

# Sustainable Development of Resort Towns and Territories: On the Way to the Balance

E. Vidishcheva<sup>a</sup> and A. Kopyrin<sup>b</sup>

*Sochi State University, 94-1, Plastunskaya str., 354000, Sochi, Russia*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development, Resort Territory, Resort Town, Balance.

**Abstract:** The importance of resort territories development and sustainability is increasing in current conditions characterized by the rapid growth of tourism industry and inflating contradictions between the increasing tourists needs and the limited amount of recreational resources. The development of resorts and recreational territories is directly connected with such vital parameters as the resource potential and its ability to reproduce and replenish, life quality of local community, demand for territory resort product, and economic stability. These development components define the need for balance between constant desire to maximize the financial result and the preservation of recreational resources and social stability of the region. This issue is extremely relevant for territories with economic activity fully dependent on the availability and conditions of recreational resources.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Change-over to the development based on the sustainability principles puts the issue of socio-economic-ecological balance of territory development in the rank of the most significant ones. To achieve a high level of sustainability resort territories as integrated systems must meet all the criteria and have the ability to maintain the positive dynamics of socio-economic development in the long term. However, nowadays most of social, economic and environmental regulation instruments do not correlate with each other, which leads to an imbalance of targets and does not allow territories to achieve sustainable growth rates. This is especially true for resort territories and cities. The targets of the resort regions, such as an increase in the tourist flow, growth in the number of visits to recreational and cultural facilities, contribute positively to the development of the territory until the maximum permissible recreational load is reached. The balance point allowing resort regions to develop sustainably is located at the joint of economic and socio-ecological interests.

In the frames of this study sustainable development of resort territories and towns is

understood as the rational use of territorial resources in the long-term process of socio-economic development goals achieving. The concept of sustainable development of territorial subjects implies a balance of the key components of sustainability, and does not allow infringement of the social or environmental interests of society. However, the rapid growth of tourist traffic, as a key condition for the region economic prosperity, counteracts environmental sustainability, accompanied by the expansion of natural areas used for recreational and related purposes, exceeding the permissible recreational loads on the territory, natural objects and regional infrastructure.

The problems of sustainable development are a major focus of interest for many foreign and Russian researchers. Among the authors dealing with the resort territories development we can mention (Makarov, 2016; Atlmann and Aleksanyan; 2016; Ignatiev, 2018). The issues of getting a balance of interests in the sustainable development paradigm are highlighted in the works of Boyra, J. (2004), Saufi, A., Andilolo, I. R., Othman, N., Lew, A. A. (2017), Mihalic, T. (2020). But despite a large number of studies on the topic, and the priority of the change-over to the sustainable development at both country

<sup>a</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2653-453X>

<sup>b</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4289-6701>

and global levels, most territorial entities are still far from the state of sustainability.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The theoretical basis of the study is fundamental and applied works of Russian and foreign scientists in the field of territorial systems sustainable development theory, analysis and assessment of resort and recreational areas sustainability level. In the course of the study general scientific methods of research, such as classification, grouping and comparison, generalization and synthesis, were applied.

The aim of the study is to analyse the content of the resorts and recreational territories sustainable development concept in terms of the balance of the main components, as well as to develop a list of recommendations aimed at achieving a balance of social, economic and ecological components of resort areas and towns sustainable development.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the level of separate resort and recreational territories the strategic goal of development is to achieve sustainability as a state that allows to withstand the main challenges: resource depletion, uneven distribution and irregular consumption. Integral components of the sustainability of resort areas are tourist demand, socio-economic satisfaction of the local community, favorable environmental conditions, economic stability, as well as moderate anthropogenic and recreational load. In recent years, environmental issues, as the least regulated and most vulnerable, have been of the greatest interest. Environmental sustainability includes but not limited to the following development directions:

- Natural Resources management (conservation of bio-diversity, seawater quality control, wastewater treatment, improvement of resource efficiency of economic activities, preservation of forests and other natural and recreational resources);
- Waste and emissions management (control of emissions, improvement of the territory cleaning system, optimization of the disposal process taking into account the resort specifics of the region);
- Recreational impact management (regulation of the passing ability of protected areas and

tourist traffic in general, preservation of cultural and historical heritage).

The economic component of sustainability is determined by the effectiveness of the regional and municipal management system, as well as a number of external and internal factors. The components of economic sustainability include the tourist demand for the territory and satisfaction with the tourist product, the diversification of the regional economy, a favorable investment climate, the independence of the local budget, and others (Saufi and others, 2015). Economic sustainability is the guarantee of the local community well-being, and is directly related to social stability, since the subject of the final good receiving is a person in both cases.

