



ECOLOGICAL MODERNISATION A BASIS FOR THE TOURISM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *The article focused the influence of the Ecological Modernisation Theory (EMT) as a basis for the tourism sustainable development for environmental policy making within the tourism destinations to improve their competitiveness. In according for the ecological modernisation within the tourism industry is necessary the introduction of new technologies and management strategies improvement at the company level to bring the economic growth and environmental benefits, therefore the state needs new policy instruments and approaches to deal with these new challenges*

Key words: *ecological modernization, sustainable development, sustainable tourism, environmental policy*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important economic sectors that can help recovering the economies during economic crisis, especially in the countries with significant natural and anthropic potential.

The economic crisis affected all the sectors, including tourism, but the reality shows that the tourism market has a growing share in the global market, due the competitiveness and development strategies used. In this respect it is clear that the tourism industry must assume more responsibility for the environment protection and quality of life in regarding the tourism destinations. Therefore, the local authorities have a central role to play in achieving sustainable responsible tourism through commitment to supportive policy frameworks and adequate funding. Ensuring the economic, social and environmental sustainability of Romanian tourism is crucial both as a contribution to "sustainable development" in Romania and for the viability, continued growth, competitiveness and commercial success of this economically highly important sector. The pressures exerted by tourism on the tourism areas are even more damaging as these are fragile zones: ecosystems are disrupted by tourist developments, or may even disappear once roads, holiday homes, dykes, marinas, amusement parks.

The consumers' behaviour, supported by environmentally sound practices and behaviour on the part of producers (tourism industry and local administration) represents an key factor that contributes to the quality of tourism destinations.

2. THE ECOLOGICAL MODERNIZATION CONCEPT

Nearly as remarkable as ecological modernization rising visibility and influence has been the diversity of the meanings and usages of this concept. Ecological modernization is now employed in at least four different ways. *First*, there is an identifiable school of ecological modernization/sociological thought. From a North American and British perspective Arthur Mol and Gert Spaargaren are now generally recognized as the key figures in the field, though in Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere on the Continent ecological modernization

is still very closely associated with the work of scholars such as Joseph Huber and Martin Janicke.

Nonetheless, Mol and Spaargaren's sole- and jointly authored works (Spaargaren & Mol, 1992; Mol & Spaargaren, 2000; Spaargaren et al., 1999; Mol & Spaargaren, 1993; Spaargaren, 1996; Mol, 1995, 1997), as well as those of close associates and colleagues (Cohen, 1997; Leroy & van Tatenhove, 1999), constitute what can be thought of as the core literature of the ecological modernization perspective.

A *second* respect in which ecological modernization is employed is as a notion for depicting prevailing discourses of environmental policy. The major figure associated with the political-discursive and social-constructionist perspective on ecological modernization is Hajer (1995). For Hajer (1995), ecological modernization is not so much a prediction of strong tendencies to industrial-ecological progress as it is a category for describing the dominant discourses of the environmental policy arenas of the advanced countries. Hajer's view is that ecological-modernization environmental-political discourse may even serve to dilute the political impulse for environmental reforms by obscuring the degree to which economic expansion, growth of consumption, and capital-intensive technological change compromise the ability of states to ensure a quality environment.

Third, ecological modernization is often used as a synonym for strategic environmental management, industrial ecology, eco-restructuring, and so on (Hawken, 1993; Ayes, 1998). Indeed, the core literature on ecological modernization has tended to give primary emphasis to environmental improvements in the private sector, particularly in relation to manufacturing industry and associated sectors (e.g., waste recycling).

Social scientists from a variety of theoretical persuasions (Schnaiberg et al., 1998; Andersen, 1994) now use the notion of ecological modernization to pertain to private sector behaviors and conduct that simultaneously increase efficiency and minimize pollution and waste. Finally, there are some scholars who use the notion of ecological modernization to pertain to almost any environmental policy innovation or environmental improvement.

Murphy (1997), for example, refers to state policies that make possible the internalization of environmental externalities as being instances of ecological modernization.

