



# Roots of unsustainable tourism development at the local level: the case of Urgup in Turkey

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**The main aim of this article is to investigate and explain the roots of unsustainable tourism development at the local level in a developing country, with special reference to Urgup in the region of Cappadocia, Turkey. It was found that the factors that ushered in unsustainable tourism development are beyond the control of local people and authorities. They are largely related to issues at the national level such as the policy of political economy, prevailing national planning approaches applied to tourism, patron–client relationships between decision-makers and related business class alongside the role of international tour operators in the international tourism system. It concludes that achieving sustainable tourism development at the local level in a developing country requires hard political choices, a confident decision-making process and the collaboration of international tour operators and donor agencies. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.**

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## Introduction

Many governments in developing countries have perceived tourism as an important means to stimulate economic growth<sup>1–3</sup>. Thus, those developing countries have frequently concentrated on the economic impacts of tourism development and ignored wider issues<sup>4–6</sup>. The contribution of international tourism to the economic growth of Third World economies seems to be significant, but it has been argued by many scholars, such as de Kadt<sup>7</sup>, Briton<sup>8</sup> and Bryden<sup>9</sup>, that tourism also continues class and regional inequalities, stimulates economic, environmental and social problems, which have created doubts about tourism being a reliable strategy for the development of developing countries.

Turkey, as a developing country, adopted tourism not only as an alternative economic growth strategy, but also as a tool to create a favourable image on the international platform through exemplifying immediate implementation of an outward-oriented economic development policy<sup>10</sup> that seemed to have been essential just after the 1980 military coup which was ushered in to combat corrupt party politics and serious social unrest and to preserve the democracy in the country<sup>11</sup>. The civilian government

which came to power following the military government in 1983 saw tourism as an easy, effective and relatively cheap instrument to achieve export-led industrialization as a core principle of the 24 January Economic Stabilization Measurements formulated by the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1980. However, these could not be implemented due to the socio-economic and political crisis in the country.

As a result of the economic, social and political crisis of the 1980s, Turkey made almost an irreversible decision about the tourism industry by enacting the Tourism Encouragement Law that gave generous incentives to the industry. As Tosun<sup>12</sup> argued, “the successive governments have played an active role in shaping and locating physical tourism investment by using generously and extensively fiscal and monetary instruments” at the initial stage of tourism development. Consequently, Turkey has experienced an unexpectedly rapid tourism growth in terms of volume, value and physical superstructure (hotels, restaurants, bars, disco, etc.) in the absence of proper planning and development principles. In other words, this rapid tourism growth has taken place largely in a haphazard way and created socio-economic and environmental problems, which may be called unsustainable tourism development. It is

the main purpose of this article to investigate and explore the roots of unsustainable tourism development at local level, with special reference to the town of Urgup in the Cappadocia region, Turkey.

### Sustainable tourism development

Sustainable development as a concept was discussed at the 1972 United Nation Conference on the Human Environment<sup>13</sup>. However, Caldwell<sup>14</sup> accepts the Paris Biosphere Conference and the Ecological Aspects of International Development Conference in Washington, which were held in 1968, as the origin of the sustainable development concept. Whatever the origin of the concept, it seems to have been made popular by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)<sup>15</sup>. It is defined in broad terms by WCED<sup>15</sup> as follows: "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need". Generally, this definition is censured as being vague, too general, rhetorical, not practical and as a catch-all phrase that can be commented on in various ways<sup>16,17,84</sup>. As a result, debate on the detailed interpretation of sustainable development has become the focus of many studies<sup>18</sup>. Naturally, scholars of tourism have joined in this popularized debate by adapting the concept of 'sustainable development' to tourism. Consequently, the concept of 'sustainable tourism development' and 'sustainable tourism' have emerged, which has enticed more scholars to join in the ongoing debate.

Comprehensive reviews of the historical development of sustainable tourism development have been provided by a number of tourism researchers, such as Bramwell and Lane<sup>19</sup>, Owen *et al.*<sup>20</sup> Murphy<sup>21</sup>, Harris and Leiper<sup>22</sup>, Tosun<sup>23</sup> and Hunter<sup>18</sup>. While it is not appropriate to provide a detailed historical account of the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism development, it seems to be essential to give a brief explanation of them to establish a conceptual framework in the context of this article.

Miltin<sup>24</sup> noted that sustainable development as a concept has two components: "definition of development" and "principles of or conditions necessary for sustainability". Development itself as a normative concept is problematic. "There is no agreed definition of it"<sup>25,26</sup>. In Hettne's<sup>27</sup> words, "there can be no fixed and final definition of development, only suggestions of what development should imply in particular contexts". Hence, it may be preferable and useful to give basic principles of development derived from various definitions of it, rather than giving a single definition of development. After examining a number of definitions of the concept, the following list may be offered as basic principles of development:

- (1) Improving basic needs of poor people<sup>28-30</sup>.
- (2) Making an effort to increase the socio-economic welfare of a society<sup>31</sup>.
- (3) "...the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty"<sup>32</sup>.
- (4) To create all necessary conditions which will lead people to gain self-esteem and to feel free from the three evils of want, ignorance and squalor<sup>33,34</sup>. In other words, to help people be "free or emancipation from alienating material conditions of life and from social servitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institution, and dogmatic beliefs..."<sup>32</sup>.
- (5) The acceleration of economic growth is essential<sup>29,32</sup>, but it alone may not be sufficient to achieve development<sup>7</sup>.

"For development to be sustainable, it must continue or its benefits must be maintained, indefinitely"<sup>35</sup>. Sustainable development is considered in the context of this article as maintenance of the determined principles of development indefinitely without leaving future generations with poorer prospects and greater risks than our own. In a similar manner, sustainable tourism development is accepted as all kinds of tourism developments that make a notable contribution to or, at least, do not contradict the maintenance of the principles of development in an indefinite time without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs and desires.

Although the argument regarding roots of unsustainable tourism development may be more or less similar for many local tourist destinations in Turkey and elsewhere in the developing world, they will be examined with special references to Urgup as a local tourist destination in Turkey. Accordingly, some general conclusions will be derived under the given broad context of sustainable tourism development.

At the outset, the reader is reminded that sustainable development in general, and sustainable tourism development as an adaptive paradigm in particular, is a multi-disciplinary and broad concept in nature. Hence, it touches upon a wide range of issues such as economic development policy, environmental matters, social factors, etc.

### The study locality: Urgup in the Cappadocia region, Turkey

Urgup is located in the Cappadocia region in Central Anatolia, Turkey. It is one of nine counties attached to the province of Nevsehir. Urgup is 17 km from Nevsehir by well surfaced road. The territory of Urgup encompasses an area of 574 km<sup>2</sup>, which constitutes 10% of the total area in the Cappadocia region (see *Figure 1*). The average elevation above sea level is 1150 m which is lower than the average altitude of Turkey (1300 m)<sup>36</sup>.

