

SUSTAINABLE RURAL AREA TOURISM: DEVELOPMENT AND ISSUES

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Rural areas have long been seen and used as appropriate locations for recreation and tourism activities. However, the restructuring of rural areas and population loss from many areas has meant that tourism has also assumed greater economic and employment importance in many rural and peripheral regions. Along with other economic processes, the growth of agro-business, and social processes, e.g. urbanization, this has contributed to substantial changes to the rural landscape.

Changes in rural areas are a result of at least three types of restructuring, namely; the collapse of peripheral areas unable to shift to a more capital intensive economy; the selective and reductionist process of agro-industrialization with the loss of many family held farms; and, the pressures of urban and peri-urban development. Restructuring has created a fragmented and reduced rural system in some locations which seems to lack most of the criteria for sustainability in either economic or community terms. Indeed, while the rhetoric of free trade is otherwise heard in international trade negotiations, substantial agricultural subsidies maintain agricultural production in Canada, Europe, Japan, and the United States, with the unfortunate irony that this has only exacerbated development problems in much of Africa, Asia and South America. Yet even given massive state intervention to support rural areas, whether it be for reasons of maintaining lifestyle and identities or because of the power of the rural vote, the nature of rural areas continues to alter.

Changes to rural areas have been inextricably linked to developments in both global and local economies, and tourism has emerged as one of the central means by which rural areas can 'adjust' new global environment. The regional restructuring associated with globalisation has usually involved attempts by regions to widen their economic base to include tourism as part of a 'natural' progression towards a tertiary economy, as employment in traditional western agriculture declines and farm sizes diminish. This implies the selective expansion of tourist flows designed to achieve one or more of the following goals:

- to sustain and create local incomes, employment and growth;
- to contribute to the costs of providing economic and social infrastructure (e.g. roads, water, sewage and communication);
- to encourage the development of other industrial sectors (e.g. through local purchasing links);
- to contribute to local resident amenities (e.g. sports and recreation facilities, outdoor recreation opportunities, and arts and culture) and services (e.g. shops, post offices, schools, and public transport); and
- to contribute to the conservation of environmental and cultural resources, especially as scenic (aesthetic) urban and rural surroundings are primary tourist attractions.

Tourism may be defined as a form of voluntary return travel, often leisure oriented, but also including Visiting Friends and Relations (VFR), business and convention travel, and short-term travel for education and health. Although tourism has traditionally been defined in terms of overnight stays and/or being away from the home environment for more than 24 hours, changes in travel technologies as well as tourism concepts and statistics has also meant that day-tripping has become a recognised category of tourism. In tourism we are therefore seeking to encourage economic development by promoting economic consumption out of the environment of the permanent residence. Although much has been written on the subject of the changing character of rural areas, of agriculture, and of the countryside, relatively little has been written on the linkages between leisure, tourism and the social, cultural and economic elements of rural and peripheral areas. This is surprising given the substantial emphasis placed on the potential economic impacts of tourism alone and the hyperbole that often surrounds tourism development in rural regions, such as the World Tourism Organization's claim 'Rural tourism to the rescue of Europe's countryside'.

Constructing the Rural

The notion of rural is difficult to define. In international terms there are no universally accepted technical terms for what constitutes rural and urban. Different countries use different size or distance parameters. In the developed world many people's notion of rural tourism actually

occurs within the day-trip zone of the urban recreational hinterland. This zone is the border area between the rural and the urban with the market being driven by urban recreationists. Moreover, this area is also substantially utilized by other settlers who live in this peri-urban area (peripheral urban) but who commute into the urban area for their employment as well as by those who seek an easily accessible second home for weekend or overnight stay. The peri-urban area which is immediate to urban centres is primarily a daytrip zone and is determined by the distance that can be comfortably travelled as a car-based trip from an urban centre to an activity location and then return to the tourist's home environment. This area is also the same location for second homes that serve a 'weekender' or 'weekend' cottage function. As a result of the intensity of use of the urban fringe it is often regarded as a location for considerable conflict between lifestyle migrants, tourists (including day-trippers), second homes and more permanent residents. Arguably in tourism terms the 'true' rural area is that beyond the day-trip zone as it is here that overnight stays become essential for travelers and there are therefore qualitative and quantitative differences to the nature of tourism, including the sheer numbers of people traveling to such areas.

