. Many ‘local’ companies have already become part of larger tourism ‘chains’. Finally, a growing number of companies are in the hands of Othersiders as well. According to some of the interviewees, it can be expected that a number of the larger companies, which are still in the hands of people from Texel, will move into external hands when they enter the market. According to the owner of a large holiday park ‘this is a major concern for Texel, as many of them are not emotionally involved in the island and are not willing to be on the Board of one of the tourism associations on Texel’.

National or even trans-national investments will increasingly affect product development on Texel, since prices of these companies will be too expensive for inhabitants to afford. On Texel, many interviewees also referred to the lack of young people able to take over businesses. Many leave the island for educational reasons and never come back as they find other and usually better jobs on the mainland. However, local ownership can also conflict with principles of sustainability. Usually opportunities for local ownership are not equally accessible, leading to ‘local elites’ (Meethan, 2001). Especially in the main street of De Koog a few entrepreneurs dominate tourism product development. Their main
interest seems to be the fast return on investment and not the sustainable development of the island.

Third, not only quantity but also quality of tourism employment and good ‘employership’ is at stake. On Texel, the issue of employment became particularly prevalent due to ‘overheating’ of the labour market in the late 1990s. There is a shortage of employees, especially in the high season, on the island. The problem is not restricted to Texel, but is a general problem for the tourism sector throughout The Netherlands. At least 1000 people are needed every high season to fill all the extra jobs in tourism on the island (restaurants and bars, hotels and bungalow parks). Every year it becomes more and more difficult to find people who can fill these jobs. Until recently, competition especially with other sectors (retail, ICT, care) was fierce. The main obstacles are the low quality of jobs, the seasonal character of the employment and the low wages. One of the strategies that may help overcome the friction in the labour market is to adopt a policy of ‘good employership’. Such a strategy is particularly needed with regard to the seasonal workforce. Currently little attention is paid to employer–employee relations and working conditions, especially in the lower segments of the labour market. More flexibility and opportunities to combine work and vacation on the island might help to attract new groups. Whereas at present employers on the island consider one another to be competitors in the labour market, a joint strategy for the island (e.g. by the VVV Texel, the Job Centre or one of the tourism associations) might prove to be more rewarding overall; and whereas Texel now promotes itself as a ‘green’ and ‘sustainable’ island to potential visitors, it could also try to create an image of a ‘pleasant workplace’ for potential workers.

Finally, sustainability is considered to increase with more linkages between tourism and other sectors. One specific type of linkage is the use of local products by the tourism industry. On Texel many initiatives are taken to stimulate the production of ‘real’ Texel products. These include the ‘Stichting Stimulering Texelse Producten’ (Foundation for the Stimulation of Texel Products), composed of the municipality, the agricultural sector and some entrepreneurs; the ‘Vereniging Texels Produkt Promotie’ (Texel Association for Product Promotion) and the ‘Stichting Waddengroep’ (linking together agrarians from the whole Wadden area). These initiatives are aimed at tourists as well as the general public. Members of the Stichting Waddengroep sell products in shops all over The Netherlands. The other two organisations focus mainly on the local market. The Foundation for the Stimulation of Texel Products supports new entrepreneurs. One of the projects of this foundation is to stimulate the production and consumption of lamb meat on the island. Lambs and sheep are an important ‘symbol’ for Texel, but restaurants import lamb meat, for the most part, from New Zealand. For several years attempts have been made to create a new production chain that includes local farmers, slaughtermen, butchers, distributive traders, and restaurants. The project aims at increasing yearly sales from 1500 to 7000 lambs (Texelse Courant, 2001). Implementation, however, is hampered by significantly higher prices of local meat, the lack of sufficient year-round supply, and particularly the competition among local parties. The Texel Association for Product Promotion combines approximately 22 producers from the island promoting their products. These products are based on a recipe originating from Texel, or are made from ingredients that, for at least 75%,
from the island or are at least 75% produced on the island. Producers range from restaurants, shops selling by-products of sheep (wool, bedspreads) or Texel beer and of course ‘Juttertje’, the liqueur based on a Texel recipe. A survey showed that the turnover of 32 producers of local products (members as well as non-members of the association) is around 10 million Euros, creating approximately 85 full-time jobs. The non-food products based on sheep wool and milk make up the most important part. For all producers of local products on Texel, around 50, a yearly turnover of 15.5 million Euros has been estimated (Stichting Waddengroep, 2000). The Association has additional value in terms of public relations. For example, 70,000 brochures are distributed on the island and mainland each year. Only 10 out of 37 producers sell their goods outside Texel (of which only two sell outside The Netherlands). Increased selling outside Texel extends the reputation of Texel. From the point of view of sustainable development, the Stichting Waddengroep is the most interesting of the three. In the Dutch Wadden area so-called ‘Wadden products’ are manufactured. These are mainly dairy products originating from the island or the first 25 kilometres of mainland bordering the Wadden Sea. At least 51% of the ingredients should originate from this area. Products are environmentally friendly, originating from organic or biodynamic farms. Sint Donatus is the main selling point on Texel, but products are sold in around 450 shops in The Netherlands as well as in Belgium.

