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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Disney Cruise Line's proposed a cruise port development for the Lighthouse Point in Southern Eleuthera in The Bahamas (Adderley, 2018, September 3). This has resulted in more and more activist groups worried that this development will have a detrimental impact on the nation's natural resources (Adderley, 2018, August 13). Hence, the aim of this paper is neither to support the proposed development nor to reject the idea, but to baseline the discussion on the fundamentals of sustainable and responsible tourism development. The paper also presents critical questions that is required by all the stakeholders to ponder before engaging in developmental work in fragile ecodestination.

How do you find the right equilibrium between the three pillars of sustainability (3Ps) – Profit (economy), People (social) and Planet (environment) in a proposed development like the Lighthouse Point? How about the fourth 'P', politics? Is the fourth 'P' going to derail the equilibrium? These are the critical questions that need to be understood before a development is taken into consideration in a natural resource like the Lighthouse Point in The Bahamas, that seems infinite only if it is managed well.

According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), sustainable tourism is defined as, "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). WTO further adds that:

"(a) Sustainable tourism should make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; (b) Sustainable tourism should respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance; and (c) Sustainable tourism should ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation" (p. 11).

Responsible tourism was defined in Cape Town in 2002 alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2018). At that summit, responsible tourism was defined as "Tourism that maximizes the benefits to

local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local communities conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species”.

Responsible tourism destinations provide quality travel experiences that promote the conservation of natural environments and offer opportunities and benefits for local communities. Responsible tourism operations are managed in such a way that they preserve the local environment and culture so that it can continue to deliver the benefits for years to come. In short, responsible tourism is about “using tourism to make better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit, in that order”.

Thus, as further outlined in the Cape Town Declaration, the following seven (7) characteristics are a MUST (not an option) in a destination that adheres to the principles of responsible tourism (Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2018):

“(a) minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts; (b) generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry; (c) involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances; (d) makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world’s diversity; (e) provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues; (f) provides access for physically challenged people; and (g) remains culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts and builds local pride and confidence”.

If a destination is not able to tick these seven characteristics, then it not regarded as fully responsible. So, how many of these seven boxes can the Lighthouse Point development tick?

Hence, responsible tourism is different from sustainable tourism in that it focuses on what people, businesses and governments do to maximise the positive economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism (Goodwin, 2018). It is about identifying the important issues locally and addressing those and transparently reporting progress towards using tourism for sustainable development.

Anderson (2011), in his popular article challenged the age old “three-pillars” of sustainability (see Figure 1A) on the basis that they obscure the real relationship between the economic, the social and the environmental. Can they then be regarded equal? He further argued that, “The environment is the physical reality all life depends on; the social is about one of the species within the environment, our own, organising itself; and the economic” is in turn one sub-set of the social”. Hence, each of these dimensions should be nested within the next: economic within social within environmental (as shown in Figure 1B). From this argument, it is clear that the most important pillar of sustainability is the environment, followed by the social and then the economy. In the Lighthouse Point development, do environmental needs take precedence over social and economic desires?