3. ECOLOGICAL MODERNIZATION & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The concept of "sustainable tourism" is based on the more general concept of "sustainable development". As Buttel (2000) stated the concept of sustainability and sustainable development had real "shortcomings in providing guidance and vision" for the future evolution of the environmental policy. The concept was popularised, questioned, interpreted by innumerable users and everyone seems to impose its own interpretation on it. As a theory, "sustainable development" promises something to

everyone. Lele (1991), presented that the sustainable development is "a metafix that will unite everybody from the profit minded industrialist and risk minimising subsistence farmer to the equity seeking social worker, the pollution concerned or wildlife loving First Worlder, the grow maximising policy maker, the goal oriented bureaucrat, and therefore the vote counting politician".

In regarding semantic aspect, the concept of sustainable development fused two words derived from verbs with contradictory meanings. The word "sustain" means perpetuation and balance, while "develop" is a dynamic word that involve expansion and transformation. As a result of elusiveness of the sustainable development and of its weak implementation a growing interest is emerging in the implementation of *Ecological Modernisation Theory (EMT)*, a variant of sustainable development concept having the advantage that indicates how to reach a sound environment without pointing out what is sustainable or not, proposing a reconciliation between the opposing goals of economic growth and environmental protection, by so named "*greener industrialisation*".

Ecological Modernization Theory (EMT) has identified two options for strategies to overcome the deficiencies of the traditional bureaucratic state in environmental policy making, namely: the first option concerns a "*transformation of environmental policy from curative and reactive to preventive, from exclusive to participatory policy-making, from centralised to decentralised...from domineering, over regulated environmental policy making to a policy that creates favourable conditions and contexts for environmentally sound practices and behaviour on the part of producers and consumers*" (Mol, 1995).

In this respect, Mol suggests that the state will have to focus more on steering via economic mechanisms and change its management strategy by introducing collective self-obligations for economic sector via discursive interest mediation, the second option refers to a "transfer of responsibilities, incentives and tasks from the state to the market that accelerates the ecological transformation process" (Mol, 1995; Huber, 1982) believes that at the core of ecological modernisation theory is the reciprocal process of the "ecologising of economy" and the "economising of ecology".

Through these two concepts he focused on sustainable production and consumption through the introduction of economic aspects, mechanism and principles directed towards environmental protection. For Huber this meant addressing the environmental problems mainly through the transformation of production via de development and application of more sophisticated technologies that bring about emissions cut, reductions on the water and energy consumption, also a decrease in waste generation. He believes that the only way of surpassing the ecological crises is going further into the process or modernisation towards "super- industrialisation".

These may happen within the tourism sector by placing an economic value on nature and including market instruments as eco-taxes, liability, the increasing demand for ecologically sound products, environmental audits. The aim is to determine the economic actors (*tourism industry*) and consumers (*tourists and local communities*) to take into consideration the environmental aspects in their "*production*" and "*consumption*" process of the tourism products, services and activities.

The intervention of the state in the affairs of the private sector is often criticised by social theorists. The role of regulations in EMT consist in establishing imperatives for improvement whilst in the same time improving the capacity of tourism industry to respond to those imperatives, thus keeping the steering role of the state (local and national governments) in bringing about changes in production and consumption processes. The Ecological modernisation theory (EMT) appeals to the private sector (tourism industry) using a word this is

interested in, namely "profit", by means of market-based incentives, making the theory more probably to be accepted by the tourism industry. Angel and Rock (2003) indicated that benefits that can be obtained from close cooperation between the agencies of economic development and the firms (while maintaining autonomy from the firms) include improvements in technological and managerial capability, as well as a wider range of resources and policy tools applicable to enhance economic growth and environmental performances.

4. CONCLUSION

Ecological modernisation is not, however, immune from criticism. Whilst there is a reasonable consensus about the core characteristics of ecological modernisation, there are sufficient differences between scholars to distinguish between „weak“ and „strong“ versions along a continuum. In its weaker „techno corporatist“ form, ecological modernisation focuses on the development of technical solutions to environmental problems through the partnership of economic, political and scientific elites in corporatist policy-making structures. The stronger „reflexive“ version of ecological modernisation adopts a much broader approach to the integration of environmental concerns across institutions and wider society, envisaging extensive democratisation and recognising the international dimensions of environmental issues.

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