

ONLINE TASK 2: CASES

Material for this task will be available by Monday 20th February. General instructions are below; thematic instructions and material are provided in thematic folders (1. Planning; 2. Branding; 3. Designing).

Selection of different case studies of tourism sites and resorts will frame your online group work. You have been divided into small groups (see GROUPS file). Get familiar with the material provided in the READINGS folder as well as in the thematic folders. Read and study what you find interesting and inspiring. You are expected to refer to 2-3 of them in your essay.

This task is split into four parts: diary entries, discussion and essay. At least two diary entries are required, but more entries are allowed, and discussion in the Optima diaries is recommended. Read the instructions below carefully.

1. Diary entry #1

Decide your own perspective. Write it to the diary in your group's thematic folder. Explain why you have chosen this perspective. Your perspective can be related to your field of study and expertise, or it can be a personal approach.

Make your diary entry already by Wednesday 22nd February.

2. Online meeting

Read diary entries and introductions (online task 1) by your own group members; give insights, comments and share thoughts. Agree an online meeting time with your group. You can use the Chat-tool offered through Optima or any other tools that you feel more comfortable with, e.g. skype, facebook, messenger etc. Note that Chat in Optima doesn't keep any discussions after you exit the chat.

Find out fellow students arguments and points of views, and consider yours' in relation to others. Try to understand where your perspectives, aims and roles will link, interact or even conflict. Aim is to discuss about the provided case/cases and also consider aspects of everyone's own perspectives in order to get material to your essays.

3. Diary entry #2

After the online meeting, write new diary entry based on the online meeting; what did you find out during the meeting? What new aspects it brought up? What topics were highlighted? Did you adjust your arguments or perspective according to the discussion? Did the meeting give you new ideas for your essay?

Make your second diary entry by Friday 2nd March.

4. Essay

Analyse the provided case study through your own field of study and the perspective you chose. Read instructions provided for each group carefully (in the group folders).

Be critical, consider different aspects, question and contemplate. Write from your own chosen perspective but also reflect to the perspectives of your group members. How does your perspective and role meet the others'? Write approx. 1000 words / 4 pages. Refer to 2-3 articles or other material provided in the Material & Resources folder and/or in the READINGS folder (General readings, and Additional readings).

Submit your essay to Optima return box by 12th March.

Online task 2

Essay 'Planning' in 'Planning Branding and Designing Tourism Destination', Koli, Finland.
Case study NETIF Nepal

By Caroline Knappers, 11-03-2012

Some weeks ago I became familiar with the Nepal Environment and Tourism Initiative foundation. This was the task related to the 'planning' subject of the Planning Branding and Designing Tourism Destination course. Going through the material, I read some interesting information, and certain facts and initiatives I thought might be possible implementable in Koli, the selected tourism destination for this particular course. However, I knew nothing at all about tourism in Finland, let alone Koli. In fact, I had never heard of Koli prior to enrolling for this course. This was one aspect that struck me as a possible improvement point in the Branding of this area. Now in my opinion planning branding and designing are intertwined and in thinking about ways to plan the given location, I also started to get ideas regarding the branding and designing of the area.

Since the task was to look into Nepal, I read the articles in the Optima page, and got interested in the way they are approaching their tourism. As I understand from the texts the tourism in Nepal isn't very sustainable, and there is little awareness amongst tourists regarding the environmental impact of their visit and their actions during their holiday. There is no clear legislation on how to treat the environment in order to keep it in balance. The nature is a fragile system that is influenced by our actions. In the PATA paper this is approached through educating the Nepalese population. The way they would like to execute these plans is through schools at primary and secondary level. The necessity and goals of a code of conduct is taught so that the future generation knows what to do, and what not to do. When this knowledge is educated throughout the school life of the children it will become a natural thing, and hopefully they will be an example for the generations to follow. But not only should this code of conduct be educated to the local people, but also, and especially, to the visiting tourists. In trying to preserve the Nepalese nature sights it is necessary that all parties do their best to realize this aim. Educating visitors of the area towards this code of conduct can be done through information brochures distributed in their countries of origin, and by providing the information to the traveling agencies that are active in the area. Also on site there should be sufficient information for the people visiting, both foreign and local. Emphasizing the preservation and continued existence of the nature can be a strong pressure medium in this case. The people visiting already have an interest in the area, and probably do not intent to purposely cause any harm. Despite their intentions it might very well be possible that they end up harming the environment with their actions, possibly without their knowledge. Therefore it is essential that all people coming into the area, or residing there are aware of what needs to be done or avoided to maintain Nepalese nature.

In this same PATA paper rural and urban hygiene and aesthetics are mentioned. In Kathmandu there is not such an excellent waste management system as we know it in (most parts of) Europe. There are many materials or products that can be recycled, and in order to achieve this it is necessary that garbage is separated properly. Not only to ensure the recycling system, but also to separate biodegradable material, and combustible waste. When this is done properly rest waste can be minimized. These aspects are proposed to take form in a home to home program in Kathmandu and the surrounding urban areas. In educating the residents of these urban areas the focus would be on the theme "Garbage can be a resource, not a waste". By composting the biodegradable material it is possible to create high quality soil for the growing of crops, with relatively low efforts and costs. The waste that is produced in the cooking, but also excreta from humans and animals can be added to the compost heap. By creating a system in the sanitary installation to ensure an easy to maintain composting installation it can be a true profit for the local people, and reduce the waste drastically. Regarding the combustible materials it is important to filter out recyclable materials. It would be a shame to incinerate materials that could have been recycled into new products, reducing the impact on the planet compared to extracting new resources from the soil. In the incineration process energy can be created, providing the area of electricity. In trying to achieve an optimal garbage separation and utilizing the materials and products it can be beneficial to actively cooperate with the people. When they are more involved it is easier to put more devotion in the activities. A translation from the Nepalese environment to the Finnish should not cause many problems, since garbage is a global phenomenon.

