

PREPARE: A model to aid the development of policies for less unsustainable tourism in historic towns

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS: sustainable tourism, urban tourism, heritage tourism, environmental audit, tourism policy, Local Agenda 21

The PREPARE wheel is a dynamic model showing how a systematic environmental audit system could be applied to the development and management of tourism. The model was derived during

research on four European historic walled towns characterised as destinations for heritage and urban tourism. Embracing the approach implied by Local Agenda 21 and 'best value' reviews, the paper illustrates how such towns can be assessed for levels of compliance with defined actions and policies set out as the necessary elements of an overall programme to move towards less unsustainable tourism in these destinations. This involves six successive stages: Policy, Responsibility, Eco-awareness, Programme, Audit and Review. Local stakeholders were involved at each stage, from defining objectives for tourism development locally to assessing the levels of compliance with expected policies and actions, although this brought a degree of subjectivity to the results. Turning the PREPARE wheel illustrates the continuous repetition of this process, which is necessary to stimulate ongoing improvements in levels of compliance with policies to move towards less unsustainable tourism. Developments in tourism policy in Alcúdia (one of the original study towns) since 1993 have been analysed to illustrate the process in practice.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents PREPARE, an acronym that models a six-part policy audit and review process for tourism. The model evolved during a detailed study of four small European historic walled towns. The paper briefly reviews the relevant literature, explains the derivation of (and justifi-

cation for) PREPARE, and evaluates its initial application. To demonstrate the applicability of the model as a framework for analysis, recent developments in the management of tourism in Alcúdia, Mallorca, are analysed. The paper concludes by suggesting that such an audit approach could establish dynamic criteria for a type of 'eco-label' for tourist destinations.

The caution implied in use of the phrase 'less unsustainable tourism' in the title of this paper recognises that there are elements of the tourism system (Mills and Morrison, 1992: xiv) that are inherently damaging to the environment. Historic small towns in particular are often in remote and peripheral places and are inevitably dependent for much of their tourism on damaging road and/or air transport (Bruce, 1997). The negative impacts of road and air transport are well documented (Cm 2674, 1994; Cm 3950, 1998). Yet the continuing debate about sustainable tourism (Stabler, 1997; Hunter, 1997; Clarke, 1997; Butler, 1998; Garrod and Fyall, 1998; Wheeler, 1999) says little about the difficulties of integrating 'idealised options such as sustainable tourism' into destination management policies (Jansen-Verbeke, 1997: 255). The problems faced by those involved with managing tourism include how to monitor and control visitor flows to minimise adverse impacts, and how to move towards a less unsustainable tourism for their particular destination.

The proposition that tourism in historic towns can be managed in a way that would make it less unsustainable is consistent with Brundtland's statement that sustainable development is: '... a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, ... and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs' (WCED, 1987: 9). The ultimate goal may be to achieve 'sustainability' in the sense of a static, idealised state in which resource use is in equilibrium, but a more practical

aspiration is to work towards that goal (Clarke, 1997: 224). Tourism policy should be no exception while recognising that, for tourism, full sustainability may never be achieved (Butler 1998: 31).

'Some people say that modern tourism — like most other current economic activities — cannot be sustainable in the strictest sense of the word ... [but] ... progress can be made in the longer term by helping tourism to become more sustainable.' (DCMS, 1998: para. 12).

The research from which the PREPARE model evolved took place in four small European historic walled towns, Chepstow and Conwy in Wales, Naarden in Holland and Alcúdia in Mallorca, destinations for both heritage and urban tourism. Heritage tourism has been simply defined as 'tourism centred on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings to art works, to beautiful scenery' (Yale, 1991: 21). The focus is on visiting inheritance. The contentious element lies in the definition of 'we', which may imply anything from 'we humans' to narrower more ambivalent groupings such as 'we Scots', 'we Irish', 'we Mallorquin', or we 'white Anglo-Saxon Protestants'. Lowenthal (1996) and Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) each discuss tourism in the context of the 'ownership' of heritage. Bruce (1998) examines implications for walled towns. In any case much of this is to be found in towns and cities, ie heritage tourism to towns and cities is a particular form of, or experience within, urban tourism.

Urban tourism is often taken to mean tourism to large cities, defined as 'metropolitan areas that have a population of over one million ... [although] ... many of the characteristics are just as applicable to smaller cities ... perhaps some of even a quarter of a million' (Law, 1993: 2). Page (1995: 16–17) adopts a more inclusive classification with 11 categories of urban tourism:

capital cities; metropolitan (used in the ecclesiastical sense) centres; walled historic cities and small fortress towns; large historic cities; inner city areas; revitalised waterfront areas; industrial cities; seaside and winter sports resorts; purpose-built integrated tourist resorts; tourist entertainment complexes; specialised tourist service centres; and cultural/arts cities.

