PAN Parks implementation process: cross cultural comparison – Bieszczady & Slovenski Raij National Parks

Christelle van den Berg[1], Femke van Bree[1] & Stuart Cottrell[2]

[1] Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands
Christelle.vandenBerg@wur.nl
Femke.vanBree@wur.nl
[2] Socio-Spatial Analysis and Recreation and Tourism,
Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands
stu.cottrell@wur.nl

Introduction

Tourism is noted as the fastest growing industry with many environmental and socioeconomic impacts, which significantly effect *Natura 2000* locations. *Natura 2000* is an ecological network of protected areas in the European Union, which serve as the centre of the EU's policy on nature conservation. The purpose of this network is to maintain and restore habitats and species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. *Natura 2000* will happen in 20–25 European countries and it is important to know how tourism will impact or affect these sites. The PAN (Protected Areas Network) Parks project, initiated by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and a Dutch leisure company in 1997, was named as one of two most relevant management initiatives for *Natura 2000* sites (DG Environment, Lisbon conference, 1999 in Kun, 2001). PAN Parks is based on the concept of active involvement of the tourism industry in conserving Europe's wilderness areas within a network of effectively managed and verified protected areas. To receive PAN Park's verification, a park must meet five principles each with specific criteria (i.e., 1. nature values, 2. habitat management, 3. visitor management, 4. sustainable tourism development strategy, and 5. business partnerships) adopted in 2001 (Anon 2002). Principle four focuses on criteria to develop and implement a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS), the primary focus of this study. Sustainable tourism development in protected areas may mean 'no development' and any tourism in protected areas should be carefully evaluated and, where permitted, carefully regulated and monitored (Brasser & Font 2002).

Nature Protected Areas (PA) in Europe are special to people (PAN Parks 2003), yet many sites must deal with an uncontrolled amount of tourists, while others would like to have more visitors. PA management parts from the idea that a PA has a relationship of mutual dependency with its environment. Change is a characteristic of modern society creating both opportunities and threats. Good management means dealing in an effective way with changes in this environment and it is important to consider a PA as an open system, because new challenges like tourism development ask for a pro-active approach (Beunders 2002). "A re-active approach is usually not very efficient: once negative impacts of a 'spontaneous' tourism development become visible, it is already too late to restore the balance" (p. 10). Tourism has become a vested economic and social interest in Europe and much environmental damage has already occurred in European protected areas that deal with a large number of visitors a year.

To monitor the influence of visitor numbers and the sustainability of tourism, standards can be set. A standard is a document or set of criteria approved by a recognized body that provides for common and repeated use of a prescribed set of rules, conditions or requirements (Toth 2000). Setting standards is one of the most difficult elements of a project that wants to establish a sustainable way of tourism in natural areas, since varying geographical and other site specific conditions mean what is appropriate for one site may not be acceptable elsewhere (Wood & Halpenny 2001). Another major difficulty arises from differences in national legislation. Ideally, standards should not be below any national legislative requirements, but if a standard reflects the highest level of current law and practice this might be too demanding for some countries. The PAN Parks initiative aims to promote a synergy between nature conservation and local development through sustainable tourism in European protected areas based on standards of quality (Brasser & Font 2002).

As an ecolabel, PAN Park's is classified as a performance based certification program based on clear-cut criteria (Brasser & Font 2002). It is argued, however, that while criteria about natural and habitat values are clear and relatively straightforward, those belonging to the STDS (Principle 4) and Business Partners (Principle 5) very much depend on the specific social and institutional context of each park, therefore cannot be called straightforward (Cutumisu 2003). Indicators measure the criteria and Valentine

and Spangenberg (2000) argue that these indicators cannot be applied to every site. Managers of each park must develop site-specific indicators within the common structure. The common structure in this case is the structure of the PAN Parks Principles. This approach (common structure, different indicators) provides a means to compare sites without ignoring their specific situation. This paper examines the difficulties of implementing the PAN Park Principles and Criteria, and the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS) in particular.