A third thing that caught my attention in reading the information on Nepal was the shelter for tourists. There is an upcoming trend for eco-lodging and wellness or yoga retreats. The Kathmandu trail in Nepal might be more of an active pastime, but the climate and somewhat rural location make it an ideal spot for such a relaxing holiday. With these kinds of retreats it would be ideal if the accommodation was accordingly, and it can be. If the hotel, lodges or apartments are built with care for the environment, using locally available building materials, and the accommodation is totally focused on the ecological sustainability, people will feel calm and peaceful, and the space will be pleasant. There are many more arguments for using locally available materials for the construction and finishing of the buildings, such as the minimized transport distance, but one key point is that by using these materials the quality of the area can be shown. When using the materials that surround the building it will blend in and become coherent union with the environment. Also the people visiting can see, experience and in fact use the nature they are staying in. It shows the beauty the nature has to offer. When the accommodation can supply itself in terms of electricity, water and heat, the impact to the surrounding environment can remain minimal, which in turn will cause for the building to look all the more naturally in its site.

After focusing on Nepal for a while, I had a Skype meeting with my group, and we discussed to task. When trying to find anything useful to say, I soon realized I didn't know much about

Koli. Therefore I decided to focus on that first, and then arrange a second meeting. I read about the national park surrounding Koli, and the Pielinen lake, and local traditions that are kept alive by the residents of the area. However, I can't feel satisfied with the information that I have. There is plenty of material about the area, but it is all from a third source. In reading through it, and looking at photographs I get enough enthusiasm to visit the area, but I do not get the feeling that I truly know what it is like. And honestly, I think there is no possibility to grasp the magic of a place solely by reading about it. The information I can find is directed at possible visitors, and it gives the impression that Koli is the ultimate place to spend time in nature, and that everything will be taken care of. In talking with my group members though, of which one is from around the area, I understand that there aren't that many facilities for visitors. Since the shortcomings of the area do not clearly show from the information that circulates online I find it very hard to form a proper opinion on the place, and to see what it is lacking.

During the Skype meeting we discussed the promotion of the place through products, and the discussion came to branding a place specific food product, that can be sold as a high quality delicacy from shops in Finland. By promoting the area with a small product range, or perhaps one particular special product, which should be highlighted in the shop, people can become familiar with the place, and an interest can be created to visit Koli.

Furthermore, in the Koli area there should be sufficient activities, both observing and actively participating. As I read from a brochure about the area there is a tradition to burn the crop fields in order to make them fertile again. This historic way of treating the soil is kept alive in Koli by the people who live there. This rich history can be an attraction for Koli, something that makes it stand out from other tourist destinations in Finland. Another aspect of the history is the gathering of berries. I see potential in this tradition; organizing excursions in small groups, educating the tourists on the possibilities the forests offers, and how to behave on your forest trip, with the main goal to pick berries, mushrooms and other eatable elements. Showing hardcore city people the pureness of the Finnish nature, and give them the possibility to really experience it. During their rural retreat everything should be accordingly, meaning going back to basics, with all luxury this allows. Modern inventions make it possible to enjoy many of our required standards, without the impact they usually have, referring to for example electricity use. Generating energy on site through solar or wind energy is a clean, renewable source of energy, which provides you with the same conveniences you're used to.

And enjoying these comforts does not necessarily mean having a brick building around you and a pitched roof above your head. There are plenty of examples to find where the guests are housed in alternative shelters. During the discussion on Skype the Elqui Doms astronomic hotel in Chile came up. The rooms are domes with a fabric cover, through which the stars can be seen. Another very ecofriendly hotel is the Parkhotel, where you can stay in a sewage pipe. Inside the pipe there is only the highly necessary equipment for sleeping,

though on the site all facilities are available. By choosing to sleep in this hotel you have to consider what you need carefully, and take a little more effort to get it.

As I mentioned, I had never heard of Koli before. Now of course this might be because of my personal interests, but there are places that I have heard of, which I would not necessarily consider to be worth visiting. Now I wouldn't want to suggest turning the beautiful national park of Koli into Disney land, but I'm sure some more branding wouldn't hurt. Comparing it to other attractive tourist destinations, they all have one specific element that draws the public; Lapland has Santa Claus, Nepal has the Kathmandu trail, Italy has the historic architecture. Koli also needs a unique selling point; something that draws the attention to it, and attracts a new flow of tourists to visit the area. In order for Koli to remain a tourist destination, it needs to be able to sustain itself through the visitors.

