A Sustainable (Culture Protecting) Tourism Indicator for Cultural and Environmental Heritage Tourism Initiatives

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Abstract: This article restores the international community’s goals for cultural sustainability and cultural protections in the context of tourism where it has been replaced by a concept of “sustainable tourism” that promotes exploitation of cultural resources but does little to protect and promote cultures and their environments. The article offers an indicator for screening government initiatives in cultural and environmental heritage tourism to assure that they meet the standards that are part of a global consensus in international laws and declarations. It offers a test of New Zealand Aid’s Tourism Project in Laos as an example of how the indicator can be used to expose failures in this field.

Keywords: Tourism, Sustainability, Cultural Heritage, Environment

Introduction

There is a fundamental paradox at the heart of international tourism and efforts to protect it through “sustainable tourism” initiatives. While the attraction of international tourism is the value placed on cultural and environmental differences that are recognized and protected by a long list of international laws and treaties, the actual impacts of tourism, globalization and “growth” are to destroy cultural diversity and environments. While international organizations have created sets of standards and protections for “sustainable tourism”, the impact of these recommendations has been negligible.

Placed together, the facts are startling.

- Statistics suggest that one tenth of global GDP now comes from tourism and roughly the same amount of the global labor force (9%) works in tourism (Sharpley 2009, p.4).
- At the same time that there is interest in global heritage and environment, the disappearance of cultural and environmental diversity is occurring at unprecedented rates. Of 6,000 remaining human cultures (down from some 15,000), 90% of them are endangered and likely to disappear within the century (Krauss 1992) with some 60-70 percent now immediately “endangered” (UNESCO 2003).

The underlying cause of the problem seems to be the ideology and approach to “sustainable tourism” and the lack of any clear accountability that may have long roots in contemporary industrialization, modernization and globalization. During the period of Nazi rule in Germany, for example, the Germans began to collect artifacts for a museum that the Germans could visit to enjoy those aspects of these cultures that they chose to protect and highlight while they were destroying those very cultures. There are many similar examples today, though they often seem to be invisible because they are happening much more slowly and on small scale.

While it would be impolite to point the finger at any particular “sustainable tourism” or “heritage tourism” projects today and to suggest that their approaches of highlighting and protecting those aspects of cultures that they could politically and commercially exploit, while simultaneously destroying the essence of those cultures, could be compared to Nazi policies of extermination of peoples, there is often a similar impact and philosophy with regard to the extermination of cultures.

As scholars have described contemporary modernization, its fundamental ethos is that it “annihilates everything that it creates – physical environments, social institutions, metaphysical ideas, artistic visions, moral values – in order to create more, to go on endlessly creating the world anew” (Berman 1982, p. 288).

Despite international laws on genocide that are designed not only to protect peoples but also to maintain their cultures, followed by several international agreements on “sustainable development” and on various cultural, social and political rights, international approaches to “sustainable tourism” have yet to incorporate existing international laws for the protection of cultures.
Tourism projects today seem to incorporate a similar ideology. The view of the U.N.’s World Tourism Organization, that offers principles supposedly to protect cultural heritage and environment in the conduct of “sustainable tourism” has made it clear that its real goal for tourism is to use it as part of an ideology of homogenization.

World tourism can contribute to the establishment of a new international economic order that will help eliminate the widening economic gap between developed and developing countries and ensure the steady acceleration of economic and social development and progress, in particular in developing countries that comes from such leveling and homogenization (WTO 1980, cited in Sharpley 2009, p. 4).

The purpose of this article is to resurrect the principles of cultural and environmental protection for survival and sustainability that are embedded in international legal documents and to place them squarely within a framework of tourism in order to eliminate the confusion that has occurred with the ideology of globalization, growth, and corporatism championing tourist profits over international law.

Previously, this author has offered several indicators to measure whether international donors, governments, and non-governmental organizations are meeting their obligations in international law and to professional standards in several of the most basic areas of development like sustainability (Lempert and Nguyen 2008), sovereignty/ freedom from dependency (Lempert 2009), democracy (Lempert 2011a), poverty alleviation (Lempert 2015a), and business promotion interventions (Lempert 2012), as well as development (Lempert 2014), itself, as part of an effort to establish accountability where little or none exists.

This article adds to that series by focusing on government interventions in the area of cultural and/or environmental heritage tourism, to assure that their approach to “sustainability” is not one that promotes sustainable profits at the expense of cultural survival, but one that fits within the context of human cultural and environmental sustainability.
The article begins with a discussion of the debates over the meanings of “sustainable tourism” and then offers the standards for “sustainability” that exist under international law and agreements that essentially resolve the academic debate. The article then shows how international standards, including those of the U.N. system, fail to actually incorporate the international consensus on sustainability and international laws on protections and replace it instead with a weak, ambiguous and voluntary standard. The harms of this lack of clarity and enforcement are clear in the form of several types of international violations that disregard cultures and sustainability for short-term sustainability of business profits.