Beyond this peri-urban or daytrip area is a peripheral area zone which can be divided into two different forms of tourism development: a high access resort development which is characterised by direct access by air and/or major highways or rail links; a low access region which is characterised by small tourism businesses and often a substantial dependence on nature-based tourism type operations (what most people would describe as peripheral). Such regions are also regarded as having quite distinct housing dimensions with the resort location often serving as a growth centre for substantial second and retirement homes as well as the in-migration, both permanent and seasonal, of a service workforce. Over time, large resort destinations which are substantially the products of exurbanisation can also develop their own peri-urban fringe. In contrast to resort regions, the non-resort periphery is characterised by the reuse of existing housing stock for tourism and second-home purposes, particularly surplus housing stock as a result of out-migration and changes in the agricultural and forestry base. Recognition of the role of distance from major urban centres as a determinant of the character of rural tourism highlights that understanding the time budget of a consumer is as important, in fact probably more important, in determining the potential success of a location in rural terms than the economic budget.

As well as difficulties in defining the notion of rural in demographic or spatial terms it must also be noted that the idea of rurality has also been socially constructed, particularly under the influence of the media. In the late twentieth century, the media continued to portray images of a 'simpler' rural life to its primarily urban audience, through television (e.g., *All Creatures Great and Small* [the television serialisation of the books of James Herriot on veterinary life in the Yorkshire Dales]), radio (*The Archers*, 'An everyday story of simple country folk'), and lifestyle magazines (e.g., *Country Life*, *Country Style*). However, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century with time-space compression rural images from outside of Britain are exerting greater influence of romanticized rural image at a wider scale. For example, the idealised Provence of Peter Mayle's books and subsequent television programme, *A Year in Provence*; cooking books and shows from rural Italy presented by celebrity chefs, e.g. Antonio Carluccio, Rick Stein; and the promotion of a 'clean, green, image for New Zealand'. Nevertheless, contemporary rurality is not consumed just via the media. Elements of the countryside, real or imagined, are also transported to urban areas through the growth of shops which specialise in 'cottage' and 'heritage' furniture and household goods, e.g., kitchenware and basketware, by which urbanites are able to bring the country into the city in symbolic and, sometimes, functional forms. Moreover, the relation to rural places is also reinforced through consumption of geographically designated product such as Tuscan olive oil and Marlborough wine.

The countryside is a cultural landscape in which ideas of rurality are socially constructed is not just an academic issue, although at first glance to many it may seem so. Instead, much of the planning and development conflict that occurs in rural areas is over people's socially constructed notion of what is appropriate in some locations and not others. Despite attempts by some to do away with the 'rural', and the increasing recognition that both urban and rural areas are subject to the same global transitions in economic, political and social structures, notions of 'rural' and 'rurality' remain important not only for the everyday lives of people in the city and the country but also for planners and policy-makers. The categories of 'rurality' and 'rural' consumption and production are therefore essential to providing the context within which tourism occurs. Tourism, along with other forms of consumption such as wine and food, often rely on the marketing of a rural idyll in order to attract both visitors and investment.

Constructions of rurality therefore play a vital role not only in determining the rate of change in the countryside but also how tourists see the country and how the rural community see themselves. Although it is perhaps ironic that rural tourism appears based on images of an unchanging, simpler and problem-free countryside when the reality has been one of change although, admittedly, change has been uneven and has taken different forms and has proceeded at different scales at different times in different rural areas. In addition, given its importance in determining tourism flows and the patterns of tourism development, it is also perhaps ironic that the vast majority of research on rural tourism has missed understanding the means by which the rural is created and sold to the visitor and local alike.

Countryside change and the promotion of place image therefore reflects the same national and international shifts in economic, political and social structures as do urban areas. Rural imaging processes are characterised by some or all of the following:

- the development of a critical mass of visitor attractions and facilities (e.g., the development of heritage sites);
- the hosting of events and festivals (e.g., Highland Games or produce based events, such as wine and food festivals);
- the development of rural tourism strategies and policies often associated with new or renewed regional tourism organisations and the related development of regional marketing and promotional campaigns (e.g., 'Hardy Country' or 'Herriot Country' in England);
- the development of leisure and cultural services and projects to support the regional marketing and tourism effort (e.g., the creation and renewal of regional museums, heritage listed buildings, and support for local arts and crafts);
- the maintenance of the rurality of the landscape, often through the support for systems of economic production that are otherwise no longer economically viable; and
- encouragement of second home development in areas with an excess of housing stock.