To go short, there are many possibilities in the Koli area, and there are many ways in which to improve its current status. In order to achieve the best possible tourist destination it is important to work together with a multidisciplinary team, and approach the issues in different ways. When all is in balance Koli can flourish like it never did before, and become the tourist attraction it has the potential for. Although we generally use the developed countries as example cases for the less developed countries, in the case of tourism there are many things to learn on both sides. Through mutual learning improvements and innovative ideas can be pursued, and the best possible solutions can be achieved. Sustaining the planet we share amongst us requires us to consciously decide on our future developments.

Used sources:

Sewage pipe hotel:

<http://www.dasparkhotel.net/index.php?lang=EN>

Elqui Domos hotel:

<http://www.welcomebeyond.com/property/elqui-domos/>

NETIF Nepal:

<http://www.netif-nepal.org/>

NETIF Brochure:

PDF provided through Optima

NETIF pata Seminar:

PDF provided through Optima

Koli Finland, PK Media:

<http://www.pkmedia.fi/Koliesitteet/PKmedia2007Hollanti170707.pdf>

In a recent paper entitled *Harmonization of Approach for Promoting Sustainable Tourism in Nepal: Efforts of Nepal Environment and Tourism Initiative Foundation (NETIF) to course a Responsible Path* the efforts of NETIF to promote a sustainable approach to tourism development in Nepal is described thoroughly. For about a decade, the concept of sustainable development has become a sort of gimmick in the mass media, corporate communication and in academic papers. As it is positively connotated, it has been used and abused. A common misunderstanding of the term is to reduce it to its environmental dimension, thus failing to consider its two other main pillars that are economic and socio-cultural dimensions (Saarinen, 2006). In turn, sustainable tourism refers to a sustainable approach in the specific area of the tourism industry. The NETIF paper does consider these three dimensions but fail to do so in a systematic way. In this short essay, my goal is to examine the various achievements and shortcomings of the NETIF initiatives through the prism of sustainable tourism. In order to do so, it is necessary to first remind that the concept of sustainability originally aimed at tackling the various challenges of a purely economic approach which usually prevails in public or private development projects. It should be kept in mind that sustainable development is not and has never been an end in itself. It is only a theoretical framework, a tool with which one can embrace the many dimensions of any type of projects and address the challenges it creates.

In the first part of this essay, I will shortly come back to the concept of sustainability and give examples from the NETIF case of the type of challenges that can be addressed through its prism. In the second part, I will concentrate on the solutions that the NETIF has adopted to address these challenges and make the many shortcomings of the paper at stake here appear clearly.

1 Sustainable development, what are we talking about?

1.1 Externalities

Traditionally, economics science have concentrated on the financial dimension of any activity. From the early works of Ricardo at the end of the 18th century, economists concerned themselves with market mechanisms, natural equilibriums and the various ways for a country (macroeconomics) or a company, an organisation or an individual (microeconomics) to take rationally informed decisions. For almost two centuries, this branch of social science has considerably developed and carved complex tools to assist decision-makers. The mathematical nature of economic models was particularly attractive for those willing to take rational decisions.

However useful econometrics have been, criticism started to raise during the second part of the 20th century. Indeed, a mathematical model, by nature, needs to rely on quantifiable factors. What first appears as a strength was eventually seen as a shortcoming. Any economic activity has impacts that cannot be quantified and are therefore downregarded by mathematical models. These impacts are usually described as externalities, positive or negative. A typical example of a negative externality would be air pollution caused by heavy industry. It is hardly quantifiable although it can have serious consequences.

As the focus was put on these externalities, some economists intended to include them back in their models although these became mathematically highly complex. Another answer has been to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach, as sustainable development can be characterized. It has the advantage to include those non-economical dimensions that can hardly be quantified.

Usually, sustainable development is considered in economical, environmental and socio-cultural terms. Still, many authors have intended to enlarge the concept to other dimension. An interesting example here is the idea of "aesthetic footprint" from professor Naukkarinen from the Aalto University School of Art and Design (unpublished). His main claim is that aesthetic features of any project have deep implications for the populations at stake and that it should therefore be

included in the assessment of the positive and negative outcomes of a project as well as the economical and other dimensions.

1.2 Tourism in Nepal, some challenges

The NETIF intends to take a sustainable approach to the development of tourism in Nepal. The paper we are to discuss here proposes many solutions it has opted for in this optic but, as stated in my introduction, it at no time systematically presents them as solutions to challenges that are varied in forms:

- In environmental terms the challenges that a development of tourism represent are obvious. More activity generates more traffic and more waste. Measures have to be taken in the planning phase in order to tackle them. One may think that opting for a strategy aiming at attracting mostly those "adventurous" and "nature-loving" tourists would be enough an answer. It is not. Mount Everest, probably the most famous feature of Nepalese nature, is for instance plagued with a growing trash problem. Since the first ascension in 1950s, it is estimated that 50 tons of trash, from gas canisters to human corpses and litter, have been left behind by alpinists¹.
- In socio-cultural terms, a hefty development of tourism is a direct threat to local culture and way of life. The development of touristic activities tends to drive local populations away from traditional livelihoods to work in the tourism industry. Although the immediate financial gain is attractive, it can eventually lead to the loss of important knowledge and know-how at the base of the local culture.
- Besides, it increases the dependency of the populations on a seasonal activity subject to changes in volume, depending on the World economics. In the instance of a sudden fall of tourism flow, populations that were originally self-sufficient may find themselves in very difficult financial situation.
- Last, to come back to the aesthetic dimension sometimes included in the overall concept of sustainability, a badly planned development can lead to aesthetic catastrophies. Indeed, tourism is often synonymous with real-estate opportunities also known as architectural scandals. As well as biodiversity or air-quality, the landscape is part of the environment and real-estate developments needed by a rise in tourism flows must be carefully thought through in aesthetic terms. In the end, grandiose landscapes are the first of Nepalese assets.