Land use conflicts and environmental management

Particularly the agricultural sector has questioned the economic control of the tourism sector. Although the agricultural sector still dominates local politics, its position is uncertain and challenged by external influences, such as climatic change, EU policies and land claims by nature conservation and tourism. First, as a result of climatic change the sea level is expected to rise between 25 and 75 centimetres in the next 30 years. This is likely to result in salination of the most important polders of Texel and compaction of their underlying clay layers, which would have important consequences for soil fertility and subsequently yield per acre. In addition, agriculture is strongly affected by the opening up of the European market and significant reductions in subsidies. Finally, nature conservation and tourism challenge agricultural land use. However, on Texel the relationship between nature, agriculture, and tourism is not as conflicting as it once was. For example, in 1981 farmers protested against the intention of creating a national park by ‘delivering’ 20,000 litres of manure to the municipality. Today, the tourism sector, in particular, acknowledges the importance of nature and landscape on the island as a main attraction. Natural areas and the national park are well safeguarded by national laws and regulations. Then again, there still are the ‘cultural differences’ between the three domains, especially between the agricultural sectors on the one-hand and nature conservationists and tourism entrepreneurs on the other. For example, the agricultural sector is seen by the tourism sector as too reactive. As one of the representatives of the tourism sector stated: ‘they are not pro-active, they depend too much on subsidies and are not enterprising’.

Discussions on land use today concentrate on three issues: the broadening of agriculture in general and camping at farms in particular; the preservation of 4000 hectares of grass land on the island; and multifunctional land use. As the
future of agriculture on Texel is dubious, two strategies are favoured. A number of the farmers prefer scaling up, which is contested by the tourism sector as well as the nature conservationists. The other strategy focuses on ideas and projects for broadening agriculture. In principal there are various ways to do so. First, by offering auxiliary (tourism) products and services, varying from offering lodging on the farm, selling local products and offering services (excursions, meals, hiring out rooms, storage for caravans, etc.). Second, by nature and landscape management by farmers; and, third, via biological or ecological ways of farming. Increasing the number of camping places at farms on the island is questioned by the tourism sector. They fear the unfair competition and/or lack of quality offered by farmers. Nevertheless the assistance of the tourism industry to agriculture seems essential. For example, the covenant on Texel to safeguard 4000 hectares of grassland on the island is endangered. This grassland is considered to be typical for the island, just as the sheep that graze these lands. The grassland is part of the tourist image and attraction of the island. However, the agricultural sector is not able to stand by this covenant and looks for more profitable ways of farming, like floriculture. Examples of multifunctional land use are also to be found on the island, for example between nature conservation and tourism. For example, Holiday Park De Krim extends the current golf link to 18 holes in an ecologically friendly manner. Nature conservation organisations and the management of De Krim together provided an integrated plan, which suits both interests.

Various actors on the island have tried to pacify these and other conflicts of interests. Obviously local government has the responsibility to tackle land use conflicts. However, many respondents point at a local ‘policy of tolerance’. The Netherlands offers an extensive system of spatial planning. Some consider the country to be over-regulated. All construction and land use changes are subject to democratic procedures of decision-making. In spite of this, one of the main complaints of households, as well as organisations on Texel, was the lack of monitoring or control of existing regulations and laws. On Texel many exemptions to the rule are taking place. In the National Law for Spatial Planning, a procedure under Article 19 allows local government to issue a permit allowing inhabitants to deviate from the zoning plan. This procedure is applied far more often on Texel than in comparable municipalities in The Netherlands. In 2000, 24 major exemptions of the rule were approved. Many respondents dislike this tolerance on the part of the municipality and plea for a stricter enforcement of the rules and regulations (see Duim et al., 2001).