Noting the diversity of approaches to the components of social sustainability, it is necessary to emphasize the versatility of this concept. In the concept of sustainable development of the Sochi resort city (Kontseptsiya, 2013), the social orientation contains, firstly, a healthy lifestyle of the population, stimulated by the availability of medicine, sports, as well as the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Secondly, a barrier-free, comfortable environment: social equality, opportunities for personal development. Third, this group includes elements of the society cultural development, in particular the preservation of cultural heritage and the development of culture as industry. In addition to the above, the social block of sustainable development includes such elements as infrastructure availability, the development of the transport system, increasing education level, modernization of the housing stock and other components of a high quality of life.

The presence of three parallel directions in the development of sustainability (economy, environment and society) often leads to distortions in one direction or the other. In an effort to preserve natural resources and protect them from anthropogenic impact, the economic component of the issue is sometimes omitted, as well as increasing tourist flows and maximizing profits people forget about the socio-environmental consequences. In general, sustainable development is a compromise of the members of today society to achieve their goals (conservation of resources, the natural environment, and the satisfaction of the community). The transition to the "rails" of sustainable development should be ensured through the joint efforts of all participants of territory economic activity. However, private interests (short-term profit) still prevail, which leads to the resources potential value reduction and limitation of the further and sustainable territory development capability. Thus, we have two parties

with almost opposite interests: one seeking short-term private advantage, the other holding the long-term public interest. This imbalance is clearly shown in Figure 1.

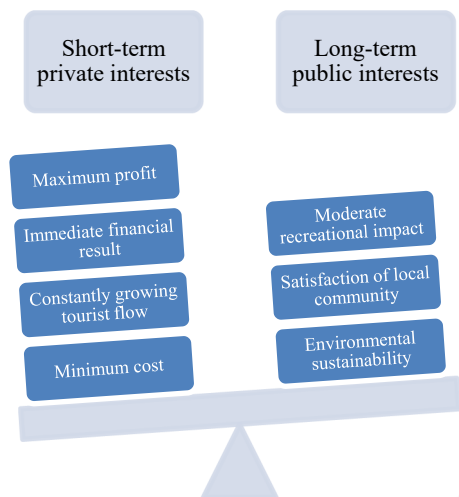


Figure 1. The imbalance of the resort territories development (compiled by the author)

Characteristic feature of tourism as the basis of the resort region economy is its duality and inconsistency. At the same time, it is a driving force for development, ensuring the improvement of socio-economic conditions, and it has a huge negative impact on natural resources as the basis of the recreational product of the territory. Therefore, environmental and resource-saving activities are mandatory policy directions of a territorial entity that strives for sustainability. The absence of a positive effect on the environmental component as a result of the realization of the potential of the territory can be balanced either by distributing the result of the economic component (compensation and recovery approach), or by introducing and continuously operating a system of recreational rationing (preventive approach). Figure 2 demonstrates the impact of resort and recreational activities on the main components of sustainability, as described above.

Balance in the concept of sustainability implies taking into account the interests of all participants and stakeholders. For resort areas, these are the local population, business, investors, tourists (consumers of the territory product) and the territory itself as a set of natural resource potential. The intersection of interests is a natural result of the development of the components of a single complex system-the territory. That is why when we talk about sustainable development, we talk about trade-offs. Unjustified deviation from the principles of rationality, or

ignoring certain aspects of development in the process of life activity of the resort territory threatens the achievement of sustainability state.

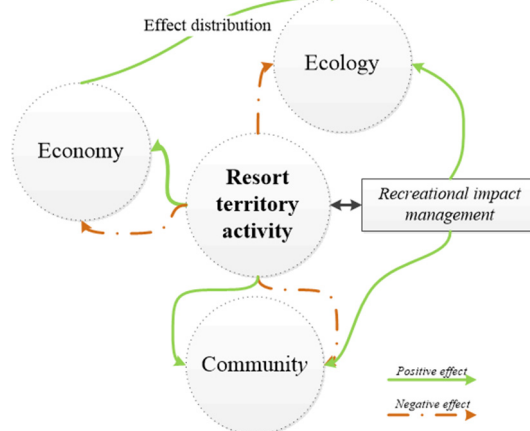


Figure 2. The influence of the resort specialization of the territory on the components of sustainability, the redistribution of the effect (compiled by the author)

A striking example of the unbalanced development of resort regions is the emergence of such concepts as "overtourism" and "irresponsible tourism" (Mihalic, 2020; Milano and others, 2019). Both terms refer to a situation characterized by a lack of balance between the social, economic, and environmental components of sustainability. They appeared due to the priority of tourism development (the economic component) and the lack of equivalent dynamics in the field of environmental protection and social development.