Around 12000 people live in Urgup. Only 3% of the population have university education, 50% primary education and 37% secondary or high school education. The vast majority of the local people (70%) work in the agriculture, 15% deal with trades, 10% have independent business and 5% have jobs in other areas. Viniculture and stock breeding are dominant in the agricultural sector. Since 1982, tourism has emerged as a viable economic activity in Urgup<sup>37</sup> and governments have ignored agriculture and supported the tourism industry.

The local community has all the peculiarities of typical Anatolian culture. The father or husband has undeniable authority over family members. Extended family structures exist to a large extent, which strengthens communal relations in the community. In brief, traditional life styles prevail in Urgup. But, the tourism development itself, outmigration of the local people to other places and immigration of people from other parts of the country to Urgup due to tourism growth, have induced the community to change and lose its authentic culture<sup>36</sup>.

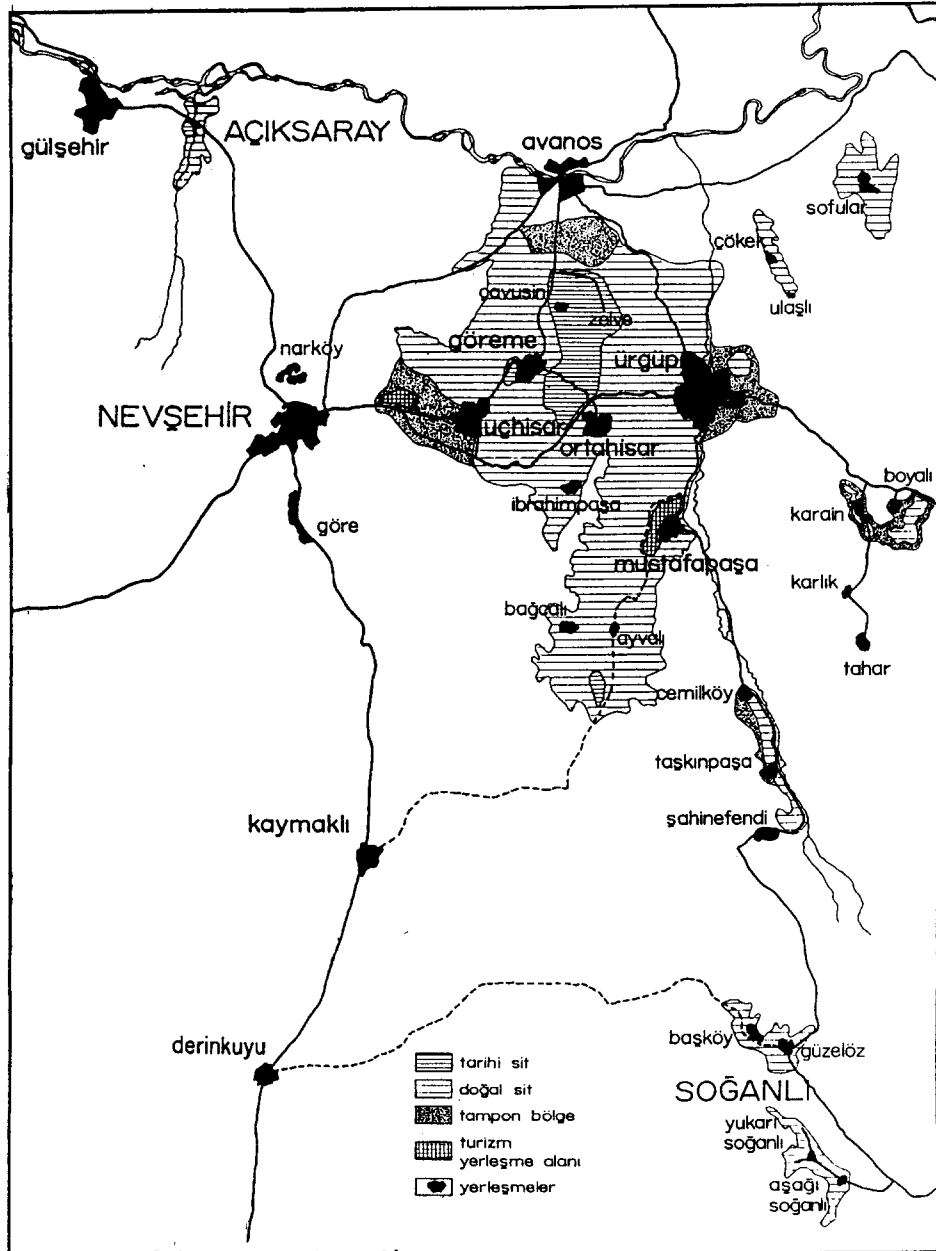


Figure 1 Cappadocia 1:25 000 scale master plan<sup>82</sup>

The geological history of the region is based on volcanicity from Oligocene times, approximately 38 million years ago<sup>41</sup>. The geological structure of volcanic origin has formed by wind erosion bizarre formations that are known as the 'fairy chimneys'. Rainwater flowing down the slopes of the valley has eroded the tufa soil and caused earth cracks which have been further exposed to wind erosion, carving out the fairy chimneys<sup>37</sup>. From the natural features of the region have emerged the unique scenery, which attracts many tourists to the regions.

Urgup is a very old town in the Cappadocia region, and has a long and colourful history. In ancient times it was known as Ossianna and later, under the Seldjucs, as Bashisar. The first inhabitants in the Cappadocia plateau date back to 3000 BC. After a millennium, the region was captured by the Hittites. Before the Hittites took over the plateau, there were small independent communities and the Assyrians were trading in the region. The Assyrians called Cappadocia 'Catpatuca', which meant the country of beautiful horses<sup>37,38</sup>.

Before the Ottoman conquest, Urgup was a Christian centre. The troglodyte dwellings were carved by the early Christians as refuges. The rich Christian history gave way to the Turkish tradition. Hence, Urgup has many religious relics, as well as historic sights<sup>39,40</sup>. The most significant fact about Cappadocia is that it provided asylum to early Christians who had selected the Goreme Valley and Urgup for building churches in the year 53 AD, thus laying the foundations of Christianity in this part of the world. Churches (eckesia or ekklesia) were places for Christians and so were located where the Christians needed. The broken valleys, which were formed by erosion, sheltered the Christians fleeing Roman oppression. Christians built a multitude of churches by hollowing into the rocks in the valley of Goreme. When the Roman Empire enabled Christians to worship freely in the year 330 AD, religious activities increased and intensified. By the end of the 4th century, monastic life began to prosper in the region. The rock churches were decorated with impressive religious frescoes. During the 7th century, the emergence of iconoclasm had created a new critical turning point for Christianity. Byzantine persecution caused the Christians to move away and seek refuge in caves and underground towns they had dug<sup>37,38,42</sup>.

The unique scenery, geological structure, religious relics and historical sites are the primary attractions for tourism, distinguishing Urgup and the Cappadocia region from other local tourist destinations in Turkey.

## **Methodology**

The researcher has substantial working experience in the tourism sector in Turkey and in Urgup. Close-

ness of the author's home town to Urgup has strengthened his personal knowledge about the locality. Thus, interpretation of the qualitative data was influenced by the author's local knowledge.