The article then presents an indicator that incorporates the international laws and standards and tests it on several government interventions in the area of tourism. The piece also shows in detail how a specific international donor project, supported by New Zealand Aid, in Laos, a country where tourism accounts for some 5% of the country’s earnings, can be scored. Recognizing that the international standard has become co-opted by short-term agendas, the piece then offers some thoughts on returning to the international standard.

Background: Concepts of Sustainable Tourism and the Failure to Incorporate International Legal Agreements on Sustainability and Protection

There is no shortage of “principles” and advice for tourism operations, nor is there an absence of debate. For decades, the international community has recognized the conflicts of interest between tourism profits and the protection of environments, cultures and sustainability, much as with any other kind of economic activity that has consumed and destroyed long-term assets for the purpose of short-term benefits for a few (Jamal, Camargo and Wilson 2013). The debate, itself, may have contributed to the problem given that lists of standards are presented without any clarity of priorities, implementation and enforcement, while the actual international legal consensus that does offer a basis for clarity and protection has largely been disregarded, even in the standard setting of development agencies that claim to recognize the needs (USAID 2005).

Recognition of the conflicts between short-term tourism profits and long-term protections date back at least forty years and have been echoed in works
continuing over that time (Young 1973; Croall 1995; Brown 1998). Calls for “sustainable tourism” standards began to increase more than two decades ago and various bodies began to offer lists and statements of protective concerns (Cronin 1990; Hunter 1995). Yet, both governmental action and the academic literature (partly reflecting the conflicts of interest with the tourism profession that the academics serve), have contributed to the confusion in the concept of “sustainable tourism” that failed to prioritize “sustainability of cultures and their environments” over “sustainable profit streams for business actors” exploiting the environments and assets of those cultures (Moforth and Munt 1998; Wheeler 1991; Berno and Bricker 2001; Liu 2003).

As an observer notes bluntly, “despite the rhetoric of sustainable tourism, international tourism has continued to grow with little, if any, evidence of adherence to the principles of sustainable development, whether from the perspective of tourist consumer behaviour, business practice within the tourism sector or tourism planning and development at the destination or national level” (Sharpley 2009, p.8).

The Current Confused International Standards of “Sustainable Tourism”

The principles of “sustainable tourism” are not difficult to identify and can be found in every textbook. The problem is that they are increasingly long and unintegrated lists, without priorities, direction or accountability. In offering these lists, various organizations like the United Nations (including UNESCO, and the UN’s World Tourism Organization, “WTO”), development banks (including the World Bank in its “Physical Cultural Resources Safeguards Policy”), and aid agencies simply offer lip services to guidelines that are unenforced and to which no one is held accountable.

Classic textbooks in the field of contemporary tourism all offer the various “principles” of tourism, but in discrete and unlinked chapters. Typical is one of the recent leading texts that offers a chapter on the “Economic Impact of Tourism”, the “Environmental Impact of Tourism”, the “Socio-cultural Impact of Tourism” and “Sustainable Tourism”, in that order (Fletcher et al. 2013).

The main set of principles in the field is the set that has been established by the World Tourism Organization, now ostensibly with the involvement of the United Nations and the international community of “aid” agencies, non-
governmental organizations, and businesses. This WTO (or “UNWTO”) has been the source of the problem under the pretext of offering a solution. Rather than relying on international laws and standards as its references and setting priorities, it has established a shopping list of competing concerns that are impossible to implement or define. In seeking to accommodate competing, conflicting interests, it offers principles in which everyone seems to be included but no one and nothing are protected or held accountable. The organization’s statement of its principles is a perfect mirror of this confusion and inability or unwillingness to establish any priorities or enforcement: “Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability” (UNWTO 1999).

In fact, the UNWTO’s lack of clarity has essentially opened the door for private companies offering “standards certification” to profit from the confusion by helping companies to promote themselves as following best practices. As an example, one of these companies offering its services on the Internet and naming itself as an organization “for Sustainable Development”, describes the UNWTO’s approach as a “gold triangle of sustainability tourism” in a way that Ironically highlights the very confusion it exploits for profit. In its crystallization of the UNWTO principles, sustainable tourism should:

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation (PM4SD: Project Management for Sustainable Development 2016).