Indeed, a rural counterpart to Harvey's question of redevelopment of the inner city may well be 'How many heritage trails, folk museums and villages, historic houses, roadside stalls, authentic country cooking, country fairs, country shoppes, and Devonshire teas can we stand?'

Tourism as a policy response

Tourism as a policy response to the economic problems of rural areas has gone through a number of phases in recent years. Until the mid-1980s rural tourism was primarily concerned with commercial opportunities, multiplier effects and employment creation. In the late 1980s policy guidance shifted to the message that the environment is a key component for the tourism industry. Under this notion, tourism is an additive rather than extractive force for rural communities. Tourism was regarded as 'sustainable', stressing the intrinsic value of the environment and, in some countries, the rural community as a tourist resource. (Although in Australia sustainability was defined primarily in ecological terms). In the early to mid-1990s an additional layer has been added to the policy responses of government to tourism and regional development which returns to the earlier economic concerns. This is the perceived role of rural tourism as a major mechanism for arresting the decline of agricultural employment and therefore as a mechanism for agricultural diversification. In the case of Europe, for example, the identification of specific rural development areas in which tourism development is funded by the EU has occurred through a number of development programmes, often in conjunction with member states, the local state, and the private sector.

Similarly, according to the Australian Commonwealth Department of Tourism 'Tourism creates jobs, stimulates regional development and diversifies the regional economic base. With the decline in many traditional industries in rural and regional areas, tourism offers an opportunity to revitalise regional Australia and spread the social benefits of tourism'. However, tourism can be a tool in regional development or an agent of disruption or destruction. Indeed, there is a growing recognition that neither an economic approach or an environmental approach to rural tourism development is, by itself, sufficient to meet the both the policy agendas of government and the real needs of the people who live in the rural areas that are the focus of most of the discussion on regional tourism development. There is therefore a need to *integrate* economic and environmental interests with the social dimensions of regional development as well as recognize the factors that make places competitive or provide for the development of a diverse

economy. The concept of integration provides us with a number of significant points about the nature of rural regional development that utilizes tourism.

1. all the dimensions of development need to be considered.
2. it implies the need for us to be aware of the various linkages that exist between the elements of development.
3. it also implies that 'successful' regional development will require coordination and, at times, intervention, in order to achieve desired outcomes.

Nevertheless, rural policy is often poorly developed and fails to integrate the different development impacts of various sectors in rural areas as well as the various forms of state intervention. Instead much of the discussion on applications of sustainability has been in individual components of rurality, e.g., attempts at developing sustainable agriculture, rather than a comprehensive approach to integrate the socio-cultural, economic and environmental components of both sustainability and rurality. Indeed, in many rural areas of the developed world tourism policy is inextricably bound up with broader agricultural policies. Nevertheless, the rural tourism industry does not have the same political power as the agricultural industry, in terms of being able to attract subsidies or other forms of financial support.

Despite the imaging of rural areas as somehow simpler and more pleasant locations there are many conflicts implicit in the diverse nature of rural areas. Many of these owe their origins to changing tastes and preferences amongst the ever-changing user populations of rural areas and the shifting spatial influences of exogenous economic and political forces. They also have origins in the conflicts between exchange value and use value. For example, the conversion of former farmland into plantation forests and the decline of the family farms to be replaced by agribusiness and, often, a mono-cultural landscape of agribusiness has aroused opposition from a variety of sources because of employment losses as well as reduction in amenity.

In many parts of the developed world opposition to the spread of agribusiness has been voiced by wildlife and landscape conservationists who note the loss of variety and habitat, and by hiking and other recreational users over the disappearance of long-established footpaths and other means of access in rural areas. Indeed, accessibility within and to the countryside has long been another source of conflict. The decline of public transportation in rural areas reflecting in part a declining rural population and changed political philosophies over the appropriate role of government in transportation has meant that in rural areas cars are more of a necessity than in cities. This problem is further exacerbated by the increasing commuting use of rural fringe areas by urban workers, which is clearly related to issues of purchase of goods and services outside of the immediate resident community thereby threatening the viability of existing retail and service outlets in such communities.

One of the more difficult issues to resolve in rural areas is the different desires, expectations, perceptions and requirements of long-time residents and new arrivals and changing community power structures that may result, particularly in those areas in which counterurbanisation is occurring, such as in the daytrip zone; where second homes and retirement homes are established; and where the development of resort communities attract not only visitors and second home development but also people seeking employment in such locations.