More generally, the political climate of Texel is not geared to lengthening planning horizons and to coping with uncertainty. Due to the small scale of the island, the municipality and people are closely tied. According to a study by the University of Groningen this close-knit community has its disadvantages as well: the interdependence between political parties, local administration, civil servants and population possibly influences integrity and objectivity (Texelse Courant, 2001). Secondly, the closeness between people and administration on Texel and the specific local culture has another consequence: focusing on small issues and overlooking long-term planning (Texelse Courant, 2001). Many locals complain about the lack of vigour within the municipality. As one of the locals argued: ‘Texel is the archetype of the Dutch “poldermodel”, everybody talks with everybody, but no (radical) choices are made’. Another respondent described the
situation as ‘paralysing, as everybody sits on the fence, runs with the hare and hunts with the hound’.

This political climate and the domination of local politics by the agricultural sector inspired the Board of the VVV Texel to instigate a participatory planning process: the so-called ‘Texel 2030’ scenario project. The ‘Texel 2030’ process formally aimed at making a contribution to the public debate and decision making on a new Tourism Master Plan for the island. However, it also served to increase the influence of the tourism sector in local policies (Philipsen et al., 2003).

The process was intended to develop scenarios for the future of Texel. It included a ‘search-conference’ in 2000 to discuss possible future developments for Texel. In this discussion tourism played a key role. The conference brought together different experts both from the mainland and the island (such as environmental planners, nature conservationists, tourism experts, farmers and people from cultural institutions). The conference resulted in four different scenarios for the future. These scenarios were presented to and discussed with the local community of Texel during a ‘choice conference’ (also in 2000), at the end of which the local community was asked to give their preferences. Texel 2030 aimed at an integrated portrayal of the future of Texel. The results of the process were turned into a new, fifth scenario called ‘Texel Unique Island’, which pictures an ‘ideal’ situation upon which new policies and decisions were supposed to be based. It aimed to give more direction to short-term planning and policies. The project seemed very promising in terms of participatory planning. Certainly it had its merits in terms of creating understanding of the future of Texel, joint learning and innovation. This is well illustrated by the fact that the scenarios, as well as nine representations of individual opinions on the character and future of Texel now are permanently exposed in Ecomare, the most visited attraction on the island with over 300,000 visitors in 2002. However, in other respects the Texel 2030 project was not as successful as presumed (Philipsen et al., 2003). Although people from the island, especially from the tourism sector, initiated the project, experts from the other side dominated. Political, scientific and technocratic discourses prevailed. For many people from Texel the issues at stake were too abstract, scenarios too extreme, and the time frame (2000–2030) too long (Duim et al., 2001; Philipsen et al., 2003). Although a considerable number of people from Texel were involved in the process, including students from secondary schools, it was not perceived by everyone as a process ‘owned’ by the islanders. This was also confirmed by the results of our survey. Even though the local newspaper and television announced the Texel 2030 events for weeks, only half of the people interviewed were aware and informed of this process. Only 17% answered the question whether their voice was heard. Two-thirds of this group felt that their opinion was not taken into account. An additional problem in the process was the inability of participants to disconnect the overall development perspectives from their direct interests: some of them felt strongly threatened by certain or even all of the perspectives.

Furthermore, as anticipated, the municipality was ambivalent and did not take a leading role, being used to a more ambiguous political process. According to Philipsen et al. (2003), on the one hand they facilitated the process by its membership of the Board of VVV Texel and seemingly supported the need for a balanced and integrated vision on the future of the island. On the other hand they
re-adopted the existing policy of ‘divide and rule’ the moment resistance from farmers and (to a lesser extent) Ten for Texel emerged. Both separately submitted a report to the municipality in which the results of Texel 2030 were questioned. Ten for Texel particularly voiced the issue of liveability (see Lengkeek & Velden, 2000). As a result, the municipality eventually had to take the reports of the Texel 2030 process, as well as the reports of the farmers and Ten for Texel seriously and contracted a consultant from the mainland to make a new vision for the island. This vision was published in 2002, once more after an extensive process of consultation, meetings and discussion (Gemeente Texel, 2003).

