

A Framework for Cultural Sustainability in Protected and Natural Areas



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2007 George Wright Society Conference

The San Francisco Peaks



- Sacred to 13 indigenous nations
- Creation stories begin at the peaks
- Home to plants, soil and pure water used for healing and ceremonies

Joe Shirley, Jr.
Navajo Nation President –
“This goes towards preserving our ways of life, preserving my prayer, my sacred song, my sacred sites, my mother: the San Francisco Peaks.”



Howard Shanker
Snowbowl General Partner –
“...our country is held for ransom by a small group of activists who believe that they personally own our nation’s public land.”

Purpose

- Propose framework to bring cultural sustainability (CS) into current frameworks for sustainable tourism (ST).
- Identify dimensions of cultural sustainability in natural areas & show how these help inform the ST framework.
- Offer insights for policy and practice in (eco-)tourism and for natural and protected areas

What is Sustainable Tourism?

Sustainability principles include a balance between there dimensional aspects of tourism development to guarantee long-term sustainability:

- **Environmental:** optimal use of environmental resources; maintenance of essential ecological processes; conservation of natural heritage & biodiversity
- **Economic:** viable, long-term economic operations; socio-economic benefits fairly distributed to all stakeholders
- **Socio-cultural:** “respect to the social-cultural authenticity of host-communities and conservation of their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values”

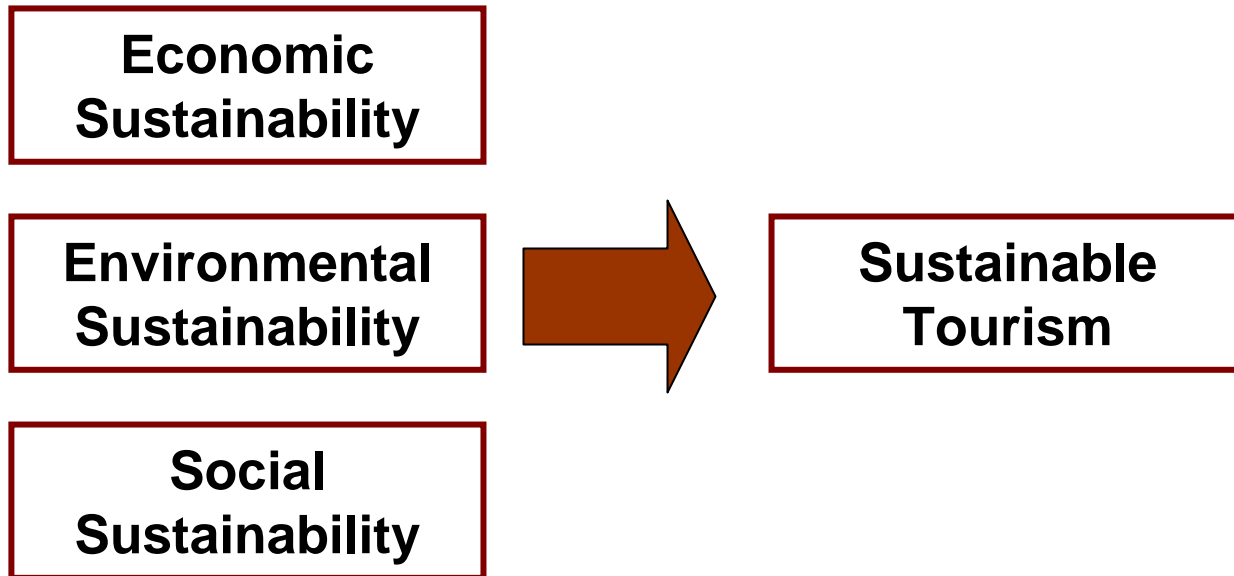
World Tourism Organization, 2004

What is Ecotourism?

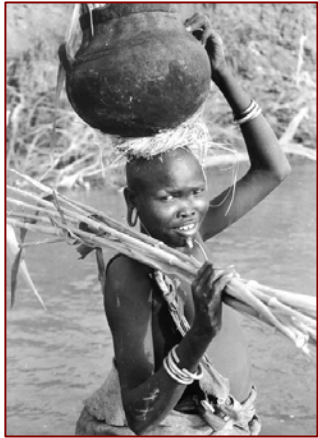
"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."