The information for this research was obtained by using a focus group, personal interviews with members of local and central authorities, and private sector representatives in Urgup and participant observation as primary data collection techniques. The focus group consisted of 12 neighbourhood headmen (mahalle muhtari) out of a possible 16, who are elected by popular neighbourhood election for 5 years. Although they are elected by popular election, they are the sole representatives of central authorities at neighbourhood level. They have an important function carrying out state bureaucracy and implementing the decisions of central bodies at this smallest administrative unit. They have perhaps the best knowledge about the local community and state bureaucracy in their neighbourhood. Indeed, they function as a catalyst between formal authorities and their neighbourhood constituencies. This was the basis of the decision to select them to be involved in the focus group in the context of this research. These 12 neighbourhood headmen came together in the neighbourhood headmen's office in Urgup and discussed extensively tourism development issues in Urgup.

The researcher acted as a moderator and facilitator to stimulate discussion and to obtain essential information. The researcher was not allowed to record the discussion, but he took notes of important points to remember what was discussed among the group members. Although focus group techniques have not been utilized by many students of tourism, since they have preferred quantitative techniques, for the purpose of this research this technique was invaluable. Substantial information about this technique is provided by Ryan<sup>42</sup> and Robson and Wardle<sup>43</sup>.

Unstructured personal interviews with members of the municipal assembly (belediye meclisi, elected by popular election), municipal council (belediye encumeni, consisting of elected and appointed officials), the mayor of Urgup (elected by popular election), the town governor (appointed by the Interior Ministry), director of the district tourism information office and president of association of tourism operators were conducted. Other personal interviews with some officials at different managerial levels of the Ministry of Tourism and the State Planning Organization were also made. Most of the interviews at local and central levels were recorded.

A large amount of qualitative data became available alongside collected governmental documents regarding tourism development policy, planning and approaches at a local and central level in Turkey. In this context, policy analysis as an effective instrument was also utilized in the existence of less-

manageable and more descriptive quantitative techniques<sup>69</sup>. Past working experience in the tourism sector and the personal observations of the researcher facilitated analysis and informed the conclusions from the investigation regarding the roots of unsustainable tourism development in Urgup.

Images of tourism development in Urgup which this paper presents are drawn and interpreted from a range of local and national sources, as well as from references to secondary material. While they are, inevitably, selective and interpretive in nature, every attempt has been made to present a balanced assessment of diverse, qualitative data.

### Rapid emergence of mass tourism in Urgup

The local bodies reported that foreign tourists started to visit Urgup for cultural and religious reasons in the middle of the 1950s. In 1953, the book *Three Nights in Rock Churches of Cappadocia*, written by Yorgo Seferis, winner of the Nobel Literature Prize in 1963, was published by the French Research Institution<sup>39</sup>. In 1954, a French journalist visited and publicized Urgup in France. Between 1950 and 1980 independent tourists visited Urgup and Cappadocia for cultural and religious reasons. During this period, local people opened small hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops and they accepted the tourists as their guests rather than exclusively their customers. By following traditions of hospitality they took every measure to make their guests comfortable.

During this period the tourists who visited Urgup and Cappadocia in general were well-educated and they had great respect for the local people and their values. In this natural and healthy process, a very friendly relationship developed between the local people and the foreign guests. Frequently, the local people invited the foreign guests to their homes and served their traditional meals and drinks without deriving any material benefits. Even though the local people did not speak English, French or German and the tourists had no spoken Turkish, they appeared to understand each other very well and, to some extent, they developed good friendships.

This natural process of tourism development had considerable positive socio-cultural and economic impact on the local people. This period helped the local people to become more flexible in a socio-cultural sense, which seems to have increased the social-carrying capacity of the local people in the era of mass tourism growth. For example, interviewees at local level in Urgup reported that although the local people in the province of Nevsehir had shown strong reactions against some tourists wearing short skirts, the local people in Urgup, which is only 18 km from this provincial centre (see *Figure 1*),

accepted mass tourism without such strong negative reactions.

In the 1960s the local municipality opened a hotel to meet increasing tourism demand, which encouraged local people to enter into local tourism by opening small scale establishments. At the outset of tourism development, the region was not covered by any of the Turkish governments' recognized development programmes; there were no incentives initially for investment in the area and so the first superstructures (a ranges of accommodation facilities, restaurants, souvenir shops, etc.) were built and financed on a small scale by local people. This natural sustainable tourism development process has been prevented by developments after 1982 which caused many small establishments to close because of imperfect market competition. Foreign tour operators were attracted to Cappadocia and rented several rooms on a room only or room with breakfast basis. As Morrison and Selman<sup>44</sup> pointed out, in 1983 the government decided to give generous incentives to the tourism industry. Foreign investors were given guarantees of repatriation of capital and profits, there was no restriction on the employment of foreign personnel and investors were allowed access to Turkish funds. In 1983 the government itself also started to build and operate accommodation establishments in the region.

The tourism development process in Urgup seems to reflect Butler's tourist area cycle of evolution<sup>70</sup> which is brought about by a range of factors. Endorsement of the Tourism Encouragement Law in 1982 has enticed many entrepreneurs and the Ministry of Tourism to open luxury accommodation establishments without considering the viability of tourism in Urgup. These new and relatively large scale investments in tourism stimulated travel agencies and tour operators to come with their package rate travelling groups. After the discovery<sup>71</sup> (Butler's exploration stage<sup>70</sup>), and local response and initiative stages<sup>71</sup> (Butler's involvement stage<sup>70</sup>), tourism development in Urgup has been institutionalized (Butler's development stage), which further encouraged capital owners to open large scale souvenir shops, discos, bars and larger scale accommodation establishments. Gradually, local control over the tourism industry has been completely lost. Emergence of such large scale development in a haphazard way has threatened the historical, cultural and natural attractions which were responsible for the initial popularity of the area. The gradual change and disappearance of the authentic natural and cultural attractions, and other changes such as noise, overcrowding, traffic jams, etc. have made Urgup less or not attractive at all for Cohen's non-institutionalized tourists<sup>72</sup> and Plog's psychocentrics<sup>73</sup> who initially explored and discovered Cappadocia in general and Urgup in particular for religious and cultural reasons.

Plog<sup>73</sup> argued that “Destination areas carry with them the potential seeds of their own destruction, as allow themselves to become more commercialized and lose their qualities which originally attracted tourists”. It is interesting to reflect that 25 years later, Plog’s comment would appear to be valid for Urgup as a tourist area. In brief, the decisions taken for developing mass tourism without proper planning, consultation, and infrastructure seem to lead to unsustainable tourism development. Alongside the rapid emergence of mass tourism in a rural community, there appear to be several other factors that contributed to unsustainable tourism development in Urgup.

### Policies of political economy

After a two year period of military-led government, the general multi-party parliamentary election was held in 1983, and a civilian government came into power. This government immediately commenced implementing the 25 January 1980 Economic Stabilization Measurements formulated by the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which had been delayed during the socio-political crisis that brought the military intervention in the country.