There is no explanation of how (or whether) long-term economic operations “providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed” can be reconciled with resource and cultural protection or how any
of these are even defined. And the very language used here of “optimal use of environmental resources” and “respect [for] the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities” seems to undermine the very ideas of environmental and cultural sustainability.

Like many recent treaties, the problems in the WTO Convention are that it offers an unenforceable wish list of goals that are contradictory and unenforceable. The U.N. system seems to have created the problem earlier, dating back at least to 1972 when UNESCO’s Convention Concerning Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) essentially undermined the existing post-World War II consensus on protections and rights that dated back to 1948. Even though there are already clear standards of cultural protection and survival in the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), that are legally enforceable, and in several rights treaties and declarations that have followed, the UNESCO Convention and then the UNWTO agreements, in step, seems oblivious of the law and offered something much weaker in its place.

Article V of the UNESCO Convention, for example, calls only on countries to “endeavor, in so far as possible and as appropriate for each country” (whatever that means, and with no one to define it or enforce it) “to adopt a general policy” (not a clear, enforceable, legally binding one) “which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community” (rather than to be part of the basic survival of the community, essential if a country is to implement the Genocide Convention) “and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes” (whatever that means) (UNESCO 1972). UNESCO laughingly claims that such steps would “ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage” (UNESCO 1972).

In offering its “Global Code for Ethics for Tourism”, the UNWTO essentially obliterated any legal commitments at all and simply replaced them with voluntary “ethics” in 1999 (UNWTO 1999). Among these 10 contradictory principles are those that protect the exploitation (Article 9: Rights of the Workers and Entrepreneurs in the Tourist Industry) and promote it (Article 7: Right to tourism; Article 5: Tourism, a beneficial Activity for Host Countries and Communities) as well as propagandize it as part of development based on growth (Article 3: Tourism, a Factor of Sustainable Development). Its
statement of goals includes the promotion of peace (Article 1: Tourism’s Contribution to Mutual Understanding and Respect) and of cultural heritage (Article 3), but without clear protection of cultural survival even while noting the importance of heritage and environmental protection (Sections 1.5, 3.4, 4.1, and 5.4).

Rather than establish mechanisms for greater accountability and prioritization, the establishment of these voluntary standards has simply opened the door to a proliferation of micro-measures in increasingly growing lists of ineffectual oversight. As of 2007, the UNWTO combined with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and some 30+ organizations to form the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and to update its list that is now the “Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria” (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2007). Both the wish lists of factors and the sheets of standards are now proliferating. Now there is a UNWTO hotel and tourism operator index offering voluntary standards for responsible tourist businesses as well as a “Destination Criteria” list for “tourism destination management” (GSTC-D).

In creating its new lists, the UNWTO reports that it analyzed some 60 sets of voluntary criteria and certifications that had generated some 4,500 criteria in the field! What it has come up with are shopping lists for bureaucrats that generate increasing potential for work in some 37 categories, but without any actual standards or prioritization. The GSTC-D, for example, is a bureaucrat’s dream of administrative work without accountability, calling for things like “a multi-year destination strategy ... developed with public participation” (Section A-1), “an effective organization, department, group or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism” (Section A-2), “a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond” (Section A-3), a “system to identify risks and opportunities associated with Climate Change” (Section A-5) and so on, for a seemingly infinite list of undefined investigations into intangible feelings like “Visitor Satisfaction” (Section A-10), “Tourism Awareness and Education” (Section B-6), and “Support for Community” (Section B-8) (UNWTO 2013).

The new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers a continuing example of the proliferation of agreements that obscure and undermine (if not ridicule) the earlier international consensus on “sustainability” of cultures and of the planet while actually promoting the very
“growth” that destroys cultures, heritage and the environment in the name of promoting it (Lempert 2016 unpublished).

While the global “development banks”, much like the UN system and the government donors and NGOs who have aligned their “development” approaches with that of the U.N., have yet to do anything resembling “sustainable development” and continue to promote an approach to “growth” that undermines cultures and resources (Lempert and Nguyen 2008, 2011; Lempert 2014), these financial institutions also offer unenforceable policies and principles for “safeguards” to suggest that they have a commitment to protection.

In Vientiane, Laos, for example, the former capital city of the Lao “Lan Xang” empire, the World Bank itself is currently completing construction of its new offices on the very site of the Lao King’s main pagoda, the Wat Klang (Central Temple) where there were still foundational remains. As head of a small NGO in the country for heritage protection, the author contacted the World Bank to ask about its plans to coordinate its construction with protection of the foundations so that they could be viewed by tourists and visited as part of a protection of Lao culture. Rather than apply its “avoidance” and “mitigation” policies as written, the response of the Bank was to simply send a copy of its Physical Cultural Resources Safeguards Policy (World Bank 2009), whose provisions were disregarded, and to begin investigations of any organizations and individuals who sought to raise concerns and stand in its way.