The development of tourism in urban areas has clear implications for wider town management and planning (eg see Jansen-Verbeke, 1997). Tourism, unplanned, has a tendency to become unwieldy and unmanageable (Page, 1995: 157). The distribution of power and responsibility often brings conflict between politicians, administrators, different levels of government (from the European to the 'parish pump'), and the public and private sectors (Hall, 1994).

Local government uses the planning system to identify potential conflicts, and to build consensus through strategic trade-offs (Friend and Hickling, 1987), but national and/or regional government may constrain local government powers to manage the urban tourist system (Cm 4014, 1998; DCMS, 1999). Policies to improve the sustainability of any activities have to integrate three parallel objectives — economic, social and environmental (Cm 4014, 1998: para. 8.10). This makes success intrinsically difficult but an approach of constrained maximisation of a given objective (akin to linear programming) allowed a coherent analytical framework to be defined (Jackson and Bruce, 1992). Physical limits, imposed in many cases by ancient town walls or similar defining barriers in Ashworth's 'wall-less walled towns' (1993), may be reached very quickly in terms of the numbers of visitors that can be accepted.

In the context of Local Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992), the logical next step in the four towns' study was to try to opera-

tionalise the management of tourism for environmental improvement by setting up a process of continuing audit and review: ie the specification of PREPARE. The authors of this paper argue that this approach could aid the development of policies for less unsustainable tourism in such historic towns.

THE FOUR TOWNS' STUDY: DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The initial research, in which the fieldwork methodology was developed, was carried out in Chepstow, Wales. Here the prime objective for further developing tourism had been defined as the maximisation of local income (Wales Tourist Board, 1988). The other objectives covering social and environmental elements were identified as 'constraints' on tourist development which circumscribed how the target could be achieved: levels of traffic, noise, damage to the historic fabric and non-aggravation of the residents (Jackson and Bruce, 1992). The original Chepstow study was initiated as a five-year, longitudinal study of tourist-related developments in that town. As such it was concerned to establish a baseline against which progress could be measured and was explicitly designed to involve local residents and the local authorities throughout, so that early results could be fed back to affect later policies.

The larger project, part-funded by the European Commission Directorate General XXIII (Tourism) Project 92/C 51/16 (reported in Denman, 1995), came in the fourth year of the Chepstow study and extended the work to Conwy (also in Wales), Alcúdia in Mallorca and Naarden in the Netherlands (Bruce, 1994). Each is a historic and walled town with less than 20,000 inhabitants but with its own distinctive features and settings. These four towns fall into Page's category of walled historic cities and small fortress towns. They are

Figure 1 Location of the four towns



typical of historic towns where the impact of urban tourism is often seen as negative (Swarbrooke, 1999). Yet, at the time of the study, each was seeking ways of exploiting their heritage through tourism, often resulting in conflicting policy and/or managerial objectives that are difficult to reconcile. See for instance Ashworth's discussion of how tourism and historic cities spatially interact in terms of both heritage and marketing (Ashworth, 1993; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996).

The research in each town was conducted by a town/university partnership, using the Chepstow methodology to produce comparable results. Quantitative data were collected covering visitor activities and expenditure, income and employment generated by tourism, investment plans, residents' attitudes, traffic volume and noise, and pedestrian movements (for example see Appendix in Dutch to Bruce *et al.*, 1993). The research teams worked

with local associations and politicians in each town to agree local objectives that were compatible with Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992; see also Jackson and Bruce, 1992; Bruce and Jackson, 1999). The consultation process involved was fundamental to the evolution of PREPARE.

The outcome was an estimated set of quantified indicators that, it could be argued, allowed estimates of tourism carrying capacity (see Butler, 1997) and indicated the position of each town in relation to these. Johnson and Thomas (1996) interpreted the 'capacity' debate in terms of an 'optimum' level of tourism development which a town may be below or above. If it is below optimum then active marketing will be appropriate; if it is above then demarketing will be necessary. Knowing where they were in this respect was crucial in the development of each town's tourism strategy. Working through the assessments required in the PREPARE model helped

identify where and when extra tourists are to be welcomed or resisted.