These economic stabilization measures led Turkey to follow export-led industrialization for which

tourism has been seen as a major instrument. Wider issues at a local level were not addressed while the government was offering generous fiscal and monetary incentives alongside the leasing of public lands, most of which were valuable for agriculture, to the investors in the tourism industry for between 49 and 99 years and decreasing red-tape for tourism investors. In the words of Tosun and Jenkins<sup>10</sup>, “using tourism as a kind of panacea for some of the macroeconomic problems ushered in an era giving too generous incentives to the industry in Turkey”.

In order to maximize the rate of return from the investment in the short term, the government determined specific tourist regions and centres. Urgup was one of them (see *Figure 2*). The state’s generous fiscal and financial incentives, and logical bureaucratic measures have aimed at inducing medium and large capital holders to invest in the tourism industry, which was an extension of policies of the political economy during 1983–1991. The governments of 1983–1991 assumed that initial phases of income concentration in the hands of limited, perhaps determined, entrepreneurs would accelerate economic growth that would lead to phases of increasingly equitable distribution of income, and rising and diversifying consumption for all. Moreover, the governments seem to have ignored the present generation, to some extent, so as to create a strong and rich country for future generations, which may not be compatible with the ethics

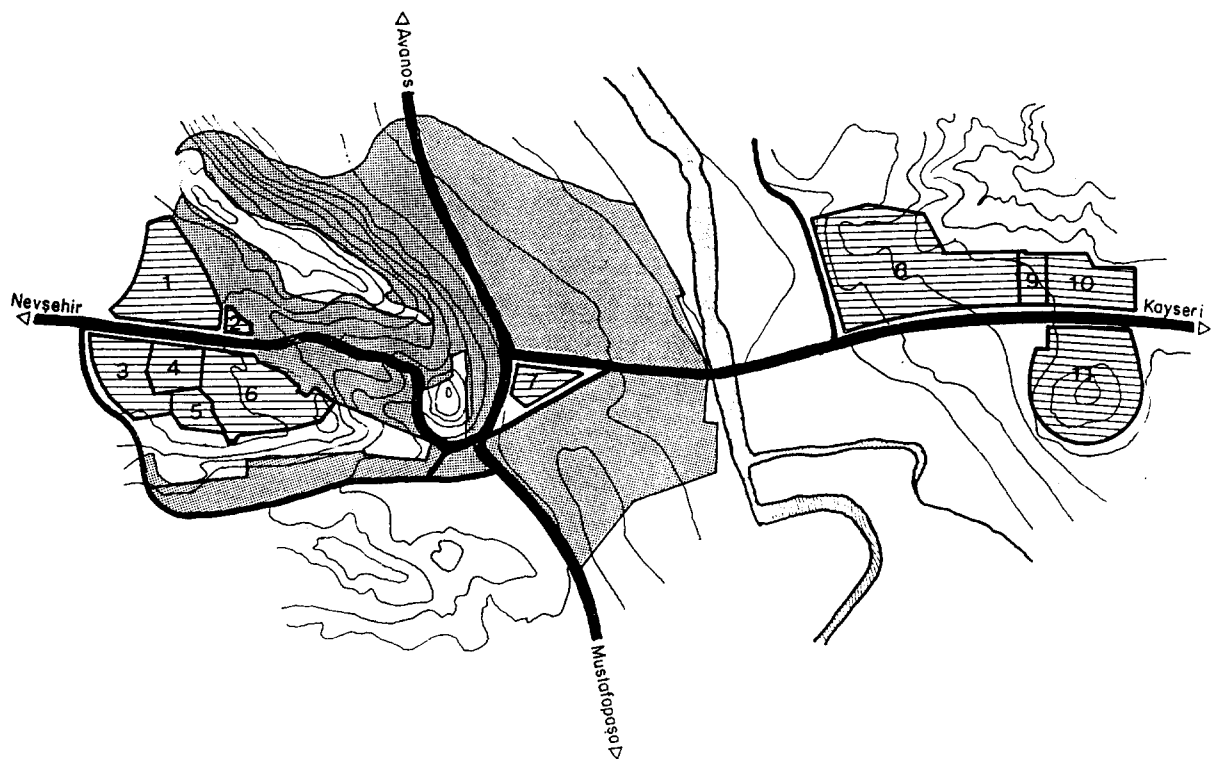


Figure 2 Urgup touristic development areas<sup>82</sup>.

and codes of sustainable development. However, this policy has not worked in practice. Concentration of income in the hands of limited numbers of rich people induced luxury consumption. In other words, "the beneficiaries of economic growth have adopted as their right the consumption standards of the rich countries and have commonly also diverted much of their accumulation to these countries for safe-keeping"<sup>45</sup>.

The local people in Urgup did not have enough capital to access the generous incentives. Thus, expatriates (non-local people) have invested in the tourism industry in Urgup. That is to say, the generous incentives accelerated the process of tourism growth and ushered in an era of unsustainable tourism development by ignoring socio-economic and environmental matters, and inter and intra generations equity. Moreover, Urgup was not ready for this rapid tourism growth due to the fact that there was not enough infrastructure and the local people were too remote from the mass tourism business to be able to benefit from it. Although the local people used to run small scale tourism-related business, they could not cope with modern mass tourism that require up-to-date knowledge of the international tourism market and wider business expertise. Hence, the roots of unsustainable tourism development have been planted by the government's generous incentive and biased economic development policies, which accelerated the phase of mass tourism development in Urgup. In this context, the Director of the local tourist information office stated that

establishing big hotels requires large capital which is not available at the local level. Thus, big hotel companies are not owned by the local people. A majority of the small scale tourist establishments belong to the local people, but they have serious problems. Some of them have already closed.

The Director of the local museum and a neighbourhood headman agree in this regard. They reported that

the local people do not have enough capital to establish proper hotels and shops to serve tourists. The capital must come from non-local sources. Thus, it is very difficult for the local people to play a leading role as entrepreneurs in the tourism industry.

As the above comments imply, resources at the local level are not enough to finance the present scale of tourism development in Urgup, which is one of the structural barriers to community participation in the tourism development process. On the other hand, the Director of the local tourist information argued that

qualified employees have been brought from outside Urgup to work for the hotels since there are not qualified local people to work in certain positions in hotels. Not surprisingly, local people are employed

for these jobs which do not require any skills and qualifications.

Moreover, a neighbourhood headman stated that hotel managers in Urgup bring their teams with them from the previous hotels for which they worked. Thus, the local people were not given many opportunities to work in the tourism industry. Hotels employed some of the local people for only 3–5 months, then they sacked the employees. Thus the local people have not wanted to work in the tourism industry and they have not seen a job in a hotel as reliable.