Therefore, the **purpose** of this study was to determine if PAN Park's principles and criteria are feasible and applicable cross-culturally for candidate parks in different countries. The main objective was to assess if the criteria must be adapted or compromised within the context of the five principles for each country or region. To gain insight into the process of implementation of STDS in the case study areas, a *sustainability framework*, developed by the Wuppertal Institute in Germany was used as the theoretical lens to guide this analysis. Referred to as the prism of sustainability (Figure 1), the framework distinguishes four dimensions of sustainability: social, economic, environmental and institutional (Eden et al. 2000).

Theoretical Context

Sustainable development means different things to different people, but the most frequently quoted definition is from the report Our Common Future (World Commission on Environment 1987): *"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* The German Wuppertal Institute (commissioned by Friends of the Earth to develop a methodology for the Sustainable Europe project) devised a four-dimensional model of sustainability (Figure 1) including the social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions (institutional includes not only organisations, but also mechanisms and orientations) with clearly defined links between the dimensions (Spangenberg and Valentine 1999). Although the Prism of sustainability focuses on sustainability overall, for this research the prism was applied to sustainable tourism. Whereas the environmental dimension is quite clearly defined to be the sum of all bio-geological processes and their elements (referred to as "environmental capital" by economists), the social dimension ("human capital") is not as easy to define. Individual human beings, their skills, dedication, experiences and the resulting behaviour are its focus, with the boundaries to the institutional dimension (institutions as an achievement of human interactions, confusingly called "social capital") not always easy to draw. Institutions are understood here as described above, i.e. not only including organisations, but the system of rules governing the interaction of members of a society as well. This kind of

societal interaction and the social norms behind each are a necessary precondition for economic activities. Nonetheless, the economic dimension ("man-made capital") is singled out as one specific subsystem of society, although this should not be understood as denoting the permanent interactions of the economic, social, institutional and the environmental subsystems (Spangenberg 2002).
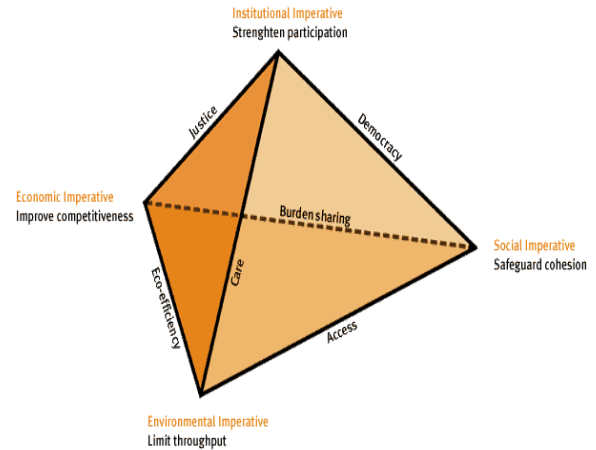

Figure 1. Prism of Sustainability (Spangenberg & Valentine 1999),

Spangenberg and Valentine (1999) describe the above-mentioned dimensions as follows: The environmental dimension describes the need to reduce the pressure on the physical environment to within ecological system limits. The environmental dimension of sustainability aims at keeping intact, indefinitely, the stability of the processes of the ecosphere, as a dynamic and self-organised structure. An economic system is environmentally sustainable only as long as the amount of resources utilised to generate welfare is permanently restricted to a size and quality that does not overexploit the sources or overburden the sinks provided by the ecosphere. This dimension is defined from an anthropocentric point of view. The institutional dimension calls for strengthening people's participation in political governance. The mechanisms of decision-making have to integrate people's wishes and activities. This way, the acceptance of and identification with political decisions both become broader, and democracy is strengthened. The social dimension demands that all individuals have access to the resources and facilities they need to live a healthy and dignified life. This implies a non-discriminatory social fabric, supported by measures to reduce social exclusion and guarantee social minimum standards and human rights. The economic dimension is to satisfy human needs for material welfare. This implies an economy that supports employment and livelihoods, in a framework, which is competitive and stable at the macro-economic scale.

According to Valentine and Spangenberg (2000) the four dimensions can be linked to imperatives

(*targets and indicators*) for local communities to *arrange* sustainable development. It is however not enough to define targets and indicators for the four dimensions of sustainability (von Weizsäcker 1989). They only express some of the necessary preconditions to maintain the self-reproduction cycles of the four interlinked subsystems, without giving any information on the character and effect of the linkages. Therefore, and also because the interlinkages often turn out to be closely linked to the most important fields of policy making, Valentine and Spangenberg (2000) pay due attention to the proper definition of targets and indicators for the interlinkages as well otherwise any system of indicators would lack operational qualities (Spangenberg & Valentine 1999).