Second homes are an integral though often neglected component of domestic and international tourism mobility. In many areas of the world second homes, also referred to as vacation homes, cottages, summer houses, recreation homes, cribs and weekend homes, are the destination of a substantial proportion of domestic and international travellers while the number of available bed nights in a second homes often rivals or even exceeds that available in the formal accommodation sector. Although the second home may be permanent, the period of residence is not. Indeed, terms used to describe second homing include 'residential tourism', 'semi-migration', 'summer migration', and 'seasonal suburbanization'. Second homes have a long tradition in Scandinavia, Canada and New Zealand where they were originally a cheap, accessible means of holidaying and leisure taking although since the 1950s increases in second home development are primarily explained through the increased personal mobility made available through car ownership. However, second homes are significant for any analysis of tourism mobility for several reasons, including relations between 'permanent' and second home populations, and the potential contribution to regional development.

Second-homeowners are motivated by a number of reasons, many of which have to do with the specific amenity characteristics of a location including distance from primary residence, physical and social characteristics of the area and availability of recreational opportunities; lifestyle; family ties to an area; and retirement planning. In many cases second home purchase is related to stages in the lifecourse and travel careers. The identification of a desirable second home environment tend to be related to an environmental search process of which travel is a key component. Holidaymaking provides the opportunities to identify potential second home locations, while second homes may also be a part of a wider lifestyle strategy that utilises second home purchase as a precursor to more permanent retirement or lifestyle migration. However, in many cases the travel component which leads to the decision to purchase a second home may be related to family ties to a district rather than just leisure and environmental amenity values. In such cases the notion of home may take on very significant personal meaning in terms of a desire to remain connected to a place where, for various reasons particularly lack of available employment or quality of life opportunities in rural areas, it may not be possible to live on a permanent basis.

Accessibility plays a major influence and use of second homes. The majority of second home owners live close to their property. Even in an international context long distance second home ownership is still the exception. The classification of second homes into weekend or vacation homes is a function of the distance of the second home from the permanent home and the time budget of the user. Weekend homes need to be within daytripping distance in order to be used effectively.

Land availability is also a significant factor in the selection of second home sites as land use planning regulations may limit the minimum size of land sections that can be sold thereby contributing to the scarcity value of desired second home locations. Such government land use controls therefore play a significant role in influencing land and housing stock values and, depending on the local rating or tax system, may even be manipulated so as to maximise rates returns from housing developments. Although such regulatory measures will often be justified by local government on the basis of landscape or environmental protection they nevertheless will have enormous impacts on the availability of land for second home development. Therefore, weekend homes tend to be in locations that may already be experiencing substantial growth through counter-urbanisation. It is in these locations that much of the conflict between second home development and the existing community occurs as, to a great extent, the likelihood of conflict is dependent on availability in the housing stock.

Nevertheless, second homes do have potential value as a means of economic development in rural and peripheral areas especially when such areas have excess housing stock and an otherwise limited economic base. Second homes provide a means for regional development through

- increasing direct visitor expenditure to the region;
- the provision of infrastructure used for both home owners and other tourists;
- the support of service and construction industries, including the utilization of housing stock that would otherwise be unoccupied; and
- the opportunity for further regional development through owners retiring to their second home.

Though the benefits of second home development to a region are potentially high they may not always exceed the costs created for government in relation to increases in waste, health care, and other services as well as the social and environmental impacts that may also occur. The seasonal nature of some second home locations may also limit the potential benefits of second home development, while also create extra pressures at periods of peak demand. Examples of social conflict have included disagreement between locals and second home residents regarding levels of development, conflicts due to perceived social inequality, and perceived competition for the use of land.

Periurban areas

In the peri-urban area tourism is but one of a range of factors, albeit highly significant, that are influencing regional change. The majority of tourism businesses in peri-urban areas are geared towards daytrippers who are seeking easy access to the countryside, with their desire to visit itself being geared towards certain idealised notions of rurality which are also shared by many of the owners of such businesses. Here, visitor and migrant motivations for mobility are almost

identical with arguably tourism serving to produce and reinforce certain idealised images of nature and rurality thereby only further enhancing the amenity values of such locations within exurban processes. Nevertheless, the significance of idealised rurality as a factor in exurbanisation is not without its ironies as exurbanites themselves do not generally consider themselves as living in or contributing to sprawl. The irony being, of course, is it is exurban desire for illusions of rural authenticity that is integral to the dynamics of suburban expansion as well as tourism ruralities. Furthermore, exurban desire is not opposed to urban gentrification. Instead, they may be regarded as 'flipsides of the same coin'.