DERIVATION OF PREPARE

Faced with the problem of assessing how each town was doing in terms of optimising the management of its tourism, policies and actions which could aid the development of less unsustainable tourism were identified. They were classified into 'elements', following a self-assessment questionnaire originally designed by Gilbert to be used by potential applicants for EC eco-management and audit regulation (Gilbert, 1993: 195–210), the equivalent British Standard BS7750 (BSI, 1992) and the international standard ISO 14000. All incorporate the principles that the polluter should pay, and that the public should be made aware of environmental information. ISO 14000-based tourism certification, as practised by Green Globe (2000), has been attacked by the WWF for claiming tourism sustainability merely through a process for improvement. For destinations, Green Globe's failure to link in with Local Agenda 21 was also criticised (WWF-UK, 2000).

Standards for such environmental management and audit schemes (EMAS), based as they are on the quality standards (ISO 9000), have also been castigated as over-elaborate (Castle, 2000; Seddon, 2000), especially so for industries such as tourism, which are less obviously dangerous than chemicals or nuclear power. PREPARE simplifies by focusing on those elements most relevant for a tourism application. It is designed to furnish the responsible authorities with information on the degree to which their destination is compliant with the process to achieve an 'eco-label'.

Although few tourism organisations or destinations have so far adopted this approach, there is increasing interest in tourism eco-audit (eg Goodall and Stabler, 1997) and tourism eco-labelling (eg Miha-

lic, 1996; WWF-UK, 2000). In 1994 the Walled Towns Friendship Circle (WTFC) became an associate member of the sustainable cities programme (Fudge *et al.*, 1996), which entailed the recognition that such a commitment implies the development of tourism policies which contribute to a wider agenda of sustainable development. At the symposium of the WTFC in September 1993, a 'WTFC hallmark' was proposed (Bruce *et al.*, 1993). Gaining such a label would indicate a walled town's determination to develop its tourism industry on sustainable principles by practising rigorous procedures to encourage local tourism organisations (hotels, transport operators, tour operators and attractions) to develop and adopt their own environment management standards.

The 18 elements of defined policies and actions themselves fell into related clusters, which are shown as the six stages of PREPARE (Table 1). Each is identified by the relevant capital letter in the key word (Bruce, 1994) in much the same way as PRESERVING summed up Plog's checklist for protecting areas from tourism impact (Plog, 1994):

Policy, **R**esponsibility, **E**co-awareness, **P**rogramme, **A**udit and **R**eview

The stages are intended to be carried out sequentially, therefore PREPARE can usefully be modelled as a wheel, where each stage is shown as a segment (see Figure 2).

The activities in each stage are explained more fully below. The wheel model allows the dynamics engendered by repeating the PREPARE process to be seen as rolling the wheel forward through a continual interaction of policy, programmes and review. Similarly, Middleton used a 'wheel of influences' to capture the idea of movement and interactive decisions (Middleton and Hawkins, 1998: 86).

Operationalising the model required the further step of allocating weights (based on

Table 1: PREPARE: Analytical framework with stages and elements

	Weights
P < P > repare policies for sustainability published	20
Initial review of town tourism policy	
Identification of a sustainable tourism system	
Policy for sustainable tourism	
R p < R > epare responsibility and resources	15
Responsibility within the local authority or other public body	
Resources to measure key environmental indicators	
Executive official accountable for policy development	
E pr < E > pare eco-awareness/communication and training	15
Communication procedures within and beyond the local authority	
Ecological and environmental awareness within and beyond the local authority	
Register of relevant documents for tourism operation and development	
P pre < P > are programmes of action with objectives and indicators	30
Register of environmental indicators for tourism	
Environmental objectives and targets	
Environmental improvement programme for tourism ¹	
Local sustainable tourism manual for use by the local tourism industry	
A prep < A > re audit procedures and reporting	15
Tourism sustainability audit procedure	
Tourism sustainability audit plan	
Tourism sustainability audit reporting	
Re prepa < Re > review of policy	5
Procedures for reviewing sustainable tourism policies	
review of sustainable tourism policy	
Total	100

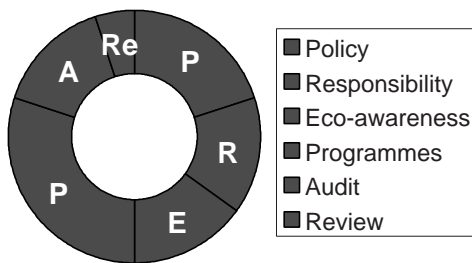
¹Sub-elements were differentially weighted in the 'four towns' project draft. Apart from a weight of 20 given to environmental improvement programmes within this segment of **pre < P > re**, all sub-elements are reckoned of equal significance within a segment.