The following consequences of such an imbalance were noted in the resort regions in recent years:

- degradation of life quality as a result of unacceptable price increase in the region;
- increased tension between residents and guests of the resorts;
- alienation of the local community, expressed in protests and street actions;
- environmental damage to natural and cultural attractions;
- overloading of transport and tourist infrastructure, etc. (Ignatiev, 2018).

The list of destinations that have experienced these phenomena includes Barcelona, Amsterdam, Hanoi, Venice, Milan, Mexico City, Budapest, etc. (Angina, 2018). The opposite example of disproportionate development is undertourism, which is an insufficient realization of the resort potential. In this situation, environmental concerns are minimal, but this is not due to the rational exploitation of the resource potential and the nature restoration policy,

the root cause lies in the lack of recreational load. Here we are talking about a low level of tourist demand, which makes it impossible to have a positive trend in the socio-economic sphere. It follows from the above that the lack of balanced territorial development is an obstacle for resort cities on the way to a state of sustainability, since the concept of sustainable development is based on the equivalence of all components.

Foreign experience shows that on the way to a sustainable development, it is necessary to consolidate the efforts of all participants of the economic activity of the territory. The search for a balance between the socio-economic and environmental goals of the development of the resort region should consist in rationing the recreational load, targeted support for the least developed areas and continuous monitoring of the inter-component balancing.

The existing system of the tourist and recreational complex functioning is far from the principles of sustainable development, and requires serious financial and time investments to meet the requirements of reality. The way to balanced development, based on consideration of the interests of all participants, begins with overcoming a number of barriers that prevent achieving the desired balance:

- Structural and organizational barriers: a huge number of actors and intermediaries involved in the implementation of the resort potential of the territory complicates the implementation of a system of orderly tourism;
- Legislative barriers: lack of a regulatory framework for the use of recreational load management tools (many natural and cultural heritage sites are not protected from the negative impact of continuous tourist flows due to the lack of a legal basis for such protection: load rationing). This group also includes the lack of leverage on individuals who promote their interests to the detriment of public interests;
- Technological barriers: low level of "green" technologies development in the region;
- Financial barriers: traditional problems related to the distribution and lack of financial resources, as well as a limited number of funding sources, force territories to implement a policy of selective development based on the principle of the highest priority;
- Cognitive barriers: difficulties caused by the human factor, ignorance or lack of understanding of the harm caused, as well as cultural and social differences, for example,

foundation of luxury resort in a region with a low life quality (Boyra, 2004).

The most of the presented barriers based on the weak controllability of the process of tourist product realization. A number of foreign resorts face irreversible processes of recreational potential depletion as a result of the direction of both public and private efforts exclusively on stimulation of the tourist flow and economic development without enter into the needs of other parties to the process. Resort activity and the associated use of the recreational potential of the territory are concentrated in the hands of private individuals focused on promotion of their own interests. This fact allows us to conclude that a public-private partnership is a necessary tool for achieving a balance and sustainable development of territory.

After studying the sustainability component composition, and justifying the need for its balance, it is possible to form a number of recommendations aimed at achieving a balance of interests, as an integral stage on the way to sustainable development of the territory:

- Cooperation with the local population in determining development priorities: an opportunity to be heard for each subject of the resort area.
- Preliminary assessment of the socio-economic and environmental consequences of all steps of the regional development plan.
- Ensuring a flexible and open system of territorial development. Flexibility implies the possibility of making adjustments during the implementation of program activities depending on the current conditions. Openness, or clarity, provides a correct perception of all parties of the process (what we do and why).

Development of tourist culture and promotion of careful attitude to the territory. The source of the negative reaction of the local communities is often the inappropriate behavior of resort guests, disrespect for local culture, vandalism and consumer attitude to recreational resources.

Rationing the recreational load and minimizing the negative impact on urban infrastructure and the environment. In order to avoid an imbalance with the environmental components of sustainability, it is necessary to monitor the perfect compliance with environmental legislation, as well as to maintain the preservation and enhancement of natural wealth for present and future generations.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The development of resort territories and cities is accompanied by a constant balancing on the intersection edge of the business, environment, and local community and tourists interests. It requires detailed study while implementation of strategic measures and functioning of the resort complex as a whole. Recreational resources, unfortunately, are traditionally perceived as a tool for attracting financial flows that do not require returns or fees for using it. In addition to performing its attractive function, the nature and environment form an important component of the social good by being a part of such concept as life quality.