2 NETIF approach to sustainable tourism

At first, what is striking in the NETIF case paper is that it considers tourism as a tool for sustainable development in Nepal at large rather than specifically concentrating on sustainable tourism. In the first part of the paper, the author quickly summarizes the challenges faced by the country. The paper puts the reader further at odds when some environmental challenges such as "the adverse impacts of climate change" are given economical and capital intensive types of solutions such as the "upgrade of all domestic airports" (sic!). This denotes a confusion from the author between the concepts of development, economic growth and sustainability. I consider that a careful planning and implementation of a development both in volume and quality of the tourism industry is already challenging enough a task. There would be far enough to write about without digressing about more general economic objectives. Besides, the fact that the author starts with dealing with purely economical types of solutions gives a bad impression, as if once more sustainability would be a mere gimmick, not corresponding to any tangible reality. In tourism planning, "economic arguments have dominated the planning discussions" (Kauppila & al., 2009) and it appears to still be the case with the NETIF project.

1 <http://www.treehugger.com/natural-sciences/everest-expedition-to-clean-worlds-highest-garbage-dump.html>

In order to make the prerogative of economic arguments over those of other types appear clearly, I will list below some of the initiatives of the NETIF in regard with the various dimensions of sustainability (3 traditional ones and aesthetics).

- In environmental terms, the NETIF has taken many initiatives both on the local and national levels. It goes from lobbying actions to promote the cleaning of waste waters in urban centers to the installation of garbage collection points on trekking paths.
- In socio-cultural terms, the NETIF aims at promoting local culture in small communities as a source of income in relation with the increase of tourist flows. Nothing is said about the actual threats that an increase of tourism would represent on traditional ways of life. In more general terms, the NETIF wants to promote educational programs, an objective going far beyond the tourism sector. The impression that is left from the NETIF initiatives is that most actions are top-down. It feels that experts, either national or international, would come to local communities and tell them how to live. This is not a sustainable approach in so that instead of promoting more ecological or whatever better know-hows, it at the first place increases clientelism in local communities.
- In aesthetic terms, the input of the NETIF is close to zero. Or at least, there seems not to be any conscious actions in this direction. The carving of information boards can be considered as an action bearing an aesthetic dimension but it is more accidental than anything else. On the opposite, the Ubuesque proposition to shift the administrative capital away from Katmandou seems not to be very well informed in aesthetic terms. Such large projects have necessarily a large aesthetic impact which should be carefully considered.
- Last, it appears that the economic dimension of planning by the NETIF remains the most well informed and thought through. One only needs to compare the NPR 500M for increasing bed capacity in Katmandu with such actions as the improving of 35 cooking stoves in Mulkharka or the planting of 5,000 trees.

To conclude, the NETIF planning for sustainable development, although originating from good intentions remains dominated by an economical approach while other dimensions of sustainability seem to be merely anecdotal. Besides, it lacks a clear focus on tourism as it attempts to address much more general issues which it should not be concerned with. Once more, these flaws appear as originating from a confusion between sustainable tourism and sustainable development and maybe a general misconception of the concept of sustainability in itself.

Koli Cultura

Case Study: NETIF (Nepal Environment and Tourism Initiative Foundation)

Essay by Hanne Junnilainen

During the case study period, I developed few central topics to reflect more about. 1) What kind of interfaces between international tourists and local people can be found in order to bring economical sustainability for the local people, 2) what is locality in the first place, 3) the role of the infrastructure in tourist destinations.

Unfortunate fact in the tourist attractions in development countries remains strong: investors commonly come from outside/abroad and local people get poorer than before since they lose their traditional livelihoods, land and environment. It has been one important aim of the NETIF initiative to improve the livelihoods of local people, but it's not clearly stated in these articles how this crucial problem will really be tackled. In the program brochure, the bridge building between the local entrepreneurs and communities is written about – and education, private public partnership and advocacy campaigns are stated. However, everything is explained in general level – it is hard for me to take the grasp of the realities, but I will give my insights based on the articles and my experience visiting Nepal in 2006.

I see it as a risk to distinguish local people from the local entrepreneurs as done in the project brochure, since this was the undesirable reality I encountered in Nepal. Villagers were poor and travel companies in Pokhara and Kathmandu took the profit of tourism. In PES (Payment for Environmental Services) project story in the project brochure, constant conflicts and lack of trust between the villagers and park authorities are mentioned indeed. This was also the main concern local people were sharing with me in 2006; decisions were made from top to down and the existing chains in livelihoods were hard to break.