To a certain extent the Foundation for Sustainable Texel continues with the participatory elements in the Texel 2030 process. In this Foundation the tourism sector, nature conservationists and the agricultural sector discuss and implement projects aiming at a sustainable future for Texel (Stichting Duurzaam Texel, 2000). First acting as the Workgroup for Sustainable Tourism, it later developed into a Foundation looking at the sustainability of the entire island. The projects of the Foundation cover a wide range of fields, from sustainable tourism to self-sufficiency in term of energy provision (by windmills and development of a tidal power plant), from mobility to the sustainable building of houses (duurzaam bouwen). One of the projects focuses on limiting the number of cars on the island and stimulates the use of bikes and public transport, as the growing number of cars on the island increasingly causes problems (long waiting hours for the ferry, shortage of parking places and overcrowded roads). To promote the use of bikes and public transport the Foundation aims at an integrated chain mobility plan. Another example of ‘good practice’ is the so-called ‘Environmental Monitor’ (Milieu-barometer) of the Recron, the National Association of Recreation Entrepreneurs (Recron, 2000). The ‘Environmental Monitor’ is a Dutch pilot project focused on sustainable adjustments in hotels and restaurants, but also in campsites and bungalow parks. Texel is a forerunner in this respect.

Liveability

Tourism affects households as well as organisations in their daily lives, and hence the public acceptability of tourism is at stake. Not surprisingly, tourism development is widely discussed on Texel. There is a lot of support for as well as opposition to tourism development on the island. These discussions reflect questions of liveability (Boomars & Hidding, 1997; Lengkeek & Velden, 2000; Spyskma, 1996) and Tien voor Texel epitomises these feelings. Time and again Tien voor Texel has put liveability (leefbaarheid) on the political agenda of Texel. The results of the household survey show that on Texel, intrusion on people’s values and norms is at stake. For example, more than three-quarters of the respondents on Texel believe that tourism has considerably changed daily life. Only half of the respondents consider this change positive. The reasons for some of the dissatisfaction are more noteworthy than the percentages found. An important explanatory variable is the so-called ‘appropriation value’ (Lengkeek & Velden, 2000). People ‘confiscate’ and become familiar with a place, thus it becomes ‘their’ place, ‘their’ island. And this transformation process of space into place includes demarcation, exclusion and containment (Short, 2001: 15). In other words, tourism is both creating and undermining the construction of place.
Tourism constructs space through time-space convergence and processes of homogenisation. But tourism also creates places. In this respect Meethan (2001: 36–7) and Lengkeek (2002) adapted the concepts of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces of Lefebvre (1991). Spatial practices are concerned with production and reproduction and thus are the realm of the economic. As we have seen, on Texel there is a shift from agriculture to nature conservation and tourism as the principal spatial practice. Representations of spaces are conceptualisations of space in terms of policies and planning and thus the spaces of politicians, planners and technocrats. It is the realm in which organisations on the island and from the ‘Otherside’ conceptualise, discuss, organise and plan the future of the island. Traditionally local politics has been dominated by the agricultural sector. The main local party, Texels Belang, mainly represents their interests. Representational spaces are spaces as directly lived, which are partly imagined and which can provide the focus for identity. The increasing dominance of tourism in the production of the place called Texel strengthens the processes of commodification on the island. However, in more recent years conceptualisations of the nature of commodities have broadened away from a focus on the production and consumption of material goods to encompass non-material or symbolic elements. In the creation of tourism places, more intangible qualities of places are being utilised (Meethan, 2001). These intangible qualities are represented in certain forms of narratives, which encapsulate selected readings of the environment, as in tourism promotional literature and brochures These meanings, narratives and symbols, which are the raw material that are commodified to produce tourist space, however, are derived from lived experiences. At the level of representational spaces, therefore, struggles over the symbolic construction of space ‘are struggles to objectify meanings, to impose upon, or appropriate from the environment a particular order, a dynamic process of contestation and appropriation through which particular interests are maintained and legitimised’ (Meethan, 2001: 37).