The study presents an analysis of the content of resort territory sustainable development concept in terms of the main components balance. The current imbalance of these components (ecology, economy, society) is a serious obstacle to the territory sustainable development. The presence of three parallel directions often leads to distortions in one direction or the other. The main reason for the existing imbalance, identified as a result of the study, is the predominance of short-term private interests over the long-term interests of society. While a balance implies taking into account the interests of all participants and stakeholders.

In addition, ecology as a component of sustainability is distinguished by the fact that its development cannot be achieved due to the multiplicative effect of the positive dynamics of other elements (which can be observed between the social and economic components). It follows that the management of recreational load, environment protection measures, as well as effective waste management are mandatory conditions for environmental sustainability.

The danger of an imbalance of interests is proved by the examples of consequences that take place on the territory of foreign resort regions. It should be noted that most of them are provoked by the priority of the tourism industry development and the lack of equivalent dynamics in the field of environmental protection and social development of the local community. The study also systematized the barriers that stand on the way of achieving the necessary balance. At the same time, it is noted that most of them are based on the weak controllability of the process of the tourist product realization. To overcome the above barriers, it is advisable to follow the proposed recommendations. The most significant of them is the need to regulate the recreational load on the territory. The analysis also made it possible to

conclude that a public-private partnership is a necessary tool for achieving a balance and sustainable development of territory.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The reported study was funded by RFBR and Krasnodar region according to the research project № 19-410-230049

## REFERENCES

- Angina, E.V. (2018). Sverkhтуризм: ponyatiye, problemy, primery. *Materialy VI Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii*, pages 4-7. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=32761200>
- Atlmann, G., Aleksanyan, G.P. (2016). Sustainability in tourism problems and some basic directions of sustainable tourism management. *Uchenyye zapiski Yerevanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 2, pages 59-67. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327466638\\_sustainability\\_in\\_tourism\\_problems\\_and\\_some\\_basic\\_directions\\_of\\_sustainable\\_tourism\\_management](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327466638_sustainability_in_tourism_problems_and_some_basic_directions_of_sustainable_tourism_management)
- Boyra, J., (2004). Tourist destinations and sustainable tourism development facing the challenge. *Materials of conference XIII Symposium Internacional De Turismo Y Ocio. Barcelona*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331732112\\_tourist\\_destinations\\_and\\_sustainable\\_tourism\\_development\\_facing\\_the\\_challenge](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331732112_tourist_destinations_and_sustainable_tourism_development_facing_the_challenge)
- Ignatiev, A.A., (2018). Ustoychivoye razvitiye i turizm. *Mirovoye i natsional'noye khozyaystvo*, 4(46). <https://mirec.mgimo.ru/upload/ckeditor/files/ustojchivoe-razvitiye-i-turizm.pdf>
- Makarov, M.U. (2016). Postroyeniye modeli ustoychivogo razvitiya turistskikh territoriy (na primere Krasnodarskogo kraya). <https://search.rsl.ru/ru/record/01006652959>
- Mihalic, T. (2020). Conceptualising overtourism: A sustainability approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*. Volume 84. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160738320301699>
- Milano, C., Cheer, J. M., & Novelli, M. (2019). Overtourism: an evolving phenomenon. In *Overtourism: excesses, discontents and measures in travel and tourism*, Abingdon: CABI, pages. 1-17. [https://www.academia.edu/40478986/Introduction\\_Overtourism\\_An\\_Evolving\\_Phenomenon](https://www.academia.edu/40478986/Introduction_Overtourism_An_Evolving_Phenomenon)
- Oborin, M.S. (2016). Ustoychivoye razvitiye kurortno-rekreatsiyonnogo kompleksa Rossii. *Uchenyye zapiski Krymskogo federal'nogo universiteta imeni V. I. Vernadskiy. Ekonomika i upravleniye*, Vol. 2 (68). No. 1. pages 133-142. URL:

- <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ustoychivoe-razvitiie-kurortno-rekreatsionnogo-kompleksa-rossii>
- Saufi A., Andilolo, I.R., Othman N., Lew A.A. (2015). Balancing Development and Sustainability in Tourism Destinations. *Proceedings of the Tourism Outlook Conference*.  
<https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9789811017162>
- Kontseptsiya ustoychivogo razvitiya goroda Sochi do 2030 goda. (2013). Departamenta razvitiya transportnoy infrastruktury OOO «Finansovyy i organizatsionnyy konsalting».  
<https://sochi.ru/upload/iblock/aaa/aaa984be6c24cb8cae072fb8f3dbc4.pdf>
- Sustainable development of tourism destinations. *Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation Secretariat, APEC project TWG*, 03:11A, page 77.  
<https://www.apec.org/-/media/APEC/Publications/2014/3/Sustainable-Development-of-Tourism-Destinations/APEC-Sustainable-Development-Tourism-Destinations.pdf>