This hierarchical manner of doing things is a very difficult to change and I think, it is very crucial to face it when procedures are planned. I'm wondering if some kind of straight interfaces between local villagers and tourists could be built – to shortcut the hierarchy and give poorer people more advantage of the tourism. For example eco- and responsibility tourism, social media and local cultural treks could give some possibilities on this – markets and possible tools to implement the ideas do exist already. In my opinion, it would be important to find the niche of tourists to fit for this environment, find the potentials of local people to bring services for tourists and do the branding well according to the local ideas found.

Moreover, I would like to see these rural communities as a resource to the tourism in Nepal – not only as a poor people to be educated and helped after. When I trekked one month in the middle of rural communities in Annapurna region, I totally thought that this rural culture had some special characteristics to offer for international travellers. As a tourist, you can actually trek in the middle of culture - since those Nepalese are trekkers in their everyday lives. I haven't really had similar experience in any other country. Therefore, I was happy to see the initiative of the cultural trek – it is special, characterizes Nepal well and has potential for Western tourists.

For these reasons, my first question is how to find these potentials of the villagers and built their capacities to serve tourist in appropriate way? What would be the interface between Western desires and local capacity to offer services locally enough? In the articles, following interesting ideas were mentioned: organic farming, cultural dance performances, home stays and locally produced food. In addition, possibilities of products done by recycled/local materials and contemporary designs based on traditional, local products could be thought of. More importantly, to really keep the profits in the villages, these services and products should be independently sold straight from the villages to the travellers. However, so many practices are based on strong central administration that it might be impossible task. For instance, it is compulsory to hire a guide when you trek in Nepal. In other words, when you buy the guide, you already buy the services and guesthouses and it is hard buy anything straight from the producers. Unfortunately I believe that if you make co-operation with the existing entrepreneurs, as mentioned in the brochure, they will collect the profits instead of the villagers. It might be a bit non-realistic to try to find some kind of shortcuts through the hierarchy, but I find the same reflections to be important also when we want preserve the local culture and environment.

In many destinations, the tourism has strong effects on local culture. On one hand, tourism can bring livelihoods to poor communities and preserve the local culture, but on another hand, it can also destroy it. Sadly, I had a feeling in Nepal that latter was the case - tourism had destroyed too much of its own environment and culture. Nepalese, who had been in contact with tourists, had big dreams about the Western lifestyle and they weren't any more proud of what they had. Due to the conflicts with Mao guerrillas, amount of the tourists had also been fluctuating a lot leaving shops empty and locals without a livelihood. Behind the smiley faces I could feel some bitterness and envy.

NETIF-initiative has indeed interesting goals and seems to have good intensions concerning preserving rural communities, culture and environment. I think that tourism can bring economical sustainability to the communities in a way that it preserves the local culture and arts, like in some parts of Bali and Laos. However, this is not a simple concept and lot of contradictions and difficulties can arise even with the careful planning. I think that some cultures are more resilience to tourism and some cultural characteristics fit better to be in contact with travellers. In the case of Bali, I think the culture is relatively well preserved since it's strongly separated from the tourist scenes and on the other hand, being a Hindu culture in the middle of Muslim country is a strong background to keep the strong identity. I think, it would be good to think these cultural strengths in all tourist destinations to strengthen the locality. Locality certainly builds up sustainability in many ways: it keeps the local ownership in the area, encourages to protect environment in the long term and to maintain interesting local traditions to give tourists reasons for return.

Thus my second question is: how the local culture, landscape and capacity can be connected to international tourism in away that it's sustainable and not destroying either the local culture or environment? You can never really integrate the local culture and tourism, but I think you can find sustainable interfaces. One option I see strong both for Koli and Nepal, is high-end eco-tourism. Maybe the environment and locality could be protected better, when the money would come from the smaller group of people who are really interested in the places? That would demand good understanding, planning and design though – and in my opinion, here this course comes in good use.

First of all, I believe it would be important to understand how locality looks different to outsiders than locals. During this case study I started to wonder what the locality is in the first place. For the Western tourists - originating from the urban culture - nature and mountain villages might mean escape, but for the locals it might be more like a prison to live in the scarcity. Even if mountain tribes seems romantic and idyllic to us, I haven't really met locals in development countries who wants go back to the rice fields – it's just too hard way to make your living.

I believe that desire for the nature and eco-tourism fundamentally comes from the urban people – it's something different and distant enough for them. I don't either believe that we can ask these communities to stick in the past to be our playground. Instead, tourism should support poor people to adapt to the economic realities they live in. Tourism can certainly have a good impact here, but maybe the project's objectives should be considered more from the perspective of the local communities and their resilience – and also see this as an opportunity to rethink the Western views of the nature. In this perspective, I also see it very important try to find found local characteristics that local are also proud of.

We also had long discussion about the topic in our Skype conference and it was interesting to share our experiences of Finland and Bali. Sasa and I had both similar and contradictory views of Bali since other had only been visiting there few times and another had lived there. Similar discussion took place concerning Finland as well. Nature based lifestyle has also disappeared in Finland. Therefore, the same fundamental problem also exists in Lapland and probably in Koli: locals do not appreciate the nature since it's a remnant of being a poor. I think, it would be also good for the Koli Cultura to rethink the local values and find the appreciation towards nature and it's preservation. Something that has been the symbol of being poor could give people new livelihoods.