To address the core question of the research, we formulated theoretical variables for the concepts in our research: dimensions of sustainability for Bieszczady National park (hereafter NP) (and surroundings) located in Poland and Slovenský Raj NP (and surroundings) located in Slovakia; PAN Park's implementation process of STDS in Bieszczady NP and in Slovenský Raj NP.

We compared the constitution of the four dimensions of sustainability in Bieszczady NP (and surroundings) with that of Slovenský Raj NP (and surroundings) and to see if this constitution influenced the STDS implementation process. To make this comparison we first drew an inventory of the constitution of the four dimensions in Bieszczady NP. Because the Bieszczady NP is situated in the Podkarpacie province, this inventory included the province as well. The same process was applied to Slovenský Raj NP and the Košice region.

To operationalise the Prism of sustainability we integrated the PAN Parks Principles with the Prism of sustainability (Figure 2). This integration is partly based on a system of ordering thematic areas into indicators used by Coccossis et al. (2001). The thematic areas they use match up nicely with the PAN Park Principles while the indicators match well with the dimensions of sustainability used in this research. The conceptual framework developed for this study is based on the Prism of sustainability within the context of the PAN Parks Principles and shows the relationships between the theoretical concepts we examined (Figure 2).

The dotted line in figure 2 shows the comparison between the implementation processes in both parks (Bieszczady NP and Slovenský Raj NP) and also the comparison between the four dimensions in both areas. For this comparison we used the Podkarpacie province in Poland and the Košice region in Slovakia. The solid line in figure 2 shows the relation between the constitution of the four dimensions of sustainability and the implementation process of the PAN Parks Principles, especially the implementation process of the STDS.
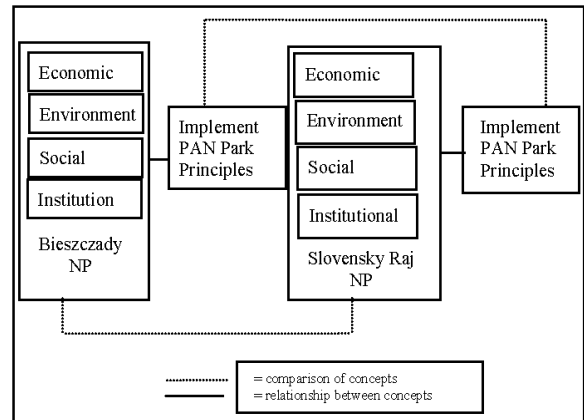

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework.

Problem statement

The paper alludes to problems that can occur during the implementation process of the PAN Park Principles and Criteria. Practically, the study gives results as tips to use by management of PAN Parks and park managers of verified or candidate PAN Parks. If PAN Park Principles depend on site-specific indicators of sustainability, it is recommendable to let park managers define indicators within a framework of more rigid principles set by PAN Parks.

From a theoretical perspective this study shows the importance of the institutional dimension versus the usual focus on the economic, ecological and social dimensions. Using the Prism of sustainability as a lens to examine the PAN Parks Principles, it clearly shows that Principles 4 and 5 depend on the institutional dimension. In future projects it is advisable to consider the institutional dimension along with the economic, ecological and social dimensions. In this context (the importance of the institutional dimension), this study builds on Cutumisu's (2003) where she argues that STDS and Business partners (PAN Parks Principles 4 and 5) very much depend on the specific social and institutional context of each park. Thus, core questions examined were: *Do the three verified parks differ in the process and quality of implementation of principles one to three to obtain PAN Park's verification? What influence does implementation of principles one to three have on the STDS process? And do elements of the dimensions of sustainability play a role in the STDS process*? This presentation will describe how to use the sustainability framework to analysis PAN Park principles and STDS implementation processes at the park level.

Methodology

A *qualitative methodology* involving a comparative case study approach as part of a Master's thesis at Wageningen University was used (Berg and Bree, 2003). At the time of this study, there were three verified parks as of September 2002. The study was conducted in two phases. In *phase one* a comparison

of three certified PAN parks, namely Bieszczady NP (Poland), Fulufjället NP (Sweden) and Oulanka NP (Finland), focused on the first three PAN Park principles. Content analysis of verification documents and expert interviews (n = 7) among park managers supplemented with participant observation at a PAN Park workshop in Poland (April 2003) was used to gain insight into differences in implementation of PAN Parks principles in these parks.