Gilbert's (1993) self-assessment questionnaire) to each stage, designed to reflect their perceived importance for reducing the unsustainability of tourism in the towns. The resulting weights were further modified in consultation with participants from the original study towns and with professionals from four further walled towns, Chester and Canterbury in England, Loches in France and Tenby in Wales, as well as the Wales Tourist Board. The weight given to the programmes segment was increased compared with that given to the auditing segment, while that given to environmental recording and

record keeping was much reduced. This was appropriate, since it was the part of the eco-audit regulation that would have required the most continuous administrative, not to say bureaucratic, effort from what is a fragmented industry of small business and administrative units. The size of the segments in the PREPARE wheel reflects the agreed relative weights (see Figure 2).

In the four towns' study the research teams used a comprehensive, over arching questionnaire (based on Gilbert, 1993) in assessing each town's level of compliance with the activities expected at each stage, if

Figure 2 The PREPARE wheel



policies and actions designed to make tourism less unsustainable were being successfully pursued. The questionnaire was completed during a round table discussion with appropriate officials for each town. The results for each town were consolidated into a five-point scale: (1) virtually non-existent, (2) minimal, (3) partial, (4) significant and (5) comprehensive.

For instance, if the conclusion was that a town had good policies for the achievement of sustainable tourism in place, it would be judged to be fully compliant, and would be awarded 20 out of 20 for the first stage. The extent to which it fell short of that achievement would be reflected by a lower score. Figure 3 shows that the average score awarded across the four towns for **P**, published policy, was 9 out of a possible 20.

The scoring of each stage at successive reviews can be seen as akin to 'formative assessment' (Devereux, 1999), so providing feedback and encouraging progress towards less unsustainable tourism. In this it is consistent with the recognition that regular policy reviews are a necessary part of the sustainability agenda. (Cm 4014, 1998).

Table 2 illustrates one question used during the four towns' study, and the scoring expected on the level of compliance revealed (Bruce *et al.*, 1993: 23).

The next section of the paper illustrates some of the issues that arise in attempting to work through the PREPARE model in

Table 2: Policy for sustainable tourism (within <P>REPARe)

Question: To what extent has your town or city put in place a policy for sustainable tourism, including the necessary success criteria and environmental indicators?

Score

4	Policy is relevant, part of day-to-day decision processes for tourism operations and marketing, and involving all significant parts of the local tourism industry
3	Policy only partially implemented or failing to meet some of the defined requirements
2	Policy exists but does not cover all requirements and implementation has not yet started
1	Policy exists in draft
0	No policy exists

the field, in the context of the outcomes of the four towns' study.

PREPARE APPLIED TO THE FOUR TOWNS

<P>REPARe: Published policies for sustainability (Weight 20 out of 100)

Although the tourism policy of some public authorities can be to have no policy at all — that is, to leave tourism to the private sector (Elliott, 1997) — this is not an option for those committed to less unsustainable outcomes. Effective environmental policies 'need to be detailed enough to demonstrate that the commitment goes beyond lip service' (Welford, 1996: 176).

The first stage of PREPARE involves a review of policy statements from the public (local authority/tourist boards) and the private sectors in a town. This establishes how far they include evidence of an operational sustainable tourism policy system for the local authority's own activities, and for the systems of the tourism

industry in the town. A fully compliant policy needs to include success criteria and environmental indicators, a marketing programme targeted towards developing less unsustainable forms of tourism, and the promotion of eco-standards to the local tourism industry (Bruce and Serra Cantallops, 1996). By the end of the four towns' study, each town had a policy for more sustainable tourism, including agreed success criteria and environmental indicators.

P < R > EPARE: Responsibility and resources (Weight 15 out of 100)

The 'responsibility' segment covers the identification of the responsible authorities for the development and management of policies to improve the sustainability of tourism in the town. It also involves an analysis of what resources are available to carry out policies; and establishes whether there is an accountable individual with executive responsibility.

In Chepstow and Conwy, responsibility was blurred between local authority departments and other levels of government. County, borough and town councils all had different, sometimes conflicting, roles, because the walled towns were only a small part of any of the authorities' area. The existence of a 'champion' at executive level in the local authority proved to be important to ensure the cross-departmental or 'cross-cutting' (Cm 4014, 1998) approach essential for developing an effective sustainable tourism system and its associated policy and advisory guidelines. Naarden had a 'champion' in its tourism officer but he was not in a sufficiently authoritative position to be fully effective. Alcúdia, with a mayoral commune form of government, did better.