In our discussions and diaries, one topic came up frequently: how environments of the tourist destinations are destroyed in various countries. Basically in many destinations, the infrastructure is not keeping up with the tourism growth and even in five star hotels you can sometimes follow your own excrement while you swim in the ocean. This is really sad, but unfortunate reality in many places I have stayed - also in Bali where the local culture had survived well, but the environment is in very bad condition. It actually became hard for me to define a popular tourist destination where the infrastructure has been planned and built in early and strong enough. Non-local investors are rarely interested about the long term sustainability and local municipality rarely has the will, money or farsighted vision to invest enough. When you don't have the local ownership of the place, the system maintenance and economical interest towards future becomes a struggle. It is also much harder to predict the tourism flows compared to permanent residence in order to size the infrastructure properly. Neither the profit base society is supporting the principles of sustainability – investors want their profits quickly and can also leave the place quickly. As a result, I have developed term "tourism infrastructure" for my own use to mean the non-sustainable nature of the infrastructure built for the tourist destinations. Representative example of the problem came to my way in Sihaunokville, Cambodia where Finnish funded modern water purification plant was working well except no pipes were coming in from the various high-end hotels near by.

In my opinion, for the international travellers, infrastructure should be planned in a way that the basic services can be used without a battle. No one really wants to on their holiday escape to

spend time to find food, toilet or taxi. I think that you can have compact service centres even in the eco-tourism places. Then large parts of the nature can also be preserved.

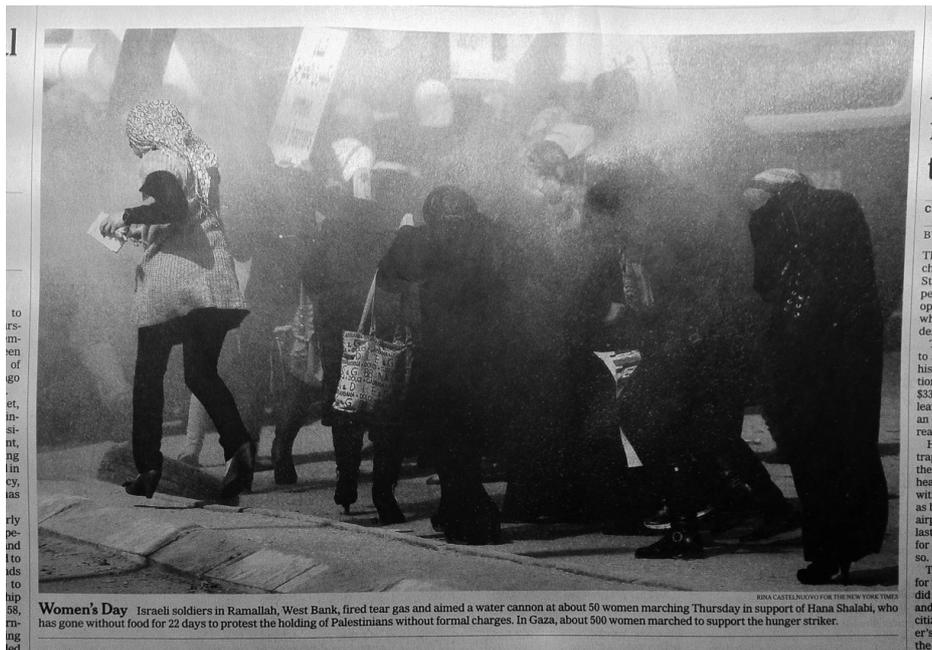
Even for my own surprise, in this sense I started to appreciate Levi ski resort where I work as a land use planner. Levi cannot be describes as a nature tourism destination even it is located in the middle of pristine nature. However, the infrastructure has been built concisely and with long term vision in mind. In the beginning of 90', their plan was to achieve 23 000 capacity for the accommodation in 2002. The plan was strongly criticized to be enormous, but the aim was achieved even before the schedule and the infrastructure is still working well. This has required strong commitment from the municipality to invest towards tourism. I think that is rare.

This essay is mainly reflecting my international experiences in development countries, but I also kept Koli strongly in mind. I actually think that there are lot of similarities between Koli and Nepal even if the local things should be considered separately in each case and the imitation of the other destinations is not really the answer. I hope in this course we could find local, well designed solutions to Koli, since planning and quality are really not the second and the third name of the tourist destinations. Koli has the pristine and extraordinary nature we can sell preserve with our decisions.

Essay

Destination Nepal

We live in a world of parallel realities. These contrasts and gaps create interesting paradox among each others values and interpretations of the world, how it is, what it should be and how we fit in with our needs. Tourism mostly is a need of nations and individuals that live in prosperity, peace and have a normal living standard conditions. This demonstrationsphoto made me think about daily lives around the world and the contrasts we are exposed to.



Parallel realities on the same day / 8th march 2012 / International Herald Tribune / women attacked by Israeli soldiers while having peaceful march in support of Hana Shalah, who is on food strike as a protest against holding Palestinians without formal charges. / My illustration to my mother to greet the mothers day with love and family connection.

We mostly do not think about these facts when we plan to take off and become short period tourists. We can always return to our reality, and that is something that is merely making us become anything else but distant observers. We grasp the culture but we cannot become part of it, since most of the times it is a barrier we cannot cross. At least not that simply. It can happen by spending more times on same destinations as tourists and learning culture through time or by simply moving to these places and truly grasps the space and its specifics.