In short, the central government has used tourism as a tool for the sake of their short-term policies, without fully considering socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism development at the local level. In other words, badly needed hard foreign currency earnings and the self-interests of decision-makers have made governments focus on the economic benefits of tourism development at national level, such as contribution of foreign tourist earning to the balance of payments. This seemed to be unavoidable just after the socio-economic and political crisis that had brought military intervention to preserve democracy in Turkey. As a result, the development of tourism has widened the gap between poor people and rich people, which contradicts the principle of sustainable tourism development as stated at the outset of this article.

### **Emergence of clientelistic relationship**

Naturally, the tourism industry brought powerful business interests into the powerless rural community of Urgup. The businessmen organized themselves in order to maximize their interests, and thus became very effective in the socio-political and economic life of the established rural community. In other words, patron and client relationships have been developed between local and central public bodies, and the business class, which has operated at the expense of the local community. For example, while the local people do not have acceptable houses, schools of national standard, proper irrigation systems and modern agricultural equipment, luxury hotels and leisure facilities for tourists have received a major share from public funds as incentives to "provide the mass tourist with protective ecological bubble of his accustomed environment"<sup>46</sup>. This is a reflection of a haphazard resources allocation system by the state authorities and preferential access to state decision-making bodies that is extremely important for being successful in business. This is due to the fact that the political parties tend to curb the power of bureaucracy for their own purposes, reinforcing the parties' tendency to push for particularistic preferences rather than objectives norms. In brief, preferential treatment seems to continue to be necessary to be qualified for essential

resources such as credits, access to municipal facilities, and so on, which are distributed through the state bureaucracy. Access to the bureaucracy is achieved through the political parties. Thus, politicians were seen as corrupt, having little concern for moral values and being oriented toward competition for spoils. The 1980 coup targeted corrupt party politics<sup>41</sup>, but it seems to be a temporary solution for a chronic socio-political illness. Although local bodies have tended to resist the demands of the expatriate business class to some extent, the central government pressurized local bodies to respond effectively to the demand from the business class. This may reflect the fact that “the formation of local government in Turkey has been initiated by the state, reflecting administrative and fiscal concerns of the centre, and has not been a source of democratic citizen participation in a public space”<sup>47</sup>.

Rumours of corruption and gossip about the partnership between the bourgeoisie, the upper echelons of the party, and the favoured businessmen, regarding too generous incentives given to the tourism industry, were often cited in the daily newspapers. For example, one of the biggest daily newspapers reported that misuse of incentives given to the tourism industry appeared in different forms. First, considerable parts of incentives given as credits were unreturned and lost. It was declared that 653 billion Turkish Lira in 1993 were accounted as lost credits given to the tourism industry. In addition, there were 135 cases in the court in relation to this issue as of 1993. Second, though credits were given to the investors in the tourism industry, investment did not take place. It was estimated that 60 000 beds which had tourism investment license did not exist in reality. Additionally, it was claimed that “there were cases where incentives were given on the bases of inner party courtesy or intimacy of friendship and relationship rather than entrepreneur capability”<sup>48</sup>.

In this context, a member of the municipal council stated that

...non-local entrepreneurs are not trustworthy. They found investing in the tourism industry relatively profitable in Urgup; thus they came here. They are here merely for making profit from the tourism industry. When the tourism sector becomes unprofitable, they will move to Kusadasi, Marmaris, Bodrum etc. For them to be in Urgup does not have any particular meaning except for making profit. They do not have a sense of belonging to the local community. They do not share with us the local conditions under which the local community have to live in Urgup. They do not send their children to the schools which our children attend in Urgup. But the local entrepreneurs want to live here whether tourism brings satisfactory profit or not. If tourism is not profitable, they will invest in agriculture, manufacturing etc., but they will be in Urgup.

That is to say, patron–client relationships have dominated and influenced formal bodies. These bodies, by supporting mass tourism, have caused changes in the local socio-economic and political structure. These changes have tended to further distance local people from decision-making. The worst thing may be that the local people in Urgup seem to have little trust in decision-makers, which have made them feel alone and helpless to solve their problems. However, this is a problem at the national level in Turkey and perhaps in many part of the developing world. A survey of attitudes and priorities of citizens illustrated that urban settlers are largely dissatisfied with the service delivery system from the municipalities and overwhelmingly express feelings of being left out of the political process<sup>49,50</sup>. “Although there is no reason to believe that the situation should be any better at that administrative level”<sup>51</sup>, the local people do not believe in the power of state institutions, but in the power of patrons. It is naive to expect that principles of sustainable tourism development will be implemented, and thus sustainable tourism development be achieved under the current political and economic structures.

The implication of the above finding in terms of sustainable tourism development in developing countries may be that the tourism sector is only a small element of prevailing sophisticated socio-political and economic systems in a country. Hence, achieving sustainable tourism development largely depends upon this macro socio-political and economic structure, and as a small element of the macro system, the tourism sector cannot develop itself in a sustainable manner unless a growth of patronal NIMBY (not in my backyard) takes place.

### Matching a segment of the tourism market with an unsuitable local destination

Although historically Cappadocia in general and Urgup in particular have been visited by foreigners for a cultural and religious pilgrimage, Turkey has been promoted as a whole by international tour operators and the Ministry of Tourism to satisfy the common needs of mass tourists such as sun, sea and sand (3Ss). The president of Cappadocia Association of Tourism Operators (KAPTIB) reported that “although Urgup does not have sea and sand, tourists visiting coastal destinations in Turkey for the 3Ss have also visited Urgup for just two night and three days”. As can be seen from *Table 1*, only 13.77% of a total 237 185 foreign tourists in 1993 visited Urgup for cultural reasons, while 81% of this total visited Urgup for general holiday reasons.

The secondary data contained in *Table 1* regarding categorization of the purpose of visit is ambiguous. Tourists may go to a place for several purposes. For example, tourists may go to a place for a holiday,



**Table 1** Number of foreign visitors over-nighted and night spent by purpose in Urgup in 1993

Purpose of visit	Number of overnight visitors	% of purpose of visit	% of number of nights spent by purpose
Holiday	192081	80.98	81.40
Culture	32661	13.77	9.53
Active sports	972	0.40	0.56
Visit friends	4860	2.05	2.21
Business	1555	0.66	2.87
Meeting, conf.	1555	0.66	0.70
Shopping	389	0.16	0.33
Religion	0	0.00	0.00
Transit	583	0.25	1.41
Study/education	972	0.41	0.14
Health and spa	0	0.00	0.00
Other	1557	0.66	0.85
Total	237 185	100	100

Source: Derived From Ministry of Tourism<sup>68</sup>.

visiting friends and relatives (VRF), shopping, etc. Nevertheless, in this context, it may be said that the focus of development has been that one form of tourism is all things for all areas in Turkey, which "is not only pompous and naive, it is also unfair, unrealistic and unwise"<sup>52</sup>. That is to say, the international tour operators have matched a destination with an unsuitable segment of the tourist market to maximize their profit with the collaboration of the local elites, expatriate investors and formal authorities, which has created complicated socio-economic and environmental problems.

In this regard, however, one may argue that tourists will not return if the tour operators do not give them what they want; the role of tour operators in shaping tourists' preferences seems to be significant.