For *phase two*, we chose two sites in different countries (Bieszczady National Park in Poland and Slovenský Raj National Park in Slovakia), which we expected to differ in the content of and relations between the four dimensions of sustainability since the first one was a certified and the other a candidate PAN Park. This phase focused on PAN Parks principal four (STDS) with in-depth interviews during May to July of stakeholders at Bieszczady NP (n=8; verified park) in Poland and Slovensky Raj NP in Slovakia (n=11; candidate park) for comparison. Interviews collected data on the economic, ecological, social and institutional dimensions in both parks and their surroundings and were assisted by local interpreters, taped, and transcribed for textual analysis with NUD*ist, qualitative software for the social sciences. PAN Park's principles and criteria were integrated within the four dimensions of sustainability as an approach to data analysis and ordering of results into thematic categories (e.g., institutional divided into policy, management, status of protection, legislation, etc.). It has been argued that principle four depends on the specific social and institutional dimensions of each park. We believe that these dimensions and relations between them vary between countries and even between regions within the same country. These differences can influence the way and extent to which a park can meet – or not – the criteria defined by PAN Parks. Therefore, we sought to determine if it is realistic to use the same criteria for each site.

Study settings

The sites chosen as case study areas were situated in two countries: Bieszczady National Park in Poland and Slovensky Raj in Slovakia. We expected these parks to differ in the content of and relation between the four dimensions of sustainability. Bieszczady National Park (BNP) is situated in the far south east of Poland and Slovensky Raj National Park (SRNP) in the north-east of Slovakia. Both parks are located in mountain ranges of moderate heights. BNP is famous for its unique fauna of rare and threatened animals. A special feature of nature in SRNP is the special character of the surface forms. The surface consists of karst plateaus with deep gorges or canyons in between. The majority of the forests in Poland are of a natural kind. The most widespread forest association is of Carpathian beech forest. The biggest part of the SRNP is covered with fir and beech as dominant wood species. The two parks have

a totally different historic background. BNP was densely populated until the 1st World War. After the war, all inhabitants were deported and the area became deserted. There were no settlements left, former fields, pastures and even roads became overgrown. The areas of the Bieszczady stayed uninhabited for many years and became a kingdom of nature (Winnicki & Zemanek 2001). In 1957 the first people returned to their homeland. Due to the climate and soil conditions of the area Bieszczady was unattractive for farmers; some of the new settlers abandoned their farms. In the 70s and 80s the government experimented with state owned collective farms. To prepare the pastures for these farms, troops devastated large areas with explosives and bulldozers. The transition to a market economy caused the collapse of the state-owned farms.

SRNP is embedded in a rich historical and cultural context. Archaeological records document the existence of humans in Slovensky Raj since 5000 B.C. In the very heart of SRNP, there are localities that were settled during the middle Ages. These localities played an important role in the history of the region. It is Klastorisko where people from the region took refuge from the Tart Arian invasions. Volunteers have rebuilt Klastorisko (Leskovjanská & Hájek 1999). The first tourists came to BNP in the sixties. They were pioneers and looking for wilderness. These days tourism started to grow. Nowadays the park is much bigger, mass tourism has been replaced by mountain tourism, group tourism has been replaced by individual tourism. The first tourists in SRNP arrived a lot earlier. They came to see the Dobsina Ice cave near the end of the 19th century. The incessant increase of visitors became the most serious negative factor for nature conservation in SRNP (PAN Parks 2003).

Results and discussion

Phase one

The first question examined was: Is it realistic to use the same criteria for every PAN Park, or is it necessary to develop or adapt the criteria, due to differences in the economic, social, environmental and institutional context of each site, within the context of the five principles for each country or region?

First a comparison of the three certified PAN Parks on their progress on the implementation of the principles is made (Table 1). Column cells with an X mark those issues the various parks still deal with at the moment; if blank it is no longer an issue.