Resources are needed to identify and measure the social, economic and environmental indicators. It took approximately 20,000 ECU (now Euros: one Euro is very approximately equal to a US dollar) per town (jointly funded by the towns and the

EU) to do the initial data collection and to set up monitoring systems. Despite this allocation of resources for monitoring, the lack of executive responsibility and accountability for sustainability left substantial scope for improvement in each of the four towns.

PR < E > ARE: Eco-awareness — Communication and training (Weight 15 out of 100)

Communicating the message about the need to make tourism less unsustainable, and the results of the monitoring activity, is critical to raising ecological and environmental awareness, referred to here as eco-awareness. Therefore this stage covers communications procedures, training to raise eco-awareness and creating a register of relevant documents.

Communications procedures in the four towns were often highly developed within the local authorities, but communications with the tourism industry and local people were often much weaker. Procedures for communication are not enough: residents must be motivated and well informed on the environmental impact of tourism activities. One of the identified objectives for the towns was that any further tourism development should take place 'without aggravating the life of the residents' (see Bruce and Jackson, 1999). The surveys of the residents of the four towns undertaken to test residents' attitudes had an important, if incidental, communication role (Bruce and Serra Cantallops, 1996).

Only in Conwy was there a real example of good practice in developing eco-awareness. A part of the Project Conwy marketing plan (see Bruce, 1995) recommended a programme to educate businesses, residents and visitors on environmental issues. As a result, local schools produced an exhibition about the environment for residents and visitors, then speakers were invited to residents' association, civic society and chamber

of trade meetings to talk about the issues and ways of becoming more energy efficient, stressing the positive, win-win aspects, such as potential cost savings. Conwy was aiming to become an environmentally aware town and to attract publicity for its efforts.

Identification of the training needs of tourism was an early part of the studies in Chepstow and Conwy. It was found that environmental awareness training needed to be geared to individuals in key roles to ensure commitment and 'ownership'. The work in Alcúdia identified the need to train hotel reception staff and tour operators in the value of something other than standard mass tourism for short-term profit. The effectiveness of the environmental awareness content in training needed further development in both Chepstow and Conwy, while in Naarden it was nearly non-existent.

All four town authorities needed to make a register of relevant documents available to the local tourism industry.

PRE <P> ARe: Programmes of action with objectives and indicators (Weight 30 out of 100)

A recognition that policy without action is of little value meant that the programmes of action segment of the PREPARE wheel was awarded the largest weight of all. 'Best practice' here would include having an improvement programme for tourism, a register of environmental indicators, identified environmental objectives and targets, and the production of a local sustainable tourism manual. Canterbury City Council specifically identified visitor management as an important part of such action programmes. As a consultee, the council has been a major participant in the EHTF's (English Historic Town Forum's) work on visitor and tourism management (EHTF, 1994; 1999).

It was beyond the scope of the four towns' study to set out the detailed guidelines required for the creation of local advi-

sory manuals for use by the tourism industry. Instead, the more general 'Green Audit Kit' developed by the West Country Tourist Board was recommended as an effective model (Dingle, 1993). Each participating town had the basis for developing such a guide through the local consultative process, feedback meetings and intermediate reports.

The initial work with the four towns each yielded programmes of action. The detail of these has mostly been reported elsewhere (Chepstow in Bruce and Jackson, 1999; Conwy in Bruce, 1995; Alcúdia in Bruce and Serra Cantallops, 1996). However, if the process stops with an action programme it fails to generate the necessary dynamic for continuing improvement towards sustainability. A test of the overall success of the approach is the extent to which the review process is repeated and stimulates further action; this is exemplified in Alcúdia (see below).

PREP <A> Re: Audit procedures and reporting (Weight 15 out of 100)

Activities in this stage include assessing the plans and procedures used to audit local tourism for sustainability and how the outcomes are reported. They need to cover the public and private sectors, but must avoid demanding great volumes of documentation from tourism organisations.

Although a full audit was beyond the scope of the four towns' study, the data generated are amenable to a great deal of further analysis. In local authority terms, elected members should lead the scrutiny of past policy, aided by access to the necessary documentation (Cm 4014, 1998). Alcúdia's subsequent strategic plan, Alcúdia 2020, included just such a review (see below).

PREPA <Re> : Review of policy (Weight 5 out of 100)

The final stage of PREPARE covers the establishment of review procedures, and

the actual review of outcomes of the policies identified as intended to make local tourism less unsustainable. To score highly in terms of compliance, the review needs to cover the public and private sectors and to consider wider legislative and other changes. It is this stage of PREPARE that turns a static analysis into a dynamic process which facilitates a continual search for improvements in sustainability, akin to the suggested 'best value' reviews in the UK (Cm 4014, 1998).