These differences are not the first thing that usually comes to our minds when we think of design concepts and packing new products. Many times we are caught into a perfect picture of the world when we try to define new branding frames for any product. We romanticize. We benchmark on existing situations which many times lead only to our own modifications of existing patterns that maybe are not at all fitting to the nature of the product we are trying to place on the market. We benchmark and we somehow reuse the already existing knowledge. When we are selling perfumes, clothes or destinations, we visualize them mostly through non-existing realities in those

places. But based on somehow constructed global image. Reconstructed realities that do not exist there entirely or outside the tourist pathway, but are something that of course, we, potential tourists will personalize with. Marketing anyways is an interesting manifestation of global but personal needs to reach our dreams. This new reality we are trying to build, is many times economic planning - how to get foreign investors in to help rebuild certain situations. (Neverending story of planting democracy in developing countries.)

We have to think again, what response-ability truly means, especially when we design for destinations that are based around strong attachment to sustainability, conservation, heritage, culture and not the least, living standards in those areas. Living in Bali made me think about tourism isolation from real true local culture because of living standards and non planned tourism. Reading some of the previous diary posts I have noticed the importance of narrative being involved in the picture and this narrative should be, as much as possible, not interpreting something that the destination wants to be, but something that destination truly and truthfully is. Beyond what it can become. There must be some deep nature of it that can fit to any frame added later that Nepal or Koli truly are in their essence. Since I am interested in storytelling, my opinion is, this little thought has to be somehow taken seriously into consideration before building any development/business strategy.

But how can we discover this real, true essence of the destination that is so wide and full of different things, stories and many times realities? ... Many different problems? So many good story opportunities? One of the possibilities is observation with active participation, being truly involved in these different realities to grasp what the place is all about. We most probably cannot just simply read about that in reports since reports usually are made through political, economical and other observation focuses. Most of the times financial status is built around money accumulation that doesn't necessarily mean long term progress even when thinking „green“. That does not necessarily mean being enough for finding essential core of the matter to mold into amazing truthful branding story that is based on preservation. That is based on active participation in story making from both sides, locals and outside teams helping with revitalization. This idea came out while reading documents on Nepal, in NETIF seminar papers.

I would like to refer to Nepali documents and ask some questions and thoughts aloud, raised by reading and observing reports. The first issue was related to living standard of Koli people and our skype talk, I shared with a team. Hanne said an interesting fact from her growing up. She mentioned that eco and „produced in nature“, meant poverty in the past and I have thought of possibility that in Koli story it is still so. Maybe Koli people would need to rethink their values as well? What if they love nature but as well want global progress?

Another key challenge I have read about in Nepal report was a lift of Katmandu to bring foreign tourists in. The cleaning micro location and providing aesthetic standards to the place. This face lift worries me since it is always mostly related to western standards when it comes to building, services and visual appearance of once revitalized areas. One example is Gili islands, Indonesia. I would like to ask myself a question how can these aesthetics be more or mostly defined by Nepali cultural aesthetics. Are there cultural standards appearing that can somehow limit these outside „financially brought in“ concepts? One option is to connect rural and urban Nepali environment by bringing Nepali designers working closely with craftsmen as well as investors, all involved in the process of face lift. Mostly these transitions are not done with enough care and gentleness to native culture, once investors are foreigners with their own standards, related to good business strategies – that priority is accumulating good money flow and profit. In many cases countries in development are exposed to highest corruption in all decision making as well as governmental levels and the investments can simply go out of hands.

What exactly this aesthetics standards mean and who is setting them, and how, is by opinion extremely important on a level of cultural preservation for long term planning.

In the report it is interesting to read about setting basic environmental awareness among all and bring it into educational curriculum and teach all local generations about sustainability. I am interested in what exactly does this methodologically mean? Is it implemented based on western methodology to teach these topics or local? It is by my opinion extremely important all local generations and communities are aware of the shift that is happening to their economical planning. Besides that the methodology should be completely adjusted to local culture and ways of learning. Western models might not be efficient at all and years can be spent without real impact. Learning by doing should be present in schools where children can actually understand what is happening through simple real time examples where they can actively participate and learn through their own experiences. This is actually the future of real mental change, how to pass the knowledge to be truly understood, not only thought. The shift has been already taking place around the world how – bringing design thinking into process of how to teach.

When reading about expanding Nepali capacities Pokhara Valley I am only doubtful how much benefit from profit truly goes to small people's pockets. I believe the common wealth should be somehow measured by the poorest not by the richest. What I mean is that the poorest should as well benefit and their standards should grow accordingly to the growth, which doesn't always apply to countries in development. And how to twist the tourism story to all areas not only one? Story from Bali is making me think about overcrowded Kuta area of the island while north and some hills areas are completely remote and distant, people poor, living from hand to mouth. Not to mention other islands. Kuta is attracting poor people from west Java looking for jobs, but ending up being (if at all) paid smallest rates while their children feed themselves in nearby orphanages. How to fight side effects like that in advance? The people migrations can happen faster than predicted.