Some of the issues concerning Principle 1–3, like the training of the staff and the number of employees in the NP, are still difficult for all the parks. All three parks are situated at the border with one or more other countries, and they all co-operate with adjacent areas. This is necessary, because this way a good buffer zone for the park can be assured. The management of visitors and the gathering of information about them

(visitor's survey) are also issues in all the parks. It should be noted that Oulanka NP (ONP) is very progressive on this point and can serve as an example for the other two parks. The most similarities are between Fullufjallet NP (FNP) and ONP. The reason for this can be that both are Scandinavian countries with similar kinds of laws and regulations. Another reason can be that they have a similar culture, at least more similar than to the Polish culture. This was also very clear at the PAN Parks Meeting. Poland was in a very different situation, whereas Finland and Sweden could relate to each other very easily.

Table 1 Summary of the comparison of the parks,

Issues	BNP	ONP	FNP
Principle 1&2			
Management Plan/ Strategy	X		X
Ecology of Fire	X		
Berry picking	X		
Critical Financial situation	X		
Hunting		X	X
Reindeer herding		X	X
National Park Zoning/ Park boundaries		X	X
Trans border Cooperation	X	X	X
Fishing		X	
Forestry		X	
Research data			X
Snowmobiles			X
Principle 3			
Staff (Training, number of employees)	X	X	X
Visitor Centre	X	X *	
Visitor Management (Plan)	X	X *	X
Visibility & Availability of information	X		
Presentation Primeval forest	X		
Development tourist products	X		
The carrying capacity		X *	
Visitor activities		X	
Visitor impacts			X
Visitors survey	X	X *	X
Principle 4 & 5			
Sustainable Tourism Development strategy	X	X *	X
EPPO Stakeholder group	X	X	X
Partnerships	X	X *	X
PAN Parks Accommodation	X	X	X *

* Issues related to positive distinction of the park compared to the other parks.

All three parks are still working on all issues concerning Principle 4 & 5. This is not a surprise, because at the time of the research, none of the parks were certified for these principles. ONP will be the first park to apply for verification of these principles. This can be seen in the matrix: two of the four issues are better developed in ONP than in the other two parks. This is also a benefit of the PAN Parks Meetings: parks can learn from the experiences and successes of other parks. Mainly the implementation of principle three, visitor management is important for successful implementation of an STDS. To develop a successful visitor management plan, data about visitors (amount, profile, activities, motives, etc.) must be available. ONP is further along on this issue than the other two

parks. From this perspective, implementation of the first three PAN Park principles, especially principle 3, clearly influences STDS implementation.

Valentine and Spangenberg (2000) argue that indicators (the PAN Parks criteria in this case) are not applicable on every site: *Each community has to develop its individual set of indicators within a common structure*. This approach (common structure, different indicators) provides a possibility to compare communities without ignoring their specific needs and situations. Our conclusion is that it is not necessary to develop or adapt the criteria of the PAN Parks principles; yet setting the same conditions to meet the criteria for each park is not realistic. There are indeed differences in the economic, social, environmental and institutional context of each site. Particularly differences in the institutional dimension influence the implementation process of the principles, especially implementation of the STDS. In her research, Cutumisu (2003) came up with the same issue. She found that relationships between park administrations and PAN Park's promoters, and all factors involved which represent a basis for STDS implementation, are insufficiently developed. This layer of relations represents the decisional and political forum. The tuning of the relationships among institutions (top-level) is a pre-requisite for attaining sustainable tourism. She also states: "Historically, authorities have dealt mainly with conservation, not promoting the resource use and now there is a new situation generating new issues as visitor management, visitor behaviour forecast, the need to actually stimulate the flow of visitors in a balanced way, as well as marketing the resource itself as a part of the whole tourism development for the region (p. 65)." Finally she adds that more co-operation between the different levels of authorities is needed.

Phase 2

In both Poland and Slovakia, respondents agreed that the development of sustainable tourism in the area, implementing an STDS, has an essential role in increasing dedication and action of both authorities and local people. This will contribute to increasing the tourism potential of the region in respect to the environment.