Except in Chepstow, the four towns' study was only funded for a single year and therefore it could not extend to a policy review. But there are current plans to return to some of the towns for this purpose.

Results of the four towns' study

The average results across the four towns have been illustrated visually as the shaded section of the segments of the PREPARE wheel (Figure 3). It can be seen that the average degree of compliance with the defined policies and actions necessary to move towards less unsustainable tourism was 'minimal'. While there was some variation from town to town, the only stage with even 'partial' compliance was pro-

grammes of action, which was awarded 17 out of a possible 30.

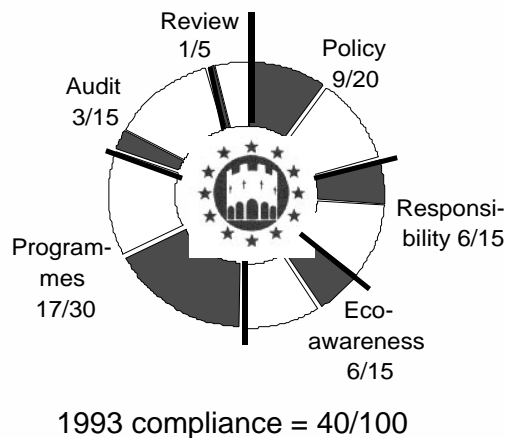
The outcome reported here reveals the situation at a given moment in time: October 1993. The rationale for presenting the results as a wheel is to reinforce the expectation that there would be a continual Agenda 21-based audit and review of tourism policies in the quest for continuing improvement (ie turning the wheel). While there has been only modest evidence of this in three of the original four towns (Project Conwy was wound up in 1993, the emphasis of policy in Chepstow has switched to marketing and there has been no further work on monitoring tourism policy in Naarden until very recently), there has been substantial progress in Alcúdia.

REVIEWING DEVELOPMENTS IN ALCÚDIA 1994–1998

In the initial discussion of the PREPARE model as a dynamic wheel, it was suggested that it could provide a framework to stimulate a continuing process of audit and review. Alcúdia participated in the four towns' study in 1993. Since then tourism policy there has developed significantly. The outcomes of this have been analysed in terms of the stages of PREPARE to assess the extent to which compliance with the policies and actions identified as central to any move towards less unsustainable tourism for the town has increased.

The very fast pace of Alcúdia's recent economic development is shown by the growth in its resident population, from under 3,000 at the beginning of the century to just 4,000 in 1970, 6,500 by the mid-1980s and over 11,000 by 1998 (Alcúdia Council, 2000). Including second residences and tourists, the total in July and August is between 50,000 and 55,000 inhabitants. In 1996 concern about the economic sustainability of this rate of development, which has been based mainly on tourism, led the

Figure 3 The PREPARE wheel: Average compliance of the four towns, 1993



council to initiate a strategic plan, called 'Alcúdia 2020'. This can be identified with the turning of the wheel: **Review** then **PREPARE** again.

The development of the Alcúdia 2020 plan involved a review of policies and the establishment of objectives and strategies to promote the long-term sustainability of tourism development. For the first time politicians, tourism professionals and social groups have begun to query the need for continuing growth. Questions have been raised about whether additional growth could damage future competitiveness by losing tourist attractiveness, and about how the council will be able to afford further increases in infrastructure investment. The big problem now is seen as how to deter private investment in the area rather than how to attract it.

In 1994, immediately after the four towns study, Alcúdia Council agreed to establish the sustainable tourism policy: 'Alcúdia Municipi Ecoturístic', involving a formal declaration by the town hall and the creation of an eco-tourism label. The strategy was to position Alcúdia as something more than a 'sun and beach Mediterranean destination', namely as a place for: 'top quality sun and beach, plus culture and a protected and attractive environment and landscape' (Alcúdia Council, 1993; 1994a). The main objective was 'to stimulate *awareness of environmental* protection among those *responsible* for the tourism industry' (Alcúdia Council, 1994b).

The initiative was initially developed with the hospitality sector (hoteliers and apartment operators), who took responsibility for establishing a set of criteria to be met for the award of an eco-tourism label. Tour operators to Alcúdia, who have nearly complete control over the 25,000 beds in the dominant hotel and apartment sectors (Alcúdia Council, 2000), have welcomed the programme. In 1994, German tour operators promoted the initiative at

the Berlin ITB, one of the world's largest tourism fairs. TUI, Neckermann, ITS, Jahn Reisen and Alltours made the presentation, and information about the Alcúdia's eco-label and its programme appeared in the brochures of TUI and Neckermann.