The policies are nicely worded and follow a line of published studies for protection of “human made and natural” resources over some two decades (World Bank 1999; Serageldin and Martin-Brown 1999; Goodland and Webb 1989; McKercher and Du Cros 2002; Hardesty and Little 2000).

Like the UNWTO standards, the Bank standards call for consideration of several factors at several stages as well as full consultations with communities, but with all of this at the voluntary discretion of the World Bank, itself, and of self-interested borrower government leaders, with no legal accountability to international law or to those communities that are affected. Where governments do not protect their own cultures or traditions for whatever reason (often it is because the ideology of the global banks and development itself seeks to destroy identity in order to free resources and peoples for exploitation) (Frank,
Cochroft and Johnson 1972; Wallerstein 1979; Berman 1982; Lempert and Nguyen 2011) or actively seek to destroy traces of competing cultures that they may have destroyed or whom they dominate, the standards and protections they offer are essentially meaningless public relations designed only to protect the Bank and the officials of borrower governments.

These policies call for detailed documentation and determination of cultural significance within the context of cultural sustainability and survival including physical and cultural context (World Bank 2009, p. 14, p.36, p.55, p.77) rather than economic valuation and consideration of various implications of making information on the site known including theft, damage through visitation, and abandonment.

**International Standards**

While the UNWTO, UNESCO, the U.N. system in general, the international development banks, and most donors fail to acknowledge international laws and agreements on cultural protections, sustainable development, and political and social rights relating to culture and environment that are effected by tourism, the international legal consensus is relatively clear and establishes priorities, a framework, and an opportunity for clearly defining and creating accountability of tourism. The U.N. Genocide Treaty, that is legally enforceable, the basic declarations on rights that reflect the global consensus and that are partly enforced through the Rome Statutes of the International Criminal Court (1998), and other basic agreements on sustainability are all relatively clear. While recent international agreements seek to replace and undermine them with a pro-business, pro-growth ideology that creates confusion, this is the same ideology that led to World War II and to the international agreements that sought to prevent it from happening again (Lempert 2014, 2015b).

Although the principles of international law can be viewed as a single framework of cultural protection, sustainability, and of rights, designed to protect global peace and security, they can essentially be seen in three categories: 1) the protection of cultures, human cultural diversity and sustainability through international law; 2) the promotion and development of culture through individual human rights to one’s culture that are protected in international rights declarations; and 3) the promotion of individual activities and change, allowing for cultures to evolve and for innovation, including new productive
and commercial activities, as long as these are consistent with protections of culture and environment. These partly overlap, but can be seen in turn in the form of various international legal documents.

1) The protection of cultures, human cultural diversity and sustainability through international law.

There are a number of international legal documents aimed directly at the protection of cultures, starting from the Genocide Convention in 1948 and including recent declarations on sustainability and on rights of indigenous peoples.

The U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, (U.N. General Assembly, December 9, 1948) is summarized relatively quickly in one sentence, in Article II, of the law with other articles describing where the law applies and to whom it applies. It is a crime of “destruction” “in whole or in part” of a group.

Article I: The contracting parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or war is a crime under international law.

Article II. In the present convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part …

Article III. The following acts shall be punishable:

(c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide.

(e) Complicity in genocide.

Article IV. [punishment includes] public officials or private individuals.
What has never been absolutely clear here is the definition of partial destruction of a group. Thus far, only actual killings have been prosecuted as genocide. Yet it is very clear from the law that there is no use of the word “death,” “homicide,” “killing” or “murder” that would limit genocide to only these things. By the principles of statutory analysis, had these limitations been intended, they would have been included. Any disruption or denigration of a culture, its integral heritage, and its environment and way of life would constitute participation in the destruction of a culture. In other words, simply protecting heritage and environment and traditions are not just a secondary concern in promoting tourism. Not being active to protect full cultural integrity is a violation of international law.

Historical analysis of this law confirms that it was also intended to criminalize a much broader set of harms than those resulting in “death.” Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word “genocide” and authored the law, believed it should be used to criminalize much more than murder and that it would protect the integrity of cultures in all of its dimensions. He wrote:

Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is stated more recently than the Genocide Convention but its principles were already put to practice in the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals immediately after World War II. The statute defines crimes against humanity as acts which:
are positively odious offences in that they constitute a serious attack on human dignity or grave humiliation or degradation of one or more human beings. They are not isolated or sporadic events but are ... part of widespread or systematic practices (Rome Statute, ICC 1998).

