

Political and institutional challenges for sustainable tourism in Curacao. Lessons for developing islands.

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Curacao

- NL-Antilles: 5 islands in the Caribbean Sea.
- part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands
- 130.000 inhabitants, 444 km²;
- GDP: 12.400 \$/capita/year
- Main tourism products: beach tourism, cruise-ship tourism, marine sports (diving); some forms of 'adventurous' nature-aggressive tourism emerging.



The emergence of the 1997 Sustainable Tourism Policy

- Pressure from environmental groups
- Lobby from Dutch policy stakeholders and ‘instrument drafting services’
- Political interest: often required by international lending organizations (IMF, WB)
- “Federal policy status” => **needs adoption as ‘Island Law’** (prerequisite implementation). Needs also adoption of other legal instrument (legislative vacuum) before most practical measures can be implemented.



Measures of the 1997 ST policy

- (1) An “Island Law” for sustainable tourism on Curaçao
- (2) Adequate Spatial Development legislation
- (3) Legislation for environmental permitting and EIAs
- (4) Legal frameworks for the protection of terrestrial nature and marine areas
- (5) Financial stimuli for tourism companies making environment-improving investments
- (6) Law with standard environmental requirements for hotels

No legal requirements on the local social-economic aspects!



Main findings on the failure to adopt the 6 legal instruments


Administrative actors: structural lack of initiative to design legislative proposals. Why?

- Low expectations that political actors will even discuss the proposal, given their historical preference for legislative vacuum
- Institutional-administrative obstacles:
 - unclear competence => no self acknowledged policy role; disagreements on the role of others;
 - shortage of human and financial resources, influencing:
 - fear of extra implementation tasks



Main findings on the failure to adopt the 6 legal instruments

Political actors did not demand legislative proposals from CTB and administrative actors because of:

- “Regional competition considerations”; perceptions that legislation sends investors in the arms of competing islands, leading to economic disaster
 - Track record “constraints”: “unjust for new investors”; “unfair competition with old investors”.
 - Tremendous lobbying power from tourism companies and prospective investors against sustainability legislation (with some accusations of corruption)
 - Lack of knowledge on the benefits of sustainability-enabling legislation
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Lessons for developing islands

How to move governments from playing a competitive prisoner dilemma game to playing a solidaristic game?

(Scharpf, 1997: 88 – Game Theory)

Developing country/island 1

		Implement	Not implement
Developing country/island 2	Implement	0, 0	3, -3
	Not implement	3, -3	0, 0 (*)

Competitive

		Implement	Not implement
Developing country/island 2	Implement	6, 6 (*)	0, 5
	Not implement	0, 5	0, 0

Solidaristic



Lessons for developing islands

How to enable a “solidaristic game”?

Scharpf: TRUST and INFORMATION

- communication on sustainability towards changing the perceptions of political actors
- strong political leadership engaged in trust building
- pressure from equally powerful international actors, such as sustainability-supportive lending and business organization and governments
- diversification of tourism products and facilities to reduce pressure from malicious investors



THANK YOU