The International Ecotourism Society (2007)

Sustainable Tourism



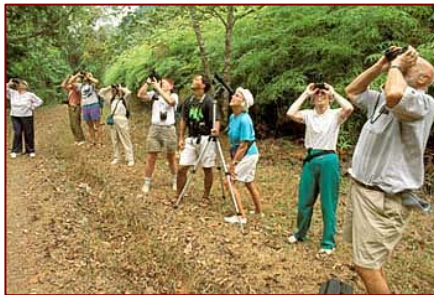
What is missing from the Sustainable Tourism Framework?



**Cultural group eviction from
The Omo National Park in
Ethiopia**

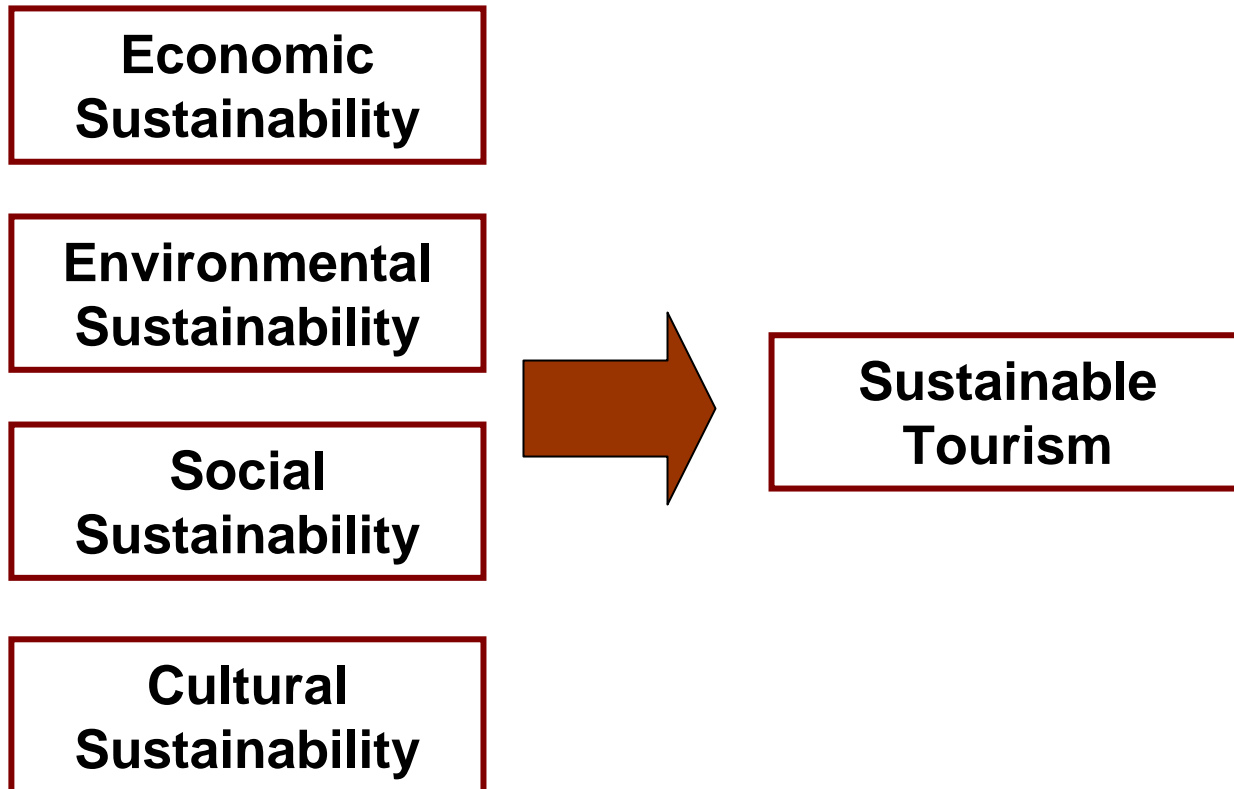


**Tourism development at
Hawaiian Sacred sites**



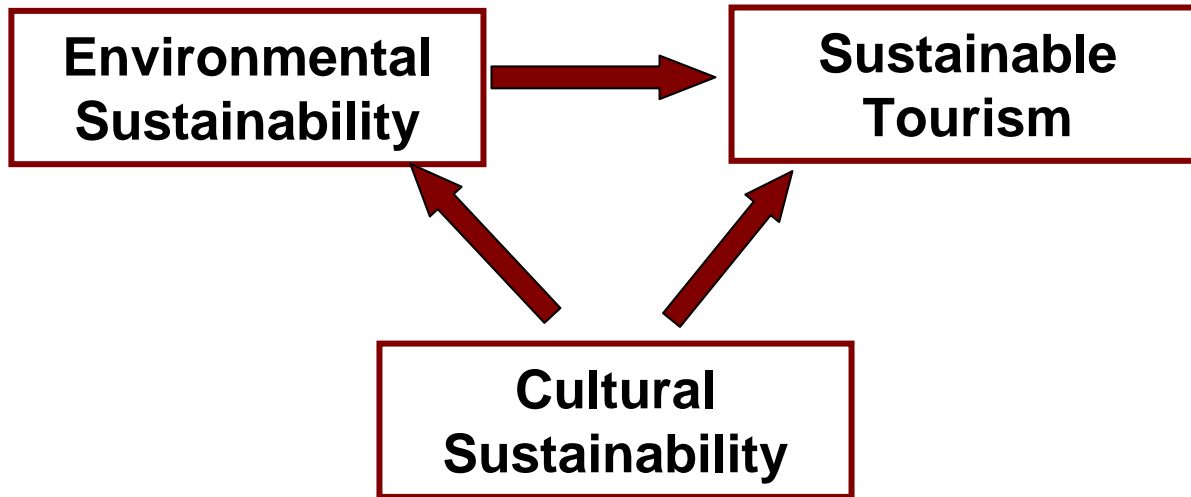
**Wealthy (eco-)tourists enjoying
natural areas while residents are
restricted from them**