The Statute does not clearly define what these harms might be other than that they be systematic and serious, but certainly the loss of the key attributes of a culture and its environment is part of a systematic policy. The disappearance of a culture and its integrity in an environment is an attack on its dignity and a "degradation". This statute does seem to be directed against the activities of a group promoting a specific ideology that leads to specific harms.

The importance of the United Nations Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), is that it offers one of the first definitions of international consensus on "sustainability" and cultural survival that can be enforceable in combination with the Genocide Convention and the Rome Statutes. The Declaration introduces the scientific formula that defines what keeps a culture sustainable: the "IPAT" equation that requires a balance of population (demographic policies), consumption and production/technology on a specific asset base. The Declaration encapsulates this idea in two principles:

Principle 3. ... to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Principle 8. To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.

One of the attempts to water down these principles and to incorporate the agenda for "growth", assimilation, and cultural destruction in the name of preservation, appears in the International Labour Organization’s Convention 169 (1989) that is named the “Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention”. While several parts of this Convention mention the “rights” of peoples, including the political right to “decide their own priorities for the process of development” (Article 7, p.1), it essentially has a subtext to promote growth policies that undermine these “rights” to sustainability. The Convention
calls for “priority in plans for the overall economic development” on “levels of health and education” (Article 7, p.2) with the mandate that “they shall participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development” (Article 7, p.1). Rather than call for absolute protection of the key economic, social and political aspects of their cultural integrity, as suggested by the Genocide Convention, it calls on government only “whenever appropriate” to ensure that traditional cultural economies “are strengthened and protected” (Article 23, p.1) and only to provide assistance “whenever possible” to provide assistance that takes “into account the traditional technologies and cultural characteristics of these peoples, as well as the importance of sustainable and equitable development”, with the blurring of “sustainability” and “equity” (homogenization through forced economic standards) (Article 23, p.2). Protection of the environment is mandated but with no legal sanctions (Article 7, p.4).

It is for this reason that the UN Development Programme, in connection with foreign governments, has used this treaty to create “zoo projects” with indigenous peoples as performers for tourists and handicraft producers as their determined economic livelihood, as in the case of Namibia (Lempert 2011b).

The U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007, nearly two decades after ILO 169, goes back to creating clearer definitions of the rights of Indigenous Peoples for protecting the sustainability and survivability of their cultures, reinforcing the meaning of the Genocide Convention. Among the clear statements are the following articles.

Article 5. Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions.

Article 7. Indigenous Peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide.

Article 8. 1. Indigenous Peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
2. Redress for .... a) any action which has the aim of depriving them of their integrity as a distinct people or of their cultural values or ethnic identities. d) any form of forced assimilation or integration.

Article 9. Indigenous Peoples .... Traditions and customs of their community or nation.

Article 11. 1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain and protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures.

Article 12. 1 Indigenous Peoples have the right to use and control of their ceremonial objects.

Article 13. Indigenous Peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations ....

Article 20. 1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems and institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

2. Indigenous Peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.

Article 23. Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to be developed.

Article 32. 2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain the free and informed consent prior to approval of any project affecting their lands or territories or other resources.
2. The promotion and development of culture through individual human rights to one's culture that are protected in international rights declarations.

In addition to the laws and treaties identifying and protecting the rights of cultures to sustainability, in ways that encompass the full range of cultural and environmental heritage and that are clearly actionable within the context of tourism, there is also a line of human rights treaties that place these rights at the levels of individuals. While the basic set of rights is established in a set of treaties starting with the International Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and followed by various Covenants for Civil and Political Rights (1966), and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the rights to culture and information that are affected by tourism and uses of cultural and environmental heritage are clearly encapsulated in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) that has been almost universally adopted.

The CRC places rights to culture, environment, and full knowledge about them in a series of articles:

Article 13. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression [and] freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers.

Article 17. States Parties ... shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health ... of social and cultural benefit to the child and ... from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources.

Article 28. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for ... the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, ... and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.
3) The promotion of individual activities and change, allowing for cultures to evolve and for innovation, including new productive and commercial activities, as long as these are consistent with protections of culture and environment.

All of the above documents, while focusing on protection and promotion of cultures and sustainability, also protect the freedoms of cultures to change and of individuals to engage in activities like tourism. The guiding principle is not promotion of profit or of economic benefit, since cultures are free to choose their own levels of consumption and integration with their environments, allowing them to be sustainable without “growth”. The goal is to make sure that any innovations are integrated with the values of the culture and supportive of it.