In brief, the international tour operators, with the collaboration of shortsighted and self-interested decision-makers and business interests in the tourism industry, have played their role as image makers and interpreters of tourism demand. In this way they have created an image of people and cultures as a tourist commodity which is remote from reality<sup>8,53,54</sup>. Consequently, power holders in the international tourism system, and their counterparts in the country and the local destination have led tourism development to take place in an unsustainable manner.

### Implementation of central decisions at local destination

One of the most obvious characteristics of the State administration in Turkey is that all decisions related to planning activities are made by central government and implemented in all local units in the country. Central government prepares national development plans every 5 years, which include all

regions and sectors of the economy in the country. The Ministry of Tourism and State Planning Organization, as units of central government, prepare and implement the national tourism development plan without consulting local governments during the planning processes<sup>74</sup>.

However, Turkey, and even some regions in the country, is too large and lacking homogeneity to be viewed from a single point of view in terms of tourism development. It is argued that "no two countries or even areas within countries are likely to face identical problems at the same time"<sup>63</sup>. Moreover, as Fagence<sup>64</sup> contends, every location, region, resources, amenities and infrastructures have an unequal potential and capacity for particular types and scales of tourism development. Tosun and Jenkins<sup>10</sup> stated that Fagence's argument is valid for Turkey. The country has seven geographic regions with various features and potential for different types of tourism development, in which many local tourist destinations have different socio-cultural, physical and economic carrying capacities for various types and scales of tourism development.

Obviously, it is beyond the national planning team of the tourism sector to prepare a comprehensive, flexible and implementable tourism development plan that will be applicable to every tourist destination in different regions of the country. This highly centralized planning approach to tourism development is the main source of problems in tourism development at the local level in Urgup, which, indeed, has planted the seeds of unsustainable tourism development.

### Emergence of environmental destruction

Consequently, the tourists who have not had a real interest in religious relics (rock churches and underground cities that provided asylum for early Christians) and natural attractions such as the fairy chimneys have damaged these antique human-made and natural attractions by behaving in an irresponsible way. On the other hand, neighbourhood headmen in the focus group and some members of the municipal assembly reported that some of the rock houses have been used as tea-gardens, bars, etc. and some of these rock houses have been bought by foreigners, who visit the region every year, to use as seasonal accommodations during their stay in Cappadocia.

Moreover, since there were no strict planning regulations or local authorities with power to implement existing regulations, ribbon development has occurred along the scenic routes and in areas of volcanic beauty. There are some examples of integrating building styles in the environment, but generally there has been a failure to integrate the superstructures of the tourism industry with the

natural volcanic beauty, which constitutes “architectural pollution” in the words of Pearce<sup>55</sup>.

Although the most significant attractions (Goreme, Derinkuyu, Ihlara Valley, Zelve, etc.) are under State protection, which can play an important role to keep Cappadocia a world-class site, measures have not been taken in time to stop environmental erosion in Urgup. As a result, an era of environmentally unsustainable tourism development emerged as well.

Not surprisingly, many scholars and even laymen are asking, “[w]ill tourists kill tourism?” Herrman Kahn, the well-known futurologist thought that rapidly-expanding tourism is next only to atomic power in its potential for environmental destruction<sup>56</sup>, but it should be kept in mind that not all forms of tourism development are a threat to the environment. As World Tourism Organization (WTO)<sup>57</sup> contended:

...it is not tourism itself which contains the virus which attacks the environment, but rather the methods adopted to develop tourism in the absence of proper assumption of responsibilities by the public authorities and where short term considerations of economic profitability are the sole development objective

On the other hand, one of the managerial staff in the Ministry of Tourism reported that the villagers are not happy with current tourism development in Cappadocia. While tourists are trekking and riding horses, they are taking fruit from the gardens of villagers without getting permission. He stated that if every individual tourist takes just one bunch of grapes, nothing will be left for the villagers who are dependent on small scale gardens and their whole income which comes from those small gardens. They live on the margin of basic needs. Moreover, tourists are polluting the environment by throwing cans and excess food or spoiled foods away. Some of the items left by tourists are not good for farms and particularly for animals.

It was suggested that the Ministry of Tourism (MT) should formulate a policy to stop this pollution which creates a negative perception about tourists, and thus tourism. Villagers are not so hospitable as they were. They have had very limited benefits from tourism development, but they suffer as a result of it. This may indicate that Urgup as tourist area would appear to be entering Butler’s consolidation stage<sup>70</sup>. It is suggested that travel agencies could rent gardens every season for tourists. The MT could put signboards to warn tourists and tourists guides not to pick fruits from gardens and not to leave waste items haphazardly on farms. The MT should also collaborate with municipalities and village headmen to collect solid wastes left haphazardly by tourists on farms.

The above findings suggest that current tourism development has affected the quality of the environ-

ment and tourists who have behaved irresponsibly damaged properties of small farmers. This compromises the ability of future and present generations in Urgup and coming tourists to satisfy their own needs.

### **Emergence of over-commercialization**

The irresponsibility of mass tourism has not only damaged antique rock churches and other invaluable natural attractions, it has also changed the previously positive image that local people had of tourists as responsible guests towards tourists being ‘too hungry consumers’. Consequently, irresponsible mass tourism tends to change the social conditions that may create various problems for the community in the tourist destination, including changes in value judgements, individual behaviour, family structure, life styles, traditional ceremonies or the way the community is organized in the destination area<sup>58,59</sup>.

On the other hand, local cultural values have been used as a commodity and marketing tool. They have been over-commercialized by using them at the wrong place, wrong time and with the wrong standards. And thus a wrong and dubious image has emerged, deliberately or not, about the local community<sup>60</sup>.

For example, Eroglu<sup>61</sup> reported that many restaurants in rock houses organized Turkish Nights as a part of their animation activity, but “it is hard to say that these are Turkish Nights”. Restaurant operators hire very cheap uneducated and untrained teams to perform folk dances and dramas in a manner that do not reflect authentic folk dances and dramas. Not only are the performances not compatible with the original dances or dramas, but also the contents of the dramas are so changed that they are inconsistent with reality. Eroglu<sup>61</sup> stated that the Nevsehir School of Tourism and Hotel Management established a team specially educated to perform folk dance and folk drama in these restaurants and hotels in Cappadocia, but hoteliers and restaurant operators have not accepted the specially educated team because of the relatively high price, and prefer cheaper unprofessional teams at the expense of cultural values. Eroglu<sup>61</sup> particularly emphasized that some of the folk dramas have been performed in forms that have humiliated the local communities from where the dramas and dances originated.

In this regard, blame also lies with tour operators unwilling to pay realistic prices for a quality experience for their client. Individual tourists may also be responsible in this regard.