Interestingly, exurban processes are usually associated with a post-productivist countryside in which 'landscapes of production' are transformed into 'residential landscapes of leisure and consumption'. Unfortunately, such generalisations while seemingly attractive in their simplicity, are often untrue. Rather than being the end of a landscape of agricultural production, peri-urban areas are better described as a new landscape of production which is characterised by intensive and often highly innovative forms of rural industry and agriculture, particularly horticulture and where the climate is appropriate, wine and fruit production. Many of these businesses also utilise alternative chains of distribution for their products via direct marketing, such as farm gate and cellar door sales, as well as farmers markets. Such a situation means that not only are peri-urban areas reflective of a multifunctional countryside but so to are many of the businesses within it, being simultaneously engaged in agricultural production and tourism. Rather than replacing an agricultural base, tourism is therefore part of a reformulation of agricultural production that is often associated with new forms consumptive practices. For example, Australia's mainland peri-urban regions suggests that such regions generate about 25 per cent of Australia's total Gross Value of Agricultural Production from less than 3 per cent of the agricultural land and that a better understanding of the contribution of so-called hobby, lifestyle or micro-farming to local economies is urgently needed.

Second home tourism is often a visible and convenient scapegoat for less tangible causes of rural change or decline including housing policy. In the public debate with respect to housing in peri-urban and coastal and mountain amenity areas, second home owners are often targeted as holders of alien values not suited to the local rural community. The paradox being evident in that some local communities struggle to survive, but see outsiders as a threat to the preservation of the 'traditional' community. The negative development, for some, of increased house prices is therefore blamed on second home owners rather than a broader assessment of housing and land use policies. Nevertheless, land availability remains a significant factor in the selection of second home sites as it is with any form of housing or tourism accommodation development as land use planning regulations may limit the minimum size of land sections that can be sold thereby contributing to the scarcity value of desired second home locations. Land use controls therefore play a significant role in influencing land and housing stock values and, depending on the local rating or tax system, may even be manipulated so as to maximise rates returns from housing and/or commercial accommodation developments. Regulatory measures will often be justified by local government on the basis of landscape or environmental protection or, in the case of accommodation regulation, health and safety. However, one of the significant unintended effects of development regulation in periurban areas, and to a limited extent in peripheral regions, is the development of a substantial 'grey' accommodation economy that exists outside of many formal tourism industry structures and networks in which second homes may be available for rent or private homes operate as bed and breakfast or homestay accommodation on a relatively informal basis, i.e. whether they are open or not depends on whether they put the sign out or put a notice up at the local tourist information centre or grocery store.

An example of the nature of many exurban accommodation providers in developed countries can be gained from a national survey of 347 bed and breakfast providers undertaken in New Zealand in 2002-3, the vast majority of whom were in the hinterlands of large urban centres. Only 15 per cent of respondents had registered their business with the Companies Office although 67 per cent were registered for Goods and Services Tax (GST). There were two very significant clusters of business types in relation to dependence on accommodation for income. For the majority of respondents it is a very small portion, with over 47 per cent of respondents earning 20 per cent or less of their total income from accommodation, at the other extreme almost 24 per cent of respondents depend on the accommodation component for 80 per cent or more of their income. Clearly, such clustering has significant implications for household and income business strategies and reflects the extent to which housing tourists is often only one dimension of income extraction for exurban household. Accommodation was also highly

seasonal with less than a third of businesses claiming to be open year-round. Significantly in terms of local employment and any additional workforce pressures on housing markets, just less than 14 per cent of respondents indicated that they would be hiring any staff in addition to existing members of the household.

Different rural areas have different contexts for exurbanisation. There is substantial evidence in the European context that in a number of rural and peripheral areas demand for second homes, as well as 'tourist' visits, is often a result of a desire to maintain family ties to regions. Individuals and households that migrated earlier in the lifecourse may retain a second home even as part of a longer-term retirement plan. This is not to deny the significance of rural amenity as a factor in exurban housing processes but simply to observe that they are often much more complex than what they first appear. Indeed, in many peripheral areas tourism and second home development and associated attraction of exurban entrepreneurs to work in such sectors may be one of the few economic development options available to such communities.