Lack of Solutions: The Weaknesses of Current International Indicators

Although one source claims that there are now at least some 60 different sets of indicators and certifications for “sustainable tourism”, there seems to be a complete disconnect between the definitions and goals of international law for cultural protections and cultural sustainability and those of tourism (i.e., sustainable revenues) (PM4ESD 2016). Rather than focus on the accountability of international organizations, governments, and non-governmental organizations working with governments in the area of tourism, to assure compliance with international laws and goals, all of these indicators seem to be voluntary, unenforceable measures placed on businesses, with the goals of protections only an afterthought second to exploitation and commoditization of cultural and environmental heritage for profit.

Rather than offer rating systems for screening the actions of international and government agencies that are supposed to regulate tourism, international organizations simply offer lists of these voluntary standards in multiple areas for businesses to consider, themselves. This essentially eliminates government responsibilities for asset management, planning, regulation and enforcement and replaces it with self-policing by the perpetrators of harms to cultures and their environments, in a voluntary, unsystematic way. This shift of all power in the area of heritage protection to tourism companies (often connected to government officials who create concessions on access to cultural and environmental heritage) and “public private partnerships”,
replaces government responsibility with “codes of responsibility” that are essentially designed as codes of global irresponsibility.

In outlining the most widely used framework of these measures, the UNWTO identified “areas of concern” that gave rise to this explosion of commercial measures (Manning 2004). It created a set of categories like “Capturing economic benefits, sustaining the tourist product” along with “Destination planning ... controlling tourist activities, managing quality” and protections. Within these categories are measures that have little real use in accountability, protection or planning, such as “Maintaining local satisfaction (% who agree that tourism is positive for community)” and “Maintaining cultural assets” which is not measured by viability/sustainability of a culture but instead by “(% of tourist revenues which go to maintain or conserve key sites and structures)” (Manning 2004).

Among similar approaches, starting with the same blinders, are those considered relevant to the European Union (a subset of the UNWTO categories, developed by the European Commission’s Tourist Sustainability Group) along with its QUALITEST scheme that evaluates the “quality performance of tourist destinations” rather than its actual impacts in accordance with international law, and its ECOLABEL voluntary certification for “environmentally friendly tourist accommodations” that is essentially an environmental impact assessment indicator applied to tourism.

Some observers have sought to collect and compare these various leading indicators, noting that few of them actually seek to assess “sustainable tourism” (only two of eleven) or can really be considered unique to tourism (four of eleven) and something other than just standard impact assessments applied to tourism (White, McCrum, Blackstock and Scott, Macaulay Institute 2006). Most of these are similar to the UNWTO, offering lists of unrelated concerns like “Visitor Satisfaction” (measured by perceptions) and “Tourism enterprise performance and satisfaction” (measured by occupancy rates, visitor numbers and profits). This also characterizes the first “sustainable tourism” indicator to be applied by businesses, “Green Globe21” that included everything from energy consumption and solid wastes to biodiversity assessments (Sherlock 2001).
How Government Tourism Initiatives Fail

In the absence of adherence to international law and professionalism for the protection of cultural and environmental heritage as the primary goals of any international intervention, with tourism only a means to the ends of sustainability and not the ends in itself, it is not difficult to imagine the result of most tourism projects today, even under the name of “sustainability”. They lead to cultural genocide, environmental destruction and exploitation in any number of the unofficially sanctioned forms that are promoted today in the international system under the guise of “development” and “poverty reduction”. While weaker cultures and their environments remain at the mercy of powerful countries and their economic interests today, in extracting their physical resources (U.N. Report 2013), so, too, are their cultural treasures at risk of pillage and their labor at risk of exploitation. This form of colonialism is not new and it has long been reported (Monbiot 1994).

In some countries, the initial stages of “tourism” opening up to outsiders is simply the commoditization of cultures, their treasures and their environments, with the granting of concessions of public space for private exploitation, carving it up (including the territories of minority peoples where they reside) and renting it out. Areas are cut up into “destinations”, with outside investors building hotels and restaurants over the existing history to exploit it while it lasts. This “tourism” means “selling tours” and building access roads to it without any respect, consideration, or understanding of what it is. It is simply something to be extracted.