Talking about high investment prospects, there was an issue in the text referring to how to cater the expectations of the visitors beyond 2011. That is exactly what I meant at the beginning of the essay, when I have exposed the issues related to what the environment that is in a process of revitalisation truly is. Many times investments are taking faster shift than the culture itself can bare. Ways of living and how things are locally done might take much more time than actual tourism planning. Adaptations might take years. That is frightening to me, especially since some cultures have truly rooted ways and values how to „do things“ and might be falling into identity crisis as a society if these shifts happen too fast.

One of my sub questions referring to these mentioned expectations are as well related deeply to waste management and toilet waste facilities, strategies and infrastructure development. The ways of living standards and conditions can effect the slow building of infrastructure. Poor facilities and limited resources, as educated workers etc. are making me think of these issues as important. No river or face lift will not work/last for long if these issues aren't taken into consideration first. What we call western standards as sewerage systems and septic tanks strategies mostly do not exist in countries like Nepal or just in a very limited geographical forms. Is there truly enough to build strategy on these issues by small scale infrastructure? What if tourism and investments start growing tripple size by year? Where is the end or the wall to say enough? Or does that mean finally bringing prosperity to all places away from tourist cities and centers? How can the idea of zero waste villages become Nepali mindset, standard? It is also crucial that tourists understand importance of these kind of tourist standards and demand exactly same thing.

The predictions for 2012 on Nepal hosting 2 million tourists sounds good. I am still very much interested in what their profile is and how do they want to spend their money? Question is tightly related to culture preservation since it is important to take into consideration that specific target groups have no true attitude for culture even if they are curious and do buy some souvenirs, and do travel as eco tourists. They could still not throw trash on the floor, but would still order chips and fries and a big beer instead of going to local food restaurant. At least with time these local food planning can truly go its way if not seriously planned in advance. Can it be planned at all? The tourists needs are limitless and craving for local food they know always comes up in all environments. Can it be done so, that overseas and local chefs meet and develop specific types of fusion food offer? Who are the target audiences is so so important since long term side effects can be very bad for actual culture preservation. Food habits are one of the most important elements of culture heritage and speak about colours, tastes and habits of hundreds of generations. What I have noticed in Bali for instance is two strongly recognizable opposite tourist profiles. One is cheap short term low budget tourism where users do not care about environment or anything just trying to have a good time away from home. The second group is short term tourists interested in self healing and healthy living. That fits perfectly with actual "islands of the gods/spirits"

spiritual hindu culture based local customs. They would as well buy locally produced food and prefer untacked rice paddies in the back alleys of Bali.

I wonder if there was ever real project made asking locals their ways and understanding of better future, a real hands on research? What does majority of rural poor uneducated Nepalis think and feel about their nature and how they see its future. How they see their children understanding and bonding with their past after globalization that floods in Nepal through tourism and other channels? How do they feel these effects today, in their daily lives? How can these old beliefs truly be protected with good planning? Good story might be a good start. Stry that will bring specific type of tourist that will want and wish to participate to prevent cultures to exist in the future.

How to conduct a plan B in case something goes wrong with long term planning economic growth through tourism? I have seen Banaue rice paddies in north Phillipines after kidnapping and execution of two foreign tourists. Visiting Banaue i have seen country itself giving land and rice paddies to local families so they can survive since the tourism there failed eventthough Banaue should be one of six wonders of the world.

...What are the Nepal B plan strategies and what can as well be beyond tourism solution for Koli?

The story of Nepal, being one of leading adventure tourism destinations is interesting and conflicting with what is representing through visual interpretations and branding, but i do not really believe that observing just how other destinations are doing wil bring clear innovations in our own Koli story. The visual identity of Nepal by my opinion is not representing zero waste villages concepts and speaks very global middle low end language. I would have to more deeply look into this topic to write more, but it displays information in a messy visual way, where beauties of scinery and other biodiversity and concepts are not obvious. It can as well be some half amateur non profit project fro cleaning he hill, rather than the most wanted adventure destination.

I have to admit that this essay is written as my thoughts flow, a sketch of topics, issues, ideas. My thinking was split throughout the whole process to more sides of the story. One was related to Nepal, another to my personal tree years living in Indonesia and the third, my thoughts on Koli.

I believe, identifying your benchmarks can be good to undersand what is existing on the market. But focusing too much on existing examples can as well limit the freshness of the approach and take the focus away from - if I can look into the future task - Koli true nature. Today the market has reshaped a lot and niche targeting could be one way of good response-ability involvment since

responsible consumers already exist. And most probably many different responsible target groups. Also channels for promoting another good sustainable story exist. I have mentioned some ideas about Koli, for instance, to sell and export Koli products locally across Finland. To create 100% natural product line with limited editions.

So what are we saying then, that will be different through content?

Today just showing the customs, scenery and explaining bold heritage and historical specifics is not enough at all. Revitalizing of these „old“, needs to be done through modern eyes/view/ approach. It needs to be somehow breezy and truly simple to attach to, to bring markets and responsible consumers, with strategic and tactic approach towards the goal to actually revitalize some destination in a long term healthy manner.

So what are we actually selling here? And most importantly to who? And what is our essential understanding of responsibility? We have to sell long lasting experience that people will always crave for ... So what are we craving for in our routine living hours? And how can that be related to responsibility? What these reports mostly don't say is, that it is all about people, and true values are hidden in family times spending, insights of local cultures we so often never truly see.

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