Assessing the impacts of tourism on liveability should acknowledge this ‘multi-layeredness’ of space. At first sight many discussions on liveability address the consequences of particular spatial practices. Tourism facilities are (perceived to be) built in the wrong places, tourism creates crowded places; traffic jams (even on the island!) and hinder; and tourism developments, nature conservation and environmental regulations obstruct agricultural development. However, this realm of small complaints, frequently blown up in the local newspaper Texelse Courant, reflects more profound conflicts over the symbolic production of space. Members of the community of Texel gain their self-esteem and confidence from comparison with others, especially in a wider context. Complaints about Othersiders or tourists have been heard throughout time and divide ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘here’ and ‘there’, the vernacular and the universal. Nevertheless these complaints need to be acknowledged. More generally, one could even propose that tourism is not merely the agent of change, but rather, that it is indicative of other processes (Meethan, 2001: 169). Perhaps the local impacts of economic, cultural and political globalisation processes, or the influx of Othersiders buying first or second houses on the island, greatly affects the quality of life. Moreover, it also reflects the fact that these feelings of discontent are not adequately represented in terms of policy and planning. Or at least that
they are perceived to be represented inadequately. The distrust in local politics has already been mentioned. More importantly, the way Texel is conceptualised by people and institutions on the other side creates commotion and confusion. Texel is impinged upon by governmental policies at the provincial, national as well as European level, and by principles of nature conservationists and increasingly practices of tourism entrepreneurs that are not rooted in Texel. Therefore, a good understanding of the grounds for discontent is the first step to solving problems, even if it reflects the frustration of a few. As Lengkeek and Velden state (2000: 15), part of the solution is the recognition of the problem and the creation of trust in the process to resolve the problems. It is exactly because trust in local politics is lacking on Texel that the local actors sometimes take over some roles of the municipality, as in the case of Texel 2030 or the Foundation for Sustainable Texel. Although the 2003 Policy Document on Tourism and Recreation (Gemeente Texel, 2003) acknowledges liveability–aspects, these aspects give no direction to the policy document and its course of action for the next ten years. They are shoved aside in favour of village development plans, which have to be prepared by village development committees as, according to the municipality, ‘liveability is only a picture at a given moment of time about which only citizens are able to acquire knowledge’ (Gemeente Texel, 2003: 35; authors’ translation). Active participation of villagers and village development committees has become one of the main issues of local policies (Gemeente Texel, 2002). This is a significant change in the approach to local policy. However, the biggest village on the island, Den Burg, surprisingly does not have a village development committee. The democratic role of village committees is also discussed. Moreover, recent research shows that, despite the small size of the villages, members of these committees are not well known and most people were ignorant of or were not enthusiastic about the functioning of these committees (Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek, 2001).

**Conclusions and Discussion**

The sustainable development of tourism on Texel clearly is socially constructed and reflects the interests of those involved. This paper related sustainable development of tourism on Texel to the four margins discerned by the corporate response model (Dam, 1997). Figure 4 summarises the real and urgent issues on the island. They relate to spatial practices (land use conflicts, economic dominance, and environmental management), as well as the conceptualisation of these issues by politicians, planners, and organisations. But even more importantly, they are represented in struggles over the symbolic construction of Texel. The scenarios put forward in the Texel 2030 project partially reflect these symbolic constructions but were also contested by people who felt expelled from this process like ‘Tien voor Texel’ and farmer organisations. The discussion of these ‘real issues’ also illustrates the danger of going back to basics as suggested by the WRR (2002). Focussing solely on the ecological foundation of sustainable development would veil the important socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability.

Nevertheless, environmental management receives a lot of attention on Texel. In this way, Texel tries to strengthen its image of the ‘green’ island. Further,
discussions and conflicts over land use link the ecological to the risk margin. Practically, these discussions have been largely resolved by the creation of a National Park on the island. Much more emphasis is now placed on the future of the agricultural land. This is an important issue for the agricultural sector as well as the tourism sector, as agricultural fields are considered an important characteristic of the Texel landscape and sheep are the symbol of the island. The land use and landscape of Texel will be determined by the future of the agricultural sector over the next 20 to 30 years.