Among the various iterations of this exploitation are the following:

- “Zoo projects” like those now of the ILO and Spain (Lempert 2011b) in which minority peoples and their villages are set up as exhibitions for outsiders;

- Amusement park / theme park projects, typical of UNESCO, in which landscapes are turned into exotic “sites” to be visited;

- Billboard-ization of culture and environment (e.g., the German Embassy fund and the U.S. Ambassador’s Fund) in which foreign governments essentially buy a mascot, spending money to restore a symbolic cultural site on which they can place their signage to demonstrate their financial and technical ability to restore what a now weak or conquered culture cannot;
- Servant projects that turn local people into hotel staff where they learn the “hygiene” and language skills to work for foreign invested resorts (e.g., those of Luxembourg Development);

- Handicraft projects that create child labor factory workers for “handicraft” exports under the guise of protecting “traditional” culture (e.g., those of Oxfam and others);

In copying and expanding these approaches, dominant and militarized cultures now ruling other peoples within their nation states use the idea of tourism to create their own tourism pilgrimage sites for the glorification of battles that created the destruction and subservience of their minority peoples (and that often cover up past and continuing genocide) and that create mythologies of leaders, promote national (state) religions and generate mythologies of the ruling group’s origins and superiority/exceptionalism.

This introduced approach to “tourism” and exploitation now includes not just the commoditization of culture and the environment but also the (inhumane) extraction of payment for basic needs of those brought to these areas in the form of pay toilets and costly, purified, water in plastic bottles.

**Solutions:** The indicator of *Sustainable (Culture Protecting) Tourism that can distinguish between projects promoting Sustainability and those Exploiting and Disrupting Cultures*

To make it easier for organizations and contributors to tell the difference between sustainable (culture protecting) tourism and other approaches in the name of sustainability, it is easy to transform the elements of sustainable tourism into an indicator with three categories. Even non-experts can quickly use this tool as a litmus test of sustainable tourism.

By simply asking whether an international tourism project initiative meets the test of satisfying the international community’s list of elements for sustainable tourism using Yes or No questions and then counting up the results, one can determine the relative compliance with development objectives by the following scale:
Before beginning the scoring, note that the indicator is not an absolute scale to measure the quality of each intervention. It simply offers a checklist of whether procedures exist at all. The indicator is not offered primarily as a social science research tool, though it can certainly be used as a way of measuring what government tourist projects are actually doing, but, instead, as a project evaluation and selection tool. It is best used to show the relative value of different projects. Note that the indicator is “relative” rather than “absolute” and each person doing scoring might score higher or lower, but should produce similar overall relative measures. Like most indicators, answers to each question would need to be “calibrated” if the goal were to assure that different observers make the exact same determinations. To do so would require a longer manual for standardized, precise answers across observers. To try to help calibrate the indicator as a guide for scoring, a detailed example of scoring is provided at the end of this article and several organizations are also scored.

Note that in this indicator, there is no measure of the economic value of the tourism or of the costs and benefits of the project. That can be measured by the author’s income generation project indicator (Lempert 2012). Readers are also directed to use other indicators created by this author for the measure of sustainable development planning (Lempert and Nguyen 2008), for the viability of specific cultures (Lempert 2010) or for other types of projects and objectives such as capacity building, local sovereignty, or for impact analysis.
Measures/ Sub-Factors

The scoring is the same for each element. Most of the questions are clear cut Yes (1 point) or No (-1 points), but in cases where there is a judgment call, you can opt for a “Debatable” (0 points). Use the following for each element.

Scoring for each area:

Yes, the project is aware of the concern for protecting and promoting culture and rights and protects against harms – 1

Debated (or partial, for different groups) - 0

No – (-1), the project causes potential harm to cultural survival through its neglect

I. Cultural Sustainability Protections Under International Law: This section takes international legal cultural protections and places them in three questions to ask, “Is there a recognition of each cultural group and an effort to change the behaviors of both local groups and foreigners that endanger that culture or that can be used to strengthen the culture?” The concerns here are those of cultural survival and of sustainability, taken directly from international law to protect cultures and to promote sustainability (3 question, with a possible score of +3 to -3).

Question 1. Recognition of a system of cultural and environmental heritage assets. Does the project seek to document the full set of cultural and environmental heritage in an area and link it to specific cultural groups (and times) as part of a cultural system, as a basis for understanding, protecting, and/or appropriately changing that culture for the purposes of creating sustainability, linking it where possible with a plan for cultural sustainability for each existing living culture?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm
Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point) if the project takes a specific site, out of its context, cherry picking the site for protection or exploitation without concern for the overall culture

Question 2. Protection and promotion geared to specific endangered heritage and the underlying threats. Does the project actively promote strategies to protect those cultural and environmental heritage assets in the project area that are endangered, though some strategy of recognition (e.g. signage, law enforcement) that changes incentives and works to recognize and protect these assets? Does it address root causes of the destruction or loss of culture and work to change those attitudes in the country?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point), if the project endangers sites by opening them up to looting/targeting or suggesting that they are of no value based on economic standards or relation to a culture without power