Tourism in Peripheral Areas

For tourism planning purposes peripheral areas are those located beyond the day-trip zone from major urban centres. Peripheral areas are characterised by a number of inter-related features that impact the development of tourism, as well as other industry sectors:

1. Peripheral areas tend to lack effective political and economic control over major decisions affecting their well-being. They are particularly susceptible to the impacts of economic globalisation and restructuring through the removal of tariffs and the development of free trade regimes.
2. Peripheral areas, by definition, are geographically remote from mass markets. This not only implies increased transportation costs to and from the core areas but may also increase communication costs with suppliers and the market as well.
3. Internal economic linkages tend to be weaker at the periphery than at the core thereby potentially limiting the ability to achieve high multiplier effects because of the substantial degree of importation of goods and services.
4. In contemporary society migration flows tend to be from the periphery to the core. This is a major issue for many peripheral and rural regions because of the impact that this can have not only on the absolute population of a given area but its profile as well. For example, migration outflows tend to be younger people looking for improved employment and education opportunities for both themselves and/or their children. The loss of younger members of communities can then have flow on affects in terms of school closures thereby further reinforcing such a vicious cycle of out-migration. In addition, out-migration can also lead to a loss of intellectual and social capital. However, for some peripheral areas new form of in-migration may occur with respect to retirement and second home development, although this will tend to be with respect to older age groups. In some situations although such developments may inject economic and human capital into peripheral areas it may also place further strain on health and social services.
5. It has been argued that peripheries tend to be characterised by a comparative lack of innovation as new products tend to be imported rather than developed locally although this perception is highly contested.
6. Because of the economic difficulties experienced by peripheral regions the national and local state may have greater interventionist role than in core regions. This is illustrated through the establishment of local economic development agencies, the development of special grant schemes for peripheral areas as in the case of the European Union, and/or agricultural subsidy programmes.
7. Information flows within the periphery and from the periphery to the core are weaker than those from the core to the periphery. Such information flows may have implications for political and economic decision-making undertaken in core regions as well as broader perceptions of place given the difficulties that may exist in changing existing images of the periphery.
8. Peripheral regions often retain high aesthetic amenity values because of being relatively underdeveloped in relation to core areas. Such high natural values may not only serve as a basis for the development of nature-based tourism but may also be significant for other types of tourism and leisure developments, such as that associated with vacation homes.

Unfortunately, many of the expectations for long term economic development generated by government support for tourism in peripheral areas have often failed to come to fruition. Indeed,

optimism over the potential employment and economic benefits of tourism owes much to a policy climate that has been uncritical over a range of issues. Several reasons can be posited for this. Perhaps most importantly is the tendency by many government development agencies, tourism industry associations and consultants to fail to see tourism within the larger development context. Most significantly, while recent government programs have sought to address peripheral problems and imbalances by way of local and/or regional tourism development programmes; simultaneously, many governments have adopted restrictionist economic policies which have compounded the difficulties of peripheral areas adjusting to economic and social restructuring (e.g., by way of centralisation of health and transport services). In such instances policy-makers appear to be struggling with national versus local priorities (e.g., the restructuring and deregulation of agriculture and other industries versus subsidy provision), a point which also raises the issue of conflict in the values and objectives of the nation state as opposed to the local state.

A second reason for the relative lack of success of tourism development in peripheral areas are that policy-makers are also confronted with inadequate (and sometimes misleading) information on peripheral area issues, and therefore a restricted capacity to identify appropriate policy instruments to select, promote and support industries and other productive capacities as viable and sustainable alternatives. Indeed, a number of industries, and not just tourism, appear to present opportunities to diversify the economic base of peripheral areas, and to stem the leakage and transfer of labour and capital (and thus community services and infrastructure) from peripheral economies. Nevertheless, some forms of tourism development and a focus on specific markets may actually preclude other development alternatives that may be more extractive in nature. Indeed, in some cases of maximising economic development in the periphery the best form of tourism may well be no tourism at all. Table 1 details some of the macro and micro-economic measures that the state may use to intervene in regional development policy.