Furthermore, over-commercialization and the rapid emergence of a get-rich-quick mentality in the tourism sector has created complex problems about images of the local community. For instance, some of the members of the municipal assembly and standing committee reported that foreign tourists

have been brought to Urgup in groups by buses and they have stayed in pre-determined big hotels outside of the county. The buses do not even pass through the main street where locally-owned small shops are. Tour guides and big hotel companies do not want tourists to visit small shops in the centre of the county. They have often given wrong information to tourists in order to stop them visiting the locally-owned small shops. For example, it was reported that a tour guide said to a group of tourists: "I would like to let you know that just a few hours ago I listened to the news from the radio. It was said that a fatal disease epidemic has widely spread in Urgup. Thus, I strongly advise you not to visit the centre of the county". This information was given without any basis in truth. However, this model is by no mean unique to Urgup. A member of the managerial staff in the Ministry of Tourism also reported that "some tour guides give wrong and deliberately wrong information...; sometimes they lie merely to make tourists happy in order to motivate tourists to give better tips".

Although it is important, there are no statistical figures available about the percentage of tourists visiting Urgup or Cappadocia who arrange their travel through travel agencies, and thus would be beholden to their tour guides to a large extent. *Table 2* shows the percentage of foreign tourists visiting Turkey who arranged their trips through a travel agent. The figures in *Table 2* give a rough idea about the pattern of trip organization of foreign tourists who visited Urgup.

Most of the interviewees at local level emphasized that after visiting pre-determined historical places (rock churches, underground cities) and natural attractions (chimney fairies, etc.), tourists are frequently directed to visit pre-determined large shops with which tour guides and hotel companies have made a commission contract. These shops are just outside of the county and many of them are owned by non-local people. Some hotel companies even provide free accommodations for tourists in order to sell goods from their souvenir shops. Tural<sup>62</sup> claimed that the structure of the tourism industry and shopping system are a result of the economic policies that have supported large scale business firms for years and have created barriers to

small businesses in the market. He suggested that the government should take necessary measures to make the large scale shopping centres lose their attraction, and should make travel agencies do their own jobs. Tourists should be left free to visit centres of cities and city tours should be encouraged. If necessary, some regulations should be enacted.

Given the 65 million population of Turkey, there seems to be large potential for domestic tourism demand. This domestic market would be an important factor to encourage a more sustainable tourism development. Evidently, it is much more difficult for tour guides to give incorrect information deliberately to domestic tourists who naturally have much more knowledge of the country and Urgup. Moreover, Turks, who know the language and culture, have less need for organized holidays, and so are more likely to visit the town centre shops to experience the culture, and to stay in the smaller, family-run, hotels.

According to statistical figures of the MT<sup>75</sup>, 101642 foreign and 39642 domestic tourist visited Urgup in 1996. Foreign visitors spent 212638 nights, while domestic tourists spent 116652 nights. Average nights spent by foreign visitors were 2.09, while this figure was 2.94 for domestic tourists. Domestic tourists thus tend to stay longer than their foreign counter parts.

It should be kept in mind that there appears to be considerable limitations to converting the potential domestic tourism demand into effective demand. Those limitations include the chronic high inflation rate<sup>76,77</sup>, high unemployment rate<sup>77</sup>, high interest rate<sup>77</sup>, wide unequal distribution of national income<sup>78,79</sup>, decreasing trend in real wages<sup>80</sup>, etc. Additionally, the social-cultural structure induces Turkish society to save for the next generations and unknown emergencies due to lack of insufficient state welfare benefits such unemployment benefits, general health insurance, child benefits, housing benefits, etc. rather than spend on holiday and leisure activities.

Nevertheless, domestic tourism can be an important driving force behind a move towards better and more sustainable tourism development. By decreasing the dependency of the tourism sector at local and national level on international tour operators and their counter-part in the country, and

**Table 2** Percentage of foreign visitors by means of trip organization

Trip organization	1987 (%)	1988 (%)	1989 (%)	1990 (%)	1991 (%)	1993 (%)	1996 (%)
Completely by travel agency	51.4	43.7	49.9	42.5	31.8	45.0	60.3
Partly by travel agency	–	10.8	11.9	9.3	–	–	–
Individually	47.5	36.3	28.6	29.0	61.1	45	39.7
Other	1.1	2.5	3.1	2.4	7.1	10.0	–
No response	–	6.7	6.4	16.8	–	100	–
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Frequency (million)	3.1	4.2	4.5	5.3	4.9	5.9	8.6

Source: Ministry of Tourism<sup>68</sup> and State Institute of Statistics<sup>81</sup>.

by changing patterns of tourism development in favour of small-scale tourism-related establishments more geared to the potential domestic demand.

As implied, the patron–client relationship in the context of accessing public funds and economic policies in general have shaped the structure of the tourism industry in such a way that the benefits of tourism development have accrued by the rich. It may be concluded from the case Urgup that whilst tourism development is beneficial to a national economy, it is not necessarily desirable for a local community.

The pattern of tourism development and distribution of the benefits suggest that involvement of local people as entrepreneurs is *sine qua non* for achieving a better distribution of benefits. This redistribution will not contradict the principles of sustainable tourism development. However, local participation in the tourism development process is not an easy option to achieve for decision-makers in the absence of financial resources and entrepreneurial skills at local level in many developing countries. On the other hand, stimulating local control may just move the patron–client problem to the local level, which may still mean that tourism development is kept in the hands of a few local elites.

In brief, it seems to be very difficult, if not impossible, to change patterns of distribution of the benefits of the tourism development in favour of those hitherto excluded. Thus, a cautionary approach is needed to implement alternative policies to achieve sustainable tourism development so as to not to create another problem which may worsen the enlisting circumstances

## **Conclusions**

Although factors affecting sustainable tourism development in negative ways have been discussed in the context of Urgup in the national circumstances of Turkey as a developing country, most of the arguments appear to be valid for many local tourist destinations in other developing countries. Hence, it is possible to draw some general conclusions from the case study.

First, as the case of Urgup shows, roots of unsustainable tourism development go beyond the tourism industry itself. In many developing countries, if not all, national political and economic priorities dominate over regional, local and sectoral priorities. As Jenkins<sup>65</sup> argued, the opportunity to derive foreign exchange from tourism export and employment created by tourism cannot be ignored easily. Since foreign exchange earnings and job creation are national priorities of many developing countries, these have dominated over every consideration, such as fair distribution of tourism benefits among stakeholders in local tourist destina-

tions, preserving the environment for future generations and so on, which are determined as principles of sustainable development. Perhaps, because of this issue, although tourism development is desirable and beneficial at a national level, it is not necessarily desirable and beneficial at a local level. Hence, it can be concluded that achieving sustainable tourism development at a local level requires integrating objectives and priorities at national and local levels. Ignoring this principle may spell a danger in terms of the sustainable tourism development process.

Second, socio-political, cultural and economic structures of many developing countries have stimulated the emergence of patron and client relationship between decision-makers and elite business interests, that operate at the expense of the vast majority at local, regional and national level. Because of this relationship, decision-makers push for particularistic preferences rather than universal norms in the allocation of scarce resources of developing countries. Consequently, this socio-political pathology undermines the principles of sustainable development, such as improving the basic needs of a given community, reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty so as to lead people to gain self-esteem and to feel free from the three evils of want, ignorance and squalor without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. Hence, it must be unrealistic to develop tourism in a sustainable manner “if the forces making for inequality are left free rein in their society and if policies aimed at the eradication of poverty are not vigorously pursued”<sup>7</sup>.