The rationale for the 2020 plan relies on residents' attitudes and opinions towards future tourism development of Alcúdia. Research shows a high degree of consciousness among residents about environmental protection (eco-awareness). Most expressed a desire to stop increasing the numbers of tourists and to aim for qualitative growth. Now the Alcúdia Council lists establishments that have gained the eco-tourism label in its Internet promotion (http://www.alcudia.net/planes/angles/3.ecoturisme/eco_a.htm, August 2000) and brochures in four languages.

The programme to establish these criteria followed the recommendations of the DRV (German Tour Operators and Travel Agencies Association) and other similar initiatives in European countries (Alcúdia Council, 2000). Nine compulsory and four optional criteria, ranging from training to water usage and purchasing local produce, were given differential weights. A hotel had to achieve a certain minimum score if it was to gain an eco-tourism label. In 1998, the Alcúdia Council, by now under different political control, extended the programme to the food and beverage sector (restaurants, bars, cafeterias, etc).

The 2020 plan includes a programme of measures to stop or reduce the current level of in-migration, to stop quantitative growth, and to extend the season. Eco-awareness will be enhanced as a way of extending the season by stressing culture, heritage and the attractive environment.

Significant improvements have been made to Alcúdia's walled centre since 1993, including pedestrianisation and burying electrical and phone wires (as proposed during the original four towns' study). The

response of residents has been enthusiastic. The programme 'Alcúdia Municipi Ecoturístic' is being intensified, strengthened and reviewed, with more involvement of the residents and by changing some aspects of its promotion to the final customer. Talks, exhibitions and workshops on recycling for children have been organised.

Scrutinising, auditing and reviewing these initiatives have been carried out by the University of the Balearic Islands as part of research for the 'Alcúdia 2020 Strategic Plan' (Alcúdia Council, 2000). They have found that tourism expenditure from tourists who stay in hotels and apartments that have the eco-tourism label is higher than other tourists, 2 per cent more overall for the whole trip and 12 per cent more within the hotel or apartment establishment. In addition, water consumption per capita has decreased, showing that the saving measures are having positive results. The length of holiday in Alcúdia was nearly 12 nights in 1998, up from just over 10 nights in 1993. This is against the recent trend for the Balearics as a whole (Govern Balear, 1993; 1998) and implicitly means a lower global warming impact per day on holiday (Bruce, 1997).

As an audit procedure, a 'green vigilante' has been appointed to scrutinise, observe and

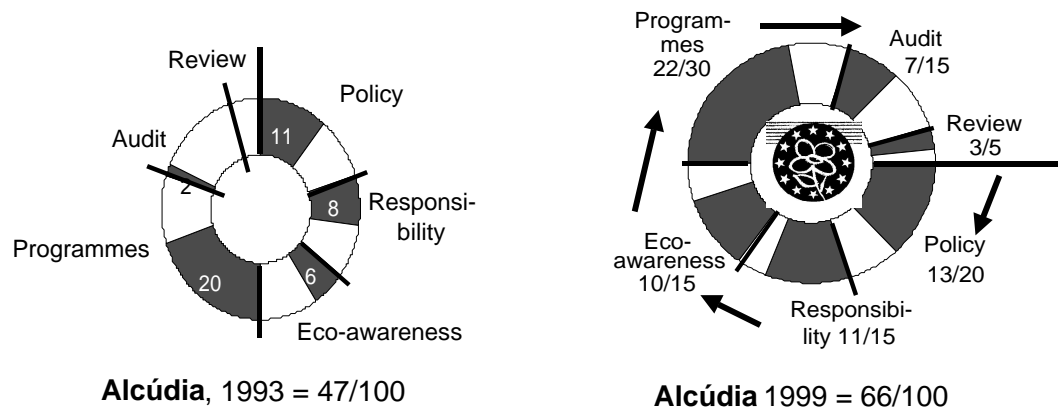
monitor the condition of protected areas and landscape, waste collection procedures, gardens etc. Systematic analysis of sea water, sand, water in wet zones, channels and lakes is undertaken; as is selective waste collection. Sanctions for actions against the environment have been instituted. More environmentally conscious criteria have also been incorporated into other aspects of municipal decisions. The town local plan was reviewed and revised in 1998, lowering the population ceiling for the area. A public works programme has included improvement to the water purifying plant, the sewage system and energy-efficiency measures for the public lighting system. In collaboration with the private sector, brochures on historic sites, eco-tourism, excursions by bicycle etc have been published.