Table 1: Macro and micro-economic policy measures with regional implications

Category	Regional effect
Macro-economic regional policy measures	
Fiscal:	
Automatic stabilisers	Progressive taxes and income support measures, especially unemployment benefit
Discretionary	Regional variation in taxes and central government expenditure (including infrastructure and procurement)
Monetary	Geographical variation in interest rates and credit control
Import controls & tariffs	Protect specific industries, which may be localised
Export controls & tariffs	Assist specific industries which may be localised
Currency exchange rate	Affects the competitiveness of domestic production and exports relative to imports
Public investment	Differential regional impact
Micro-economic regional policy measures	
Policies to reallocate labour	
<i>In situ</i> reallocation	Occupational training and retraining Educational policies, including student support and location of Education and research facilities Journey-to-work subsidies
Spatial reallocation	Migration policies Housing assistance Employment information Improvements in efficiency of labour market
Policies to reallocate capital	
Taxes and subsidies: inputs	Assistance with capital investment Wage subsidies Operational subsidies Research and development assistance, including new product and product differentiation and the provision of market information
Taxes and subsidies: outputs	Export rebates

Taxes and subsidies: technology	Price subsidies Marketing and promotion assistance Research and development assistance Innovation assistance
Subsidies: capital markets	Communication access assistance Loan guarantees Export credit guarantees Venture capital provision
Administrative controls	Controls on location of investment Planning controls Reduced administrative controls

A third reason for perceived policy failure is that the initial expectations for tourism as a means of regional development were too high. Arguably this is particularly the case with nature-based tourism which, almost by definition, tends to be very small scale, often highly seasonal, and fails to attract the large numbers of tourists characterised by mass pleasure tourism. Indeed, policy realism often appears to be lacking with respect to nature-based tourism (ecotourism). Nevertheless, at a local scale such developments can still be extremely significant allowing population and lifestyle maintenance and possibly even a small amount of growth, although not the dramatic improvements that many regions and their politicians seek.

One of the greatest difficulties in developing tourism in peripheral areas is understanding the factors by which tourism firms locate successfully (Table 2) as well as the means by which government can intervene in assisting the location and development of firms as part of a wider regional development strategy. Clearly, if tourist firms are publicly owned, as is common in some of the Nordic countries, then some of the commercial pressures that influence firm location in market optimal as opposed to social or place optimal conditions can be resisted. However, given contemporary philosophies regarding the appropriate role of the state with respect to firm ownership then even 100% owned public firms will usually need to provide a financial return to government.

Table 2: Relative importance of factors in explaining the success of regional tourism development

Important		Moderately important		Not important
Accessibility - road - aviation/airports - train - communication - pedestrian - distance from main transport routes - distance from main population centres - travel ease - travel time - travel distance	Positive attitudes of local communities toward tourism and second home development	Government intervention - land and premises - land prices and rents - loans, grants and tax reductions - planning - advice and assistance - support from various levels of government	Destination promotion (highly targetted and specific, e.g. special interest marketing)	Access to research
	Exchange rate	Infrastructure	Skilled labour	Industry organisation
		Local linkages		Unionisation
		Business services		Headquarters function
		Wage rates		Destination promotion (general)
		Amenity values		
Cost competitiveness		Substitutability of experience		

Nevertheless, this is not to say that rural and peripheral area tourism policy always fails. Indeed, there are a number of successes, particularly in areas that have increased their accessibility while several other initiatives with respect to connections between agriculture, food and tourism have also proven to be extremely successful.

Critical to the success of regional business strategies is the development of intangible capital. For example, many firms and regions have intangible assets—knowledge, relationships, reputations and people. However, only some firms and regions succeed in converting these assets into intangible capital which create value when captured as intellectual property, networks, brand, and talent. Appellation controls have long served to act as a form of intellectual property in terms of rural space as well as product, which have international repercussions in terms of the ability – or otherwise – to copy such names, e.g. Champagne and Burgundy. More recently, however, regional specialty food and drink products have also come to be registered as intellectual property as designated quality labels within EU and national law. A process which Ilbery and Kneafsey (2000b) appropriately described within the context of globalisation as ‘cultural relocalization’. The intellectual property of process, place and product through appellation controls can therefore act as a competitive edge for many food products. Appellation controls may also serve as the basis for place brands and reinforcement between food production and consumption and tourism destinations, as they also serve as a source of differentiation. Talent, or intellectual capital is also important, for peripheral regions as they are often subject to the loss not only of population in general but more specifically those seeking greater educational or employment benefits. Therefore strategies to attract and retain population are very important to peripheral areas. In this the amenity values of an area, the development of a tourism industry, the deliberate location of infrastructure, such as educational institutions, airports, and broad band capabilities, can all be used to attract and retain people. This strategy has been utilized with success in parts of Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Finally, networks, particularly between sectors such as agriculture and tourism, are arguably even more important in rural areas than urban ones because of the need to attract and retain as much expenditure as possible in economically marginal locations.