Third, the role of international tour operators in directing international tourism demand and shaping tourism development in developing countries is undeniable. Intense competition between identical tourist destinations in terms of prices, rather than product differentiation and quality, and increasing the supply of almost identical commodity tourist destinations, increase dependency of destination countries on the international tour operators. This dependency strengthens these tour operators' bargaining power. Thus, the structure of the international tourism system puts developing countries in a position where they cannot afford to reject or oppose decisions of international tour operators due to the real possibility of losing substantial economic benefits from international tourism for which they have already made massive and irreversible fixed investment. Under this condition, developing tourism in a sustainable manner at local or national level in developing countries seems to be largely at the mercy of the international tour operators. That is to say, achieving sustainable tourism development in many developing countries is very difficult, if not impossible, without the collaboration of the international tour operators. How this collaboration can be achieved seems to be a research topic on its own.

Fourth, product differentiation may be used as a tool to increase bargaining power of developing countries against the international tour operators, and thus as a tool for sustainable tourism development. Cappadocia in particular and Anatolia in general are the meeting point of various cultures and religions. Thus, it is one of the most interesting regions in the world in that the location embraces people of different religious beliefs, but who live fraternally. In this context, Cappadocia's unique heritage and natural attractions, including local museums, can be utilized as an important marketing tool to attract discrete tourists who may be persuaded to visit the region for cultural and religious reasons as independent travellers. However, using cultural tourism as a driving force behind a move to a more sustainable tourism development pattern requires policies. What are needed are strategies, such as establishing a regional tourism marketing office to promote Cappadocia with its authentic images by utilizing modern information technology such as the world wide web including internet and e-mail. Also needed is a regional central reservation system that can act on behalf of the regional tourism establishments to sell hotel rooms and rental cars for tourists in advance through using the noted means of modern information technology.

Naturally, those strategies demand expertise and fixed investment to be operationalized. Hence, it seems to be difficult to implement those strategies, but via collaboration and co-operation of private sector and public bodies at local, regional and national level their operation may become possible.

On the other hand, converting potential domestic tourism demand into effective demand can be an additional strategy to off-set the threat of the international tour operators to substituting demand to identical or similar tourist destinations. Although this option is not attainable for many developing countries who have difficulties in satisfying the basic needs of their people and, thus, lack domestic tourism demand potential, it seems to be possible for Turkey to do this. However, as pointed out, the desperate need for foreign currency earning puts developing countries including Turkey in a position where they cannot reject international tourism even though it takes place in an unsustainable form. That is to say, domestic tourism demand cannot be a complete substitute for international tourism demand that brings considerable foreign currency earning into developing countries.

Fifth, community involvement seems to be an indispensable part of the strategy for sustainable tourism development, and thus it has been advocated by many scholars mostly from developed countries. However, participation of the local community in the tourism development process is

not an easy option to be utilized by developing countries. First, in many developing countries, the public administration system and legal structure are not appropriate for implementation of this strategy. Second, many local communities lack financial resources to be involved in the local tourism industry. Imperfect market conditions and biased economic policies of governments have made it more difficult for local communities with limited capital to enter into the tourism business. Additionally, the cultural remoteness of host communities to tourism-related businesses in developing countries appears to be an important limitation to local participation in the tourism development process. As Din<sup>83</sup> contends that "unlike the ideal-typical case as depicted in evolutionary models in tourism literature, the extent of local entrepreneurial involvement is usually very limited, owing to the fact that the local indigenous groups are rarely adequately preadapted to the business culture in tourism" However, without a financial commitment by local communities, community participation as a strategy might be meaningless, ineffective and, perhaps, detrimental. Third, it seems to be unacceptable to decision-makers to develop and implement a participatory tourism development approach as it demands considerable time and effort. Fourth, if it is accepted, it is possible that the local elite can shape and direct organs of participation for their own benefits. This may mean that tourism development is still kept in the hands of a few. Fifth, as Dieke<sup>66</sup> stated, "local experience of tourism is negligible...public servants who owe their positions on trust on behalf of the government...lack the expertise and competence of tourism matters", which is another factor that largely influences the effectiveness and efficiency of participatory tourism development at the local level.

It is suggested that government should carefully introduce deliberate measures to enable indigenous people to take advantage of the opportunities brought by tourism if the intended objectives are to distribute benefits to the local communities<sup>83</sup>. For example, entrepreneurial skills of local people could be developed through specially designed education or training programs, free consultancy services would be given to tourism related small businesses, and tourism entrepreneurs could be induced to employ local people by fiscal and monetary policies. Furthermore, local tourism development workers may be hired to work with local people to develop tourism products and market the local value added aspects of the area to tour operators, travel agents and individual tourists.

Sixth, an analysis of the tourism development approach in Turkey shows that centrally prepared national development plans determine all principles of tourism development at regional and local level.

“In large countries—for example in India, Indonesia, the People’s Republic of China and Nigeria—national approaches to tourism planning would be ineffective”<sup>10</sup>. In these countries, a central planning approach at a national level cannot take into account relevant local social, environmental, political and economic matters since they are simply too large and lack a homogeneity to undertake such tasks. Thus, planning approaches to tourism development in Turkey should move towards destination-specific planning at regional and local level under the co-ordination of central bodies such as the Ministry of Tourism and State Planning Organization.

Seventh, planning tourism development at local level with local participation in the process may not be effective and useful unless a mechanism of control and management of development is established. Obviously, this requires decentralization of the public administration system. This has been an agenda item of governments since the 1980s in developing countries, but little has been achieved. On the other hand, decentralization should not be seen as a panacea for the problems of tourism development in developing countries. As it is argued,

There must be control from the top, yet there must be also flexibility at the bottom, and the two needs are fundamentally contradictory. If there is too much autonomy from control, ...development goes astray, with the benefits going to the rich. And if there is too much emphasis on supervision from above in administering government programmes, ...development also goes astray, with the benefits again going to the rich. Finding the right mix of supervision and autonomy is probably the most difficult bureaucratic problem...<sup>67</sup>.

That is to say, not every form of decentralization will work under all conditions to solve problems in order to achieve sustainable tourism development. Hence, a cautionary approach is needed.

Finally, it is arguable that the principles of sustainable tourism development have been developed in and by developed countries where different and far better economic, legislative and political structures are in operation than in developing countries. Hence, implementation of the principles of sustainable development and sustainable tourism development require hard political choices and brave decisions which are necessary to meet the needs of international donor agencies such as the IMF and WB, and the commercial practices of the international tour operators.

In the case of Urgup, the lessons are clear. Unless the described developmental, organizational and political issues are recognized at both local and national levels and urgent remedial actions taken, the tourism potential of a community which so

welcomed tourism in its earliest forms, will not be sustainable in future.

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