Linking the socio-cultural to the risk margin requires local participation and control over tourism development. The issues of liveability in fact are to be traced back to the (perceived) lack of a voice in development issues. On Texel many legal possibilities to exert democratic control exist, but locals do not frequently use them. Things are often dealt with in an informal way or they are not thoroughly discussed in order not to suppress assumed unanimity on the island (see also Ginkel, 1995). The upper left side of the model highlights the (over-)reliance on tourism. Local support for tourism development largely rests on the economic dependence on tourism, which on Texel is very high: around 19% of the people directly – and probably some 75% directly and indirectly – depend on tourism. On Texel, many tourism facilities are still in local hands and unemployment is practically non-existent. Improving the quality of employment in tourism on Texel may be strategically important to attract sufficient workers during the high season.

However, public and political discussions on sustainable tourism development on Texel emphasise issues on the right-hand side of the model. Organisations on Texel primarily focus on the reconciliation of the profit margin with the ecological margin within a legal context. The Foundation for Sustainable Texel is doing precisely that by executing projects in the field of energy saving, sustainable construction, and mobility. Although socio-cultural issues are not absent in the discussions, they do not receive a similar amount of attention in public discourses. In terms of actual products and projects, the emphasis is unquestionably on issues represented by the right-hand side of the model. One of the reasons is that the ecological margin is well represented and voiced by pressure groups, of which there are a number on Texel. They are very well institutionalised and supported by an extensive system of laws and regulations. Land use conflicts, therefore, are easier to mitigate although procedures can be very time-consuming. The socio-cultural margin, however, is far less represented. In Texel particularly ‘Tien voor Texel’ articulates feelings of discontent, but they are not very well accepted by the dominant elite on the island. However, ‘Tien voor Texel’ effectively uses legal instruments and the local newspaper to defend their case.

The analysis also revealed some existing strategies for sustainable development of tourism that are transferable to other regions. First of all the concept of a ‘moratorium’, as applied in Texel, forces one to think not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of quality. If growth is not established through larger numbers (apart from lengthening the season), it should result from increasing quality. Second, the deliberate attempts to link tourism to other sectors of the economy, especially agriculture by creating regional products, is an important strategy towards sustainable development. Although the results in Texel are
promising, elaboration is necessary, especially in view of the difficult situation
the agricultural sector finds itself in. Third, the Foundation for Sustainable Texel
is an interesting experiment to put the concept of ‘sustainable tourism’ firmly on
the agenda. It is questionable, however, if they must adhere to a limited scope (on
the borderline of the profit and ecological margin). On Texel, it seems essential to
incorporate the socio-cultural margin as well. Last, the ‘Environmental Monitor’
in The Netherlands is a strategy that already has the attention of other countries
as well.

Although Texel presents interesting practices and strategies in terms of
sustainable tourism, it seems legitimate to conclude that the overall balance in
terms of results is still meagre. While fully acknowledging current practices and
strategies, these are mainly concerned with a so-called ‘tourism centric
approach’ to sustainable development. Instead discussion and action should
become more focused on the question of how the impacts of tourism can be
accommodated at the local level in such a way that tourism strengthens sustain-
able development. In terms of Dam (1997) a tourism centric approach includes
the design of a strategic overall package, addressing customer benefits, corpo-
rate liability, ecological impact and public acceptability. Only by carefully
designing the product and policy development, which acknowledges and
balances the four margins, will a region achieve a sustainable position within its
tourism macro-marketing environment. In practice, however, as we have seen,
most of the time the margins are dealt with only partially. It is a real challenge to
complete fully such a strategic design.

It is even more challenging to implement an approach which ideally not only
meets the criteria of sustainable tourism but supports sustainable development
in general and meets the requirements of inter- and intra-generation equality
(see Hunter, 1995). For example, on Texel one might question what the rationale
is of introducing over 1000 people as seasonal labourers from the ‘other side’ in
order to be able to receive the tourists in the peak season. Or one might question
the current contribution of tourism to the preservation of the agricultural land-
scape, which still is negligible. In this way, by addressing the relation between
tourism and sustainable development more generally, real ‘strategic’ issues can
be tackled.

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