Sustaining Rural Places

This paper has discussed various issues with respect to tourism in rural areas. It noted various issues related to ideas of rurality, the impacts of tourism mobility, conflicts between different users of the countryside, and tourism as a tool in rural regional restructuring and employment generation. Rurality, as well as other conceptions of nature, are part of the broader cultural economy of the countryside. Increasingly notions of rurality are no longer dominated by concepts of food production and new uses of the countryside are redefining the idea of what constitutes the rural landscape. However, the more romantic notions of rurality will not disappear overnight, indeed they are often reinforced as part of tourism and food promotion. The romantic idea of the winemaker personally crafting wine in a cellar is extremely remote for what is, in many parts of the world, a chemical process more akin to refining. Many rural tourism opportunities do take people out of the urban environment and become an important part of a lifestyle choice to engage in what is regarded by many as a more attractive environment. The issue of whether this represents a break in routine is a moot point. It is a break from urban routine but for many people it is a regular occurrence, especially for those with second homes. This is not to deny that for many people, particularly the immobile in urban society, the rural environment is unknown, perhaps even alien, and only known through the media.

Peri-urban rural and peripheral areas in the developed world have been affected by the same issues of economic restructuring and globalization as has many urban environments. However, in rural regions, that already had a less complex economy such factors can have a more marked affect in terms of loss of infrastructure as government withdraws services, and often the loss of economic viability for agricultural or forestry production without significant subsidies. These factors, along with changes in technology and mobility, have also contributed to population loss. Indeed, it needs to be emphasized that accessibility and mobility is not a one-way process, people can leave a place as much as they can be attracted to it as mobility options become available. In response to the perceived crisis in rural areas tourism has become an extremely important development strategy which does hold promise for the economic competitiveness of some locations. Nevertheless, in a sometimes desperate search for economic development, a wider tax base and employment generation inappropriate policies and development programmes may be followed whereby locations focus on low-road, duplicative regional competitiveness strategies rather than on more high road initiatives that increase social capital, intellectual capital and networks. However, building yet another visitor centre, museum, and/or events or convention centre and being able to cut a ribbon on it to show that you have ‘done something’ is much easier than engaging in the task of improving intangible intellectual and social capital and networks.

Table 3: Low, middle and high road regional competitiveness strategies

Low Road	Middle Path	High Road
Zero sum	Growth enhancing	Network enhancing
Place promotion	Education and training	Internal networks
Capturing mobile investment, firms and capital	Fostering entrepreneurship	External (non-local) networks
Subsidised investment and means of production, e.g sites and premises	Helping and mentoring new firms and entrepreneurs	Benchmarking assessments
Focus on visitors on the basis of numbers	Investment in infrastructure	Investing in superstructure
	Business advice	Transport links, especially airline and airfreight links
	Reducing uncertainty	Information and communications links
	Coordination	Scanning globally for new knowledge

An integrated approach to rural and peripheral areas is therefore essential if rural development is to assume more sustainable characteristics. However, sustainability does not mean freezing the rural landscape, for example the peri-urban landscape regarded by some as sprawl is in fact far more productive and sustainable than what many people characterize as well as providing a dense mosaic of habitat that may assist in maintenance of biodiversity. Rural areas change. Understanding of visual amenity changes. The rural economic base changed. Government and interested groups can best assist rural areas to meet the challenges of economic restructuring and change by supporting the development of intangible capital such as leadership and generic skills (education and entrepreneurial skills), and by attaching greater importance to the provision of relevant information that affects decision making, rather than specifically supporting programmes which encourage brochure production, walking trails and other small scale local tourism initiatives, such as visitor centres. However, projects to support the relative transport and communication accessibility of locations are also extremely important as is the overall amenity of a location and the nature of government regulation and intervention. Not all areas can attract large numbers of visitors and a realistic appraisal of the tourism potential of a region is essential. In order to achieve the desired goals for places tourism in rural and peripheral areas must therefore be seen not only within the wider context of human mobility, including tourism, but also within the broader mix of government policies and agendas.

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