> Interviewee in Poland: *"Sustainable tourism gives opportunities to local people by giving them a job, so it improves the local economic situation. It also respects the nature."*

> Mayor of Hrabusice, Slovakia:*"The inhabitants of the villages here are owners of the National Park. They have to use the area in a clever way and take care of their own property."*

In our study, authorities in both regions still focus on the level of not destroying the environment by

tourism development. They do not have a pro-active attitude (yet) towards integrating conservation and tourism. But a re-active approach to tourism is usually not very effective. Good management means dealing in an effective way with changes in this environment. New challenges like tourism development need a post pro-active approach. Once negative impacts of *spontaneous* tourism development become visible, it is already too late to restore the balance: tourism has become a vested economic and social interest and the damage is already done (Beunders 2002). A pre pro-active approach to new challenges should therefore be stimulated.

According to the PAN Parks Principles, the parks certified on P1-3 should be financially self sufficient after 1 year, because of the annual fee paid by local business partners for the use of the panda logo. None of the parks have met this term of reference. According to Beunders (2002) local stakeholder involvement is a time consuming and complicated process, especially in regions where social competitiveness is low and the motivation to work together has yet to be created. Training and professional facilitators can play an important role here since people can learn how to co-operate (Beunders 2002). But PAN Parks must play a more directing role in this process. In parks like BNP, a participatory approach and local stakeholder involvement are totally new concepts. They do indeed have to learn how to co-operate and there is a big need for training and education. In STD, stakeholder and stakeholder analysis are key issues. A stakeholder analysis is useful to analsize strategically the environment of the project to know which people and institutions you must deal with (Beunders 2002).

The tourism manual is a good guideline for developing a STDS, but for parks like BNP and SRNP not a practical guideline. A BNP Park authority in Poland says:

"I think this manual is very much focused on the way sustainable tourism is supposed to be from the EU country's prospective. Some parts of the manual are much more relevant and some parts are less relevant. These less relevant parts need some more study in eastern European countries. The tourist manual is very much ambitious."

PPF should therefore not imply that these techniques are known in all parks. There is too little time and money available to start an EPPO (local stakeholder committee), develop a STDS and contract local partners as the tourism manual might suggest.

A pre-project appraisal provides the proponent with the important baseline data needed for the project. Without this pre-project appraisal, the proponent will not have the basic information needed to make important decisions for the project (Urquico, 1998). The PAN Parks project also has a self-assessment questionnaire for candidate PAN Parks by means of a

pre-project appraisal. The goal of self-assessment is to evaluate a protected area against the established PAN Parks Principles, Criteria and Indicators. Although a park is supposed to be verified on 5 principles (first 1-3, then 4&5), the self-assessment only evaluates Principle 1-3. Therefore lacking in the PAN Parks self-assessment questionnaire is an inventory of the structures involved in tourism and the social problems in the area. The project's self-assessment, and its principles, criteria and indicators too, are totally focussed on the Protected Area (PA) and skills of the PA management, although what they are trying to achieve by implementing the five principles is Sustainable Tourism based on local stakeholder's involvement. Politically, it is important to have an understanding and involvement of community in decision-making, planning and implementation. The influence of the government must be clear, as well as the level of networking with NGOs, private groups, and agencies of government (Urquico, 1998). It cannot be assumed that the PA researched these factors, thus, there is a lack of knowledge about an important part of the region the project is supposed to be implemented in. Before a project like PAN Parks can be implemented, there should be clarity about these subjects. The ability to fulfil Principle 4 & 5 is just as important as the ability to fulfil Principle 1-3 and should be included in the self-assessment questionnaire. Without governmental and community support the project has no chance of succeeding. When a project like PAN Parks is implemented into a park in a region where there is no governmental and community support, sustainability of tourism cannot be guaranteed. This falls back on the concept of empowerment of communities. Sofield (2003) argues that virtually all models of tourism planning incorporate public and community participation, but most of them are market driven. They could be described as "reactive and containment public participation" (see Macbeth, 1996 in Sofield, 2003), because they tend to be placed in the context of how to achieve tourism development plans, rather than permitting communities real choice. Empowerment of communities for tourism development requires a political framework that is either supportive (pro-active) or at least neutral, not obstructionist. There must be a shared willingness of community, individuals and external entities (authorities) to initiate and undertake processes leading to empowerment. A fundamental tenet is that it must be able to counter dependency. If it cannot/does not, then genuine empowerment doesn't happen. Positive support emerging from the public sector, working in partnership with people's organisations, is necessary to ensure that a project is sustainable (Sofield, 2003).