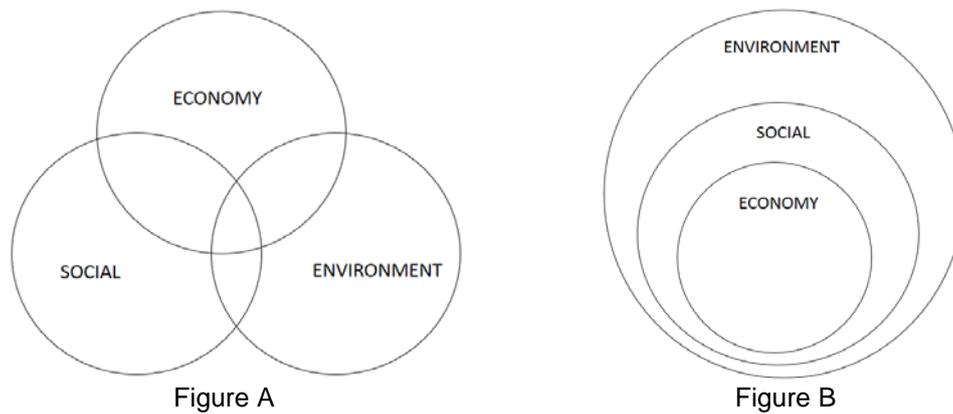


Figure 1. Evolution of the three-pillars of sustainability

Thus, this argument that the three-pillars of sustainability is desirable to achieve equilibrium (balance between economic, social and environmental) seems to misrepresent the reality. What that means in practice is that instead of pursuing sustainability, and forms of development which are sustainable, we get the pursuit of development, which is semi-sustainable, to some extent aimed at staying within environmental limits, but not doing so in any way which is really serious. Instead, we should be aiming at development which combines economic, social and environmental aims, not at development which compromises between them. Anderson further questioned why shouldn't we have development which is both environmentally sustainable and delivers good things for society? Is this outlook unimaginable? If it is, then it is indeed sad for mankind. We need to move away from the natural "trade-off" mindset of economists who seem to sacrifice short-term economic goals at the expense of long term social and environmental degradation. So, how about the case in the Lighthouse Point development? How do we manage less dense development in an environmentally fragile location like Lighthouse Point? Is this conceivable?

In conclusion, for the Lighthouse Point proposed project, what the people on the ground are requesting is consultation and engagement with the local community. This is fundamental in any small island destination development that is fragile and in which the community is a main stakeholder. The UNESCO's sustainable tourism guide emphasises the importance of engagement with the local communities and businesses (UNESCO, 2018). This is imperative as all stakeholders will then have a greater sense of the limits of growth and will be conscious of their responsibility. This can be done by talking and listening to the host community and businesses; identifying and communicating sustainable, economic local opportunities; and empowering the host community by telling their story in the site.

Should the Lighthouse Point expansion be allowed to have 'controlled' development as indicated by Disney Cruise Line? Should the site be secured (or gazetted) as a multi-use national park to preserve its cultural, historical and natural value for generations to come? Simultaneously, how can the country provide a long term economic stimulus for this island to sustain? Remember, the fourth "P" in the three-pillars of sustainability - this can make or break the sustainability of the destination.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, Lighthouse Point, Eleuthera, cruise tourism*

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Dr. Nair was at Taylor's University, Malaysia, for 19 years as a full Professor at the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts; Programme Leader for the Responsible Rural Tourism Network; Associate Research Fellow of the Centre for Research and Innovation in Tourism (CRIT) and the founding Director of the Centre for Research and Development at the University.

Dr. Nair earned a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture (1994), Master of Science in Systems Engineering with a specialisation in Environment (1998) and a Ph.D. in Systems Engineering with a concentration in Ecotourism (2003) from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). He also holds a Diploma in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations from the College of Professional Management (1997), Jersey, UK, and a Licensed Environmental Auditor (EMS-14001).

His research specialisation is in Sustainable and Responsible Tourism, Rural Tourism, Ecotourism Management, Environmental Management, Community-based Tourism and Green Tourism.

A consultant with many national and international projects, Dr. Nair's exceptional research achievements with more than 200 publications to his credit have earned him many awards including the Taylor's Chairman's Staff Excellence Award for Academic Excellence (2002); Research Excellence Award (2007 & 2013); Best Paper Award for Tourism Research in the Third National Tourism Educators Conference for his work in ecotourism (2004); Merit and Honorary Award as the Outstanding Young Malaysian Award respectively for Academic Leadership and Accomplishment in 2006 and 2009 by the Junior Chambers International; and many more accolades.

In 2011, he led one of the biggest national research grants that was awarded to a private university worth USD3million for a 5-year project (2011-2016) entitled, "Multidimensional Responsible Rural Tourism Capacity Framework for Sustainable Tourism" under the Ministry of Education's Long Term Research Grant Scheme (LRGS). The project outcome surpassed the key performance indicators (KPIs) set by the funding body.

Dr. Nair was also the past Vice President of the Malaysia Ecotourism Association (MEA), past President of the Asia-Pacific Council for Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (APacCHRIE) and the past Secretary of the Tourism Educators Association of Malaysia (TEAM). He is a well sought after keynote speaker across the globe and visiting professor for universities in Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, Myanmar and France.

Dr. Nair joined University of The Bahamas in fall 2017.