7   What is to be done?

We have learnt, rather too late, that action comes, not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.

Dietrich Bonheoffer[1]

This has been a personal journey, one that has enabled me, with many others, to explore the concept of responsibility, to apply it in the context of tourism and to explore its relevance in a number of different societies.

I have sought to report here on the development of a broad movement in thinking about how to address the consumption of tourism, and how responsibility can be taken by individuals and groups in businesses, communities and local government, encouraged and supported by their peers. Above all, I have tried to emphasise that with opportunity comes the responsibility to act. In many other areas of concern, from banking and politics to fishing and farming, we need more responsible approaches. Responsibility is free. We can have as much of it as we can handle: we can all take some; we can all take more; we should all take some.[2]

The experience of pursuing the Responsible Tourism agenda has frequently reminded me of the socio-cultural and religious diversity of our world and that it is individual people who make our species more sustainable. There are global problems and issues, but solutions are generally local, although we can learn from each other and translate solutions from one place to another. There are few if any global solutions, although there are global threats in our finite world.

During my years as a tourist and tour leader, I felt a mounting unease about the experience of tourism – which is what drove me to research and teaching on tourism. My disquiet stemmed from the chasm between claims about the benefits of ecotourism and the reality, so I began to look into the impacts of tourism in and around national parks in Africa and Asia. The

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1   Letters and Papers from Prison (2001)

2   I am grateful to Denis Wormwell, of Shearing Group for formulating this so powerfully. It is also used in the title of a paper by John Peters.

result was empirical confirmation that the benefits of ecotourism were not to be found in the destinations, at the system level, and that there was little point in relying on the niche of ecotourism – that was not enough. In destinations, ecotourists are indistinguishable from all the others. The challenge was how to manage all forms of tourism to make them more sustainable, and many individuals had to take responsibility for that. At the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology I met national park wardens who clearly had very little understanding about how tourists arrived at the park gates – I realised that, if they did, they would have a better chance of managing both the tourists and their impacts. The resulting courses we developed on tourism and conservation were designed to empower national park wardens to manage tourism to benefit conservation and the local communities who are often disadvantaged by the protected area. Participation in the VSO and Tearfund campaigns, and subsequent work with Association of Independent Tour Operators, led me to the realisation that Responsible Tourism offered an approach which could engage all the stakeholders – and this also led me to the discovery of Krippendorf.

In the course of debate in the classroom at Greenwich University in 2000, together with the Masters students we identified three objectives for the development of Responsible Tourism, three things we aspired to see achieved: the creation of a marketplace for Responsible Tourism products; a charity to support people in destinations in managing tourism for the benefit of their community and their place; and awards to provide recognition and encouragement for those businesses which were changing. I co-founded ResponsibleTravel.com with Justin Francis in 2001[3] and in 2004 we launched the Responsible Tourism Awards, now the World Responsible Tourism Awards. The Travel Foundation emerged out of the government's Sustainable Tourism Initiative and Travel Philanthropy, which was launched in 2007.[4] Scores of Masters students now work in the field of Responsible Tourism – they work for UK outbound operators, tourist boards, governments, NGOs, tourism businesses, trade associations and consultancies around the world.

My work on tourism and poverty reduction grew out of a request from the UK's Department for International Development for a working paper on tourism and poverty elimination. Those were heady days; but the 2002 WTO policy paper, of which I wrote the initial draft, committed only to alleviation. The foundation of the Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership was remarkably

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3   I subsequently sold my shares.

4   www.travelphilanthropy.org.uk/

productive and demonstrated the value of open access publication on the Web, although there was considerable disappointment in the unwillingness of donors to demand evidence that the interventions they funded had made people less poor.

Work with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in South Africa on their guidelines for Responsible Tourism led to the first International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations, now held annually, and the Cape Town Declaration. The conference defined the characteristics of Responsible Tourism and the concept was subsequently taken up by the World Travel Market for their World Responsible Tourism Day, which is supported by UNWTO. My work on national tourism policy in South Africa, The Gambia, Bhutan, Rwanda and Oman, and discussion with predominantly mid-career students from around the world, has reinforced the importance of recognising and working with the world's diversity: local priorities and narratives are of crucial importance.

The ethic of responsibility

At the core of the Responsible Tourism movement is the ethic of responsibility, a willingness to take responsibility for achieving sustainable development through tourism. Tourism takes place in diverse destinations and each is unique. Destinations are sometimes similar but they are never identical. Each unique location has a particular geology and geography, social structure, history and cultural heritage and a diversity of views will exist about the place, about what issues need to be addressed and how. Responsible Tourism was not defined in the Cape Town Declaration, nor is it defined here. It is an ethic of responsibility, applied to tourism, which engages with those who recognise their objectives in the Cape Town Declaration characteristics of Responsible Tourism[5] and who support its principles:

- All forms of tourism can be more responsible;
- We should resist the commodification of tourism: it undermines value;
- The world is diverse: we should recognise and celebrate that it is and respect it;
- Circumstances alter cases: in different places, communities have different priorities, different issues are salient and solutions vary;
- Responsible and sustainable tourism will be achieved in different

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5   http://responsibletourismpartnership.org/cape-town-declaration-on-responsible-tourism/