The second question of the problem statement is: *Does the constitution of the four dimensions of sustainability, according to the Prism of sustainability, have influence on the implementation process of the STDS?*

An overview the four dimensions of sustainability and their (negative/positive) relation with the implementation of a STDS is given (Table 2). According to Brasser and Font (2002) parks can benefit from the support of WWF in training and resources to meet the criteria and once they are qualified parks, they can use the PAN Parks logo for marketing purposes. The anticipated benefits for each park include opportunities for increased, mainly international, tourism businesses, networking and research opportunities and closer co-operation with local population and stakeholders (Brasser & Font 2002). Table 2 shows that the implementation of STDS can have many advantages. A STDS can create more jobs on different levels from marketing the area, not done previously, to selling agricultural products directly from the farm, especially in a time where the status of agriculture is decreasing. STDS can also decrease the influence of tourism on the natural environment; it can provide concrete plans for National Parks and its implementation can be a good tool to achieve general objectives of both Podkarpackie province and the Košice region. Meanwhile, the lack of an overall vision and a tourism vision in both areas makes implementation of STDS more difficult. Networking and co-operation, as part of the social capital is not yet sufficient in both countries. Scattered ownership of SRNP does not provide good conditions for this. Above all it is not clear to everyone what sustainability means. People want to earn money right now, which makes sustainable thinking almost impossible. Tourism will never be successful or sustainable if only based on good intentions, accidental commit-

ment and individual initiatives. Uncontrolled, poorly planned and managed tourism development will in the long run be far from sustainable while negative impacts could jeopardise both natural and cultural resources we seek to protect (Beunders 2002).

A problem in SRNP for instance is that tourism is not included in its budget making it difficult to account for tourism when conducting new plans. In some cases we see aspects of the dimensions of sustainability coming out in the implementation of the STDS, while in other cases as STDS seems to influence the dimensions of sustainability. Therefore it can be said that there is a certain relation between constitution of the four dimensions of sustainability and the implementation of a STDS.

Conclusions

Findings show that there are indeed differences between the social-cultural, economic, environmental and institutional contexts in Poland and Slovakia with more extreme differences when compared to Sweden and Finland (i.e., laws, governmental structure, economic and political stability, etc.). From a general perspective, PAN Park's principles and criteria are broad enough to be used for each cultural context and standards and integrity of the criteria should be maintained cross-culturally. Yet, the conditions on which the criteria should be met for each park location should vary for each country (i.e., time frame for verification, funding available, help and technical assistance, etc.). The degree of readiness for an STDS in Poland remains in the beginning stages

Table 2. Difficulties and advantages of STDS implementation in relation to sustainability dimensions.

	Difficulties of STDS implementation	Advantages of STDS implementation
Social dimension	If target groups are not clear, no Product Market Combinations for Unique Selling Points can be made; no awareness campaigns for the residents; no highly skilled and informed employees.	STDS can create more employment and keep young people in the areas; STDS can give a positive impulse to both regions
Economic dimension	Without useful strategies with action points, the overall vision for the future is not clear; lack of integration of tourism in other sectors, can make the areas less competitive than other areas; goals for economic investments and employment need to be set; bad condition of the infrastructure in both countries.	Both regions are working on tourism development.
Environmental dimension	Goals for conservation and restoration of the protected areas and cultural settings need to be set.	Natural and cultural settings can be used as USP in the STDS; The required zonation for the STDS can decrease the influence of tourism on the natural environment; Relatively unpolluted areas increase their competitiveness with other areas.
Institutional dimension	No overall visions of both areas; tools for attracting tourists (marketing) are criticised by deputy director or are not allowed to apply on the NP; tourism strategies of parts of the area are not integrated; Scattered ownership of the SRNP; No research for implementing the STDS has been conducted; Financial problems to make new plans in Poland; Mayors of communities think on local scale in stead of regional scale; It is not clear for everybody what sustainable means, let alone what STDS means.	A STDS can provide innovations that are embedded in the legislation of the NP's; STDS can provide concrete plans for the NP's; Both NP's already have a buffer zone; In both countries there is some form of co-operate between stakeholders in the area; BNP management and local partners have a common interest: keep visitors in the buffer zone of the area; Implementation of STDS is a good tool to achieve general objectives of both regions.