These changes in Alcúdia demonstrate a commitment to a review process and to improvement in line with the principles of PREPARE. In each segment, the authors' analysis suggests that levels of compliance in the town can now be judged to be 'significant' (see Figure 4).

CONCLUSIONS

Whether in Alcúdia, the other three walled towns involved in the 1993 study, or indeed any destination, a major issue for

Figure 4 The PREPARE wheel applied to Alcúdia, 1993 and 1999



those involved with the management of tourism is how to work towards making 'their' tourism less unsustainable. In the context of Local Agenda 21, they need to have an agreed set of objectives for that locality within which they can define appropriate policies and actions, and set up a programme to monitor the varying impacts of tourism. Further, the essence of the broader sustainability agenda implies that there should be ongoing change to move towards less unsustainable outcomes from human activity.

The process of audit and review set out in this paper, and modelled as the PREPARE wheel, provides a framework within which those responsible for managing tourism can judge the extent to which the impacts of their policies and actions are consistent with their strategy. The approach dovetails with both Local Agenda 21 and with the UK's 'best value' reviews of all local government activities (Cm 4014, 1998). A fundamental feature of PREPARE is that the combination of audit and review is intended to stimulate the further development and implementation of policy.

All the towns participating in the 1993 four towns' study, on which this research was based, faced conflicting objectives as they sought further to exploit their tourism potential. Officials in each town identified their own tourism attributes, defined marketing and development strategies, and worked through the stages of PREPARE with the research teams.

The results demonstrated that doing this provided a practical and operational way to move towards less unsustainable tourism in each of the four towns, while being flexible enough to work with whatever reasonable programmes of data collection, quantitative model building, physical improvements and well-directed marketing the destination could afford.

In 1993, the four participating towns could only be rated as 'minimally to par-

tially' compliant (in a formal environmental audit sense) within a number of the segments of PREPARE set out in Figure 2. More recently, the way in which Alcúdia has been improving the management of its tourism has demonstrated the value of continuing review and of close partnership between public and private sectors, especially at the local destination level.

It is a strength of the PREPARE approach that it explicitly involves local people in the agreement of the strategic objectives for the development of tourism in their town. Ideally, they should also take part in the assessment of the degree to which current policies and actions are compliant with what is necessary to make local tourism less unsustainable. All local stakeholders should be involved, but in the four towns' study it was mainly local administrative officials, which is not unusual in such exercises.

However, while self-assessment is central to the way that Gilbert (1993) sees EC eco-management and audit regulation being implemented, allowing local stakeholders to be part of the scoring process on levels of compliance with the policies and actions defined in the elements of PREPARE inevitably involves a degree of subjectivity, since the judgments are not being made by neutral outsiders. A balance needs to be struck between the advantages that this brings in terms of raising local eco-awareness and promoting the concept of continual review, and the disadvantages of the loss of objectivity and reduction in the validity of comparing outcomes from different destinations. In the 'smokestack' industry version of the European eco-audit regulation, this criticism is pre-empted by reference to the use of registered outside verifiers prior to the award of any eco-label (EC, 1993: Annex 3). The Green Globe with its external certification process claims more than PREPARE (Green Globe, 2000) but has been accordingly criticised for being misleading (WWF-UK,

2000). In any case, democratically controlled tourist destinations may be unwilling to submit to such outside assessment, although it is the experience of the Walled Towns Friendship Circle (WTFC) that town authorities may welcome some form of assessment by their peers, ie by representatives from other similar towns.

The research reported in this paper has been conducted in European walled towns. However, it is of wider interest and applicability. While the obvious impact of tourism in the medieval core of such towns is very clearly defined by the walled precinct, the application of the PREPARE model could be equally valuable for the more amorphous tourist-historic core of many urban areas and, with adaptation, to rural or coastal destinations. Changes consistent with turning the 'PREPARE wheel' forward by periodic audit and review can put any destination on a course that demonstrates a clear commitment to making tourism less unsustainable.

More generally, regular monitoring of the policies and actions covered by each of the PREPARE segments could become a critical part of incorporating tourism into an environmental management audit system (EMAS) for a destination area. This, in turn, could justify a type of destination eco-label, where progress and commitment to positive change are judged sufficient. Seven years on, each of the four towns studied in 1993 could be a candidate for the award of a WTFC hallmark.

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