Sustainable Tourism

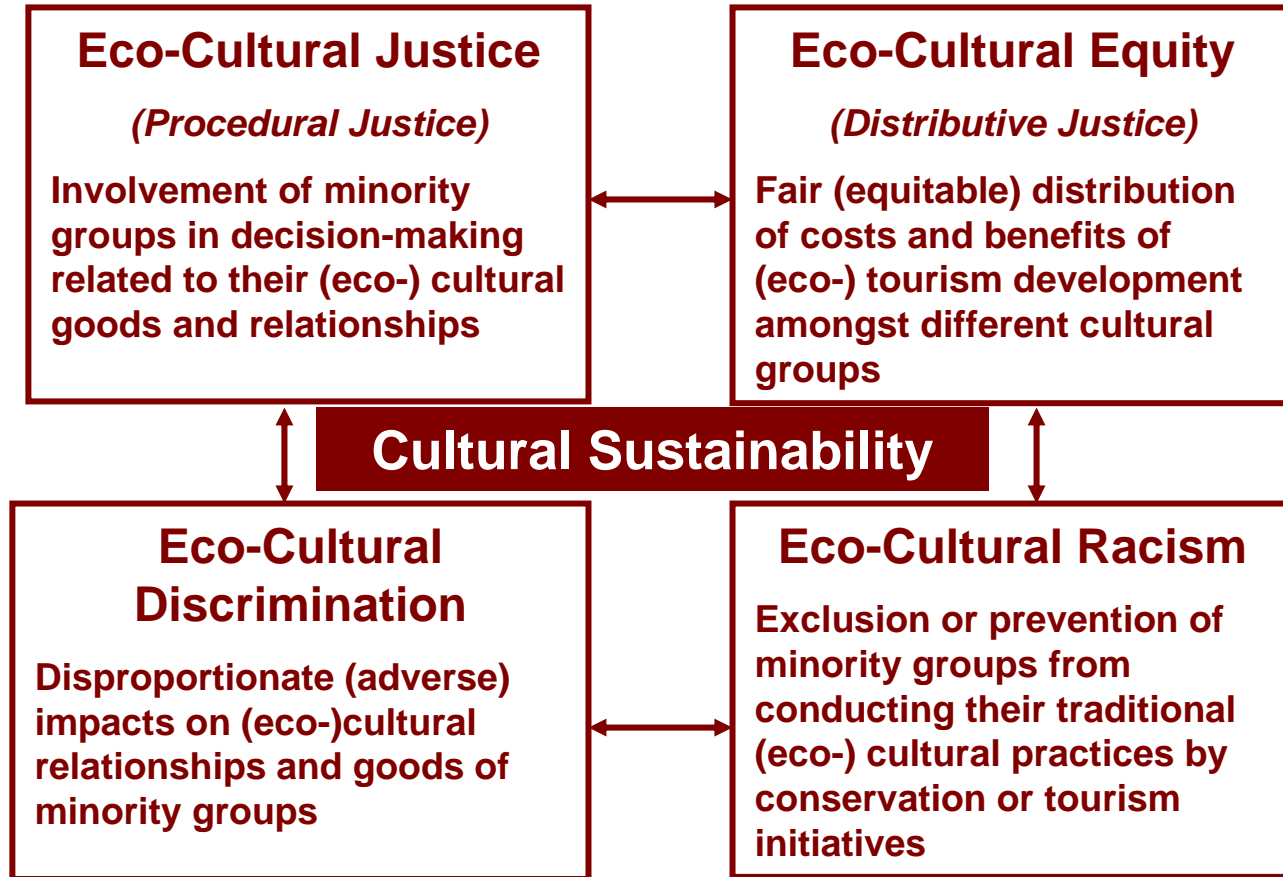


Cultural Sustainability in Sustainable Tourism

For the well-being of natural/protected areas it is crucial to **bridge cultural and environmental** aspects in order to ensure equity among those who visit, those who inhabit the natural areas and those whose cultural heritage is embedded in landscapes, ecologies and cultural sites.