since the park was recently verified on principles 1 to 3 and they are presently developing the structure of an STDS. In Slovakia, the park is not yet verified and may not be due to limitations not related to ability to establish an STDS; therefore, direct comparisons among the parks was not possible. Many of the ideals of PAN Parks and an STDS are based on western European situations, which should be considered in the verification of parks in former eastern block countries. In *conclusion*, the sustainability framework was useful for examining issues of sustainability in implementation of PAN Park principles and will be helpful in developing indicators to monitor the balance between sustainable tourism and nature conservation. PAN Parks is an innovative initiative and still in its infancy, yet the task of networking Europe's finest parks is apparently succeeding.

References

Anon, A. 2002. PAN Parks: WWF's sustainable tourism certification programme in Europe's National Parks. In: Harris, R., Griffin, T. & Williams, P. (eds.). Sustainable Tourism: A Global Perspective. Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford. p. 321.

Beunders, N. 2002. PAN Park's manual for sustainable tourism and development: Practical guidelines for the formulation of a sustainable tourism development strategy (STDS) for protected areas and their regions. Internal document of the PAN Parks Foundation. Netherlands Institute for Tourism and Transport Studies, Breda, The Netherlands. 100 p.

Brasser, A. & Font, X. 2002. PAN Parks: WWF's sustainable tourism certification programme in Europe's national parks Harris, R., Griffin, T. & Williams, P. (eds.). Sustainable Tourism: A Global Perspective. Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford. p. 321.

Berg, C. van den & Bree, F. van. 2003. PAN Parks Principles: crosscultural or site specific? Master's Thesis, Wageningen University, The Netherlands.

Coccossis, H., Collovini, A., Konstandoglou, M., Mexa, A. & Parpairis, A. 2001. Defining, measuring and evaluating Carrying Capacity in European Tourism Destinations. Environmental Planning Laboratory, Athens.

Cutumisu, N. 2003. The synergy between nature conservation and development; A framework for analysing the impact of the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy in Natura 2000 sites. Wageningen University, The Netherlands.

Eden, M., Falkheden L. & Malbert, B. 2000. The Built Environmenta and sustainable development: research meets practice in a Scandinavian context. Planning Theory & Practice 1(2): 260–272.

Kun, Z. 2001. PAN Parks Verification. WWF, Budapest.

Leskovjanská, A. & Bedrich H. 1999. Slovenský Raj/Slovak Paradise National Park. In: Voloscuk, I. (ed.). The National Parks and Biosphere Reserves in Carpathians. The last nature paradises. Association of the Carpathian National Parks and Biosphere Reserves, Tatranska Lomnica.

Sofield, T.H.B. 2003. Empowerment for sustainable tourism development. Pergamon Publishing. Amsterdam.

Spangenberg, J.H. 2002. Environmental space and the prism of sustainability: frameworks for indicators measuring sustainable development. Ecological Indicators 57: 1–15.

Spangenberg, J.H. & Valentine, A. 1999. Indicators for Sustainable Communities. Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy. The Prism of sustainability. Available from: http://www.foeeurope.org/sustainability/sustain/t-content-prism.htm. [Cited 4 April 2003].

Toth, R. 2000. Elements of success and failure in verification. In: Ecotourism and sustainable Tourism Certification Workshop. 17-19 November 2000, Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, New York.

Urquico, C.T. (ed.). 1998. Community Based Susutainable Tourism. A Handbook & A Reader. ASSET Inc., Quezon City.

Valentine, A. & Spangenberg, J.H. 2000. A guide to community sustainability indicators. Environmental Impact Assessment Review 20: 381–392.

Weizsäcker, E.U. von. 1989. Earth Politics. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, Germany.

Winnicki, T. & Zemanek, B. 2001. Nature in the Bieszczady National Park. Bieszczady National Park, Ustrzyki Dolne.

Wood, M.E. & Halpenny, A. 2001. Ecotourism Certification and Evaluation: Progress and Prospects In: Font, X. & Buckley, R.C. (ed.). Tourism Ecolabeling: certification and promotion of sustainable management. CABI Publishing, Oxon. p. 121–140.

World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. Our common future. Oxford University Press, Oxford.