Cultural Sustainability and the Natural Environment

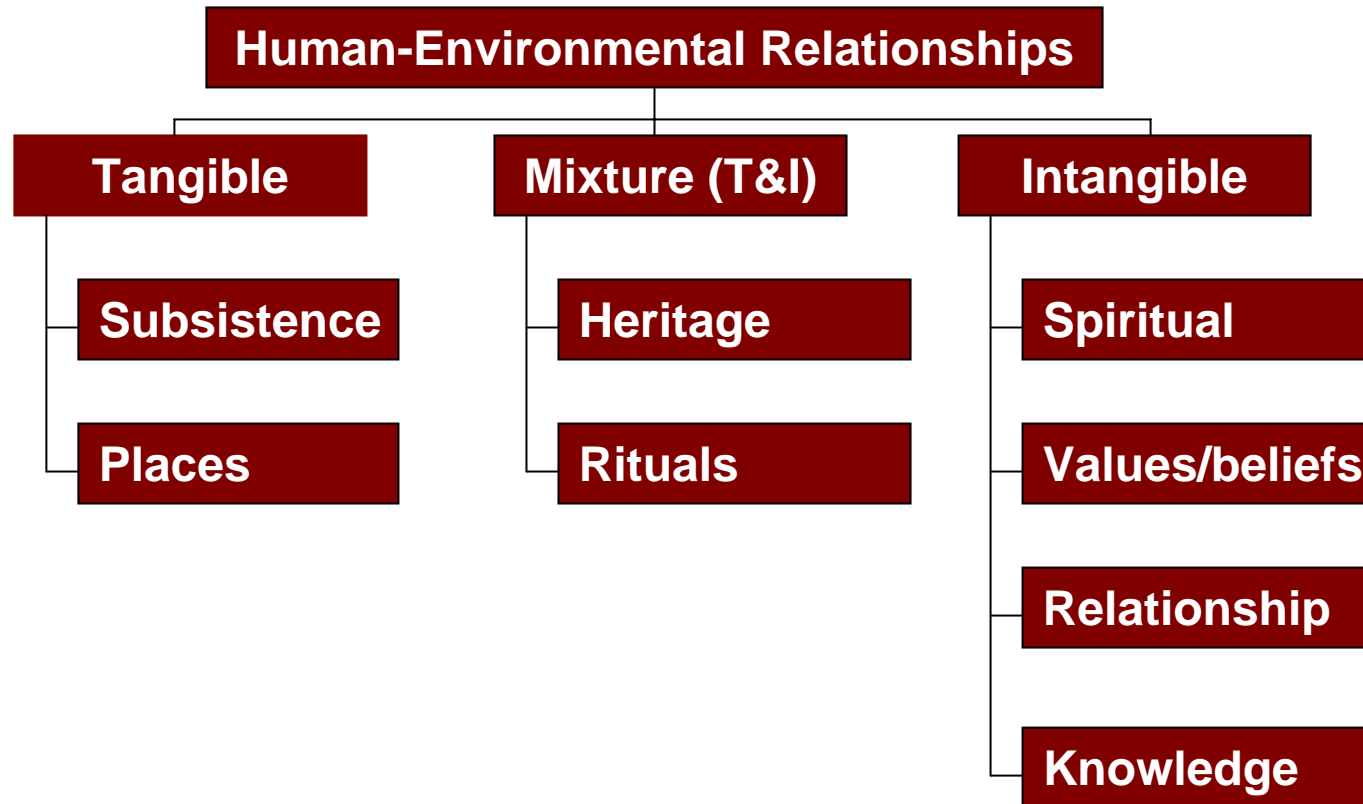


Sustainable Tourism & Cultural Sustainability

An cultural justice framework can ensure that cultural impacts of tourism development in natural/protected areas are **fairly distributed among social groups and communities**.

1. Consideration of human-environmental relationships between people and their natural environment (which are also cultural)
2. Objective indicators to monitor different aspects of cultural justice framework
3. Representation, active participation and approval of all stakeholders

1. Human-Environmental Relationships in a Cultural Context



Human-Ecological Relationships in a Cultural Context

“Land does not just represent space but rather, the interconnected physical, Symbolic, spiritual and social aspects of many cultures including First Nation ones.”
(Wilson, 2003)



Kilauea Volcano, Hawaii
The body of the Goddess Pele



Ayahuasca plant used by
Amazonian shamans



Kettle River, British Columbia, Canada
Sacred river for the Okanagan Tribe

2. Objective indicators to monitor different aspects of cultural sustainability

- Indicators to monitor potential cultural changes with respect to both local inhabitants and visitors
- Indicators to ensure equal participation of all cultural groups in any tourism development decision
- Indicators to ensure the fair distribution of benefits/costs of tourism development among all groups.
 - Interviews with indigenous and traditional leaders
 - Tourism experts panel
 - Involvement of NGOs

Cultural Sustainability: Challenges

- Lack of attention to human-environmental relationships in a cultural context
- Lack of robust indicators that can track changes in human-environmental relationships
- Notion of culture is problematic (cultural changes are often intangible and can occur over long time spans)
- Power struggles and anthropocentrism: whose culture to protect?

Conclusion

Sustainable tourism must include a cultural sustainability framework that:

- Ensures that environmental-cultural relationships and assets are fairly included in (eco-)tourism development and natural area management
- Enables the inclusion and protection of diverse groups with respect to their cultural heritage, cultural identity and cultural well-being
- Ensures direct participation in decision-making and control over cultural goods and relationships

Implications for Practice and Policy

- Fair participation of cultural groups and protection of their cultural rights
- Identify cultural indicators for (eco-)tourism certification and accreditation programs
- Education of tourists/visitors and local communities on the cultural significance of their natural assets
- Codes of conduct and ethics

Questions / Comments

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