Question 3. Recognition of cross cultural and internal solidarity over protection to address underlying international threats. Does the project work across borders where there are international factors threatening heritage or where the heritage is that of a group largely based outside of the area (including former colonial powers or forced migrated groups), in order to create solidarity and linkages over cultural sites for cultures across borders, and to change practices of outsiders who pose a threat (outside investors) and are a root cause of harm?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm
Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point) if the project does not directly confront groups whose power or ideologies are threat to the local cultures and environment and seek to change their behaviors

II. **Protection of Rights to Learning About Culture and Tolerance:** The three questions here focus on promoting culture by addressing individual rights of young people (found in human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child) to learn about their cultures and environments and other cultures, the full history of sites (positive and negative) and of attributes of sustainability, as well as by creating incentives for businesses to promote this learning. Is there a promotion of learning locally and be visitors on all perspectives relating to the local culture and its survival as well as an attempt to encourage the market to promote engaging intellectual products to promote such learning and understanding? (3 questions, with a possible score of +2 to -2).

**Question 4.** *Promotion of learning for local people and not just foreigners, with learning objectives for both groups.* Does the project offer opportunities for local peoples of their own culture or neighboring cultures to extend their own understanding of and pride in their heritage and environment, beyond that of just use for ritual purposes, and that of their neighbors, or is it geared just towards wealthy outsiders as a way to extract income?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and promotes local understanding and pride

Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point) if the presentation is used to promote use of an asset primarily by outsiders
Question 5. *Promotion of educational content in a way that increases understanding of cultural sustainability and tolerance.* Does the project include educators and anthropologists from a variety of cultures and perspectives to promote understanding of the culture and heritage of the area in a way that is linked to the sustainability of various peoples in their environments, including allowing for criticisms and reflections on current cultural choices and systems of power, economic consumption choices, and social institutions, and that also presents the full history of sites without covering up unpleasant truths or promoting narrow interests?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and promotes multiple, critical perspectives beyond just architecture, religion, and factual history

Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point) if the presentation is used to promote nationalism, racism, and hegemony, reinforcing the dominant powers and choices

Question 6. *Promotion of intellectual products and intellectual activity through small businesses (SMEs).* Does the project seek to inspire local peoples to investigate their cultural and environmental practices and to offer them in the form of products with educational content (toys, technologies, historical discussions) that go beyond recreation, site services, and iconographic souvenirs?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point) if the project just promotes outside exploitation of local skills or resources without real understanding
III. Integration of Tourism Businesses into Goals of Cultural Sustainability:
Is tourism promotion directly linked with protecting and promoting a culture, including its cultural and environmental heritage, or does it have competing interests and objectives that are incompatible with cultural and environmental sustainability? (2 questions, with a possible score of +2 to -2).

**Question 7.** *Tourism profits protect the culture and sites in a way integrated with them rather than to commoditize them.* Does the project just generate income for local peoples in ways that protect the integrated culture and culture knowledge such that the community can limit or end the tourism to promote its sustainability, without being reliant on it or does it promote consumption and culture change that ultimately destroy the sites and the culture?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point) if the tourism increases population and pollution, puts the resources at risk through increased demand, generates employment that is not part of traditional economic production, and is used as a supplement to income rather than a way to reintegrate the culture through pride and restoration of traditions

**Question 8.** *Expansion of diverse culture sites rather than copying and competing.* Does the project expand the market for tourism by offering a unique local area or does it replicate something elsewhere in a way that competes against it and puts both areas ultimately at risk?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

Debatable or not relevant - 0

No – (-1) (Loss of a point)
**Results: How Some Organizations Do**

After understanding how the test works, it is easy to apply to every new case in just a few minutes and with close agreement among anyone using it. Although only a handful of models of tourism approaches are scored here, they represent the full range. The key to success, unfortunately, seems to be related to the existing power of communities. Those that are already powerful are able to mobilize resources to protect their cultures and histories (particularly in communities of the first world or in districts of wealthy minorities such as the Chinese or Jewish communities) while those that are dependent and weak are likely to be areas of exploitation. None of the major international organizations, governments, or non-governmental organizations seem to be committed to cultural and environmentally protective sustainable tourism in any systematic way. Major country organizations seem to be the biggest failures while some small countries occasionally rise to the global standard but not consistently.

- **Strong Approaches to Sustainable Tourism that Promote Culture, Environment and Education (4 to 7 points)**

  Historic area protection projects in inner cities as well as renovated market areas are typical examples of the best approaches to sustainable tourism that are promoted by communities, themselves, seeking to revitalize and/or protect their cultural patrimony, and these can score 6 to 7 points if they are done well. Where they are done badly, exploiting areas as “theme park zones”, they score much less as many UNESCO projects and other single theme attempts to commercialize or propagandize history do. The examples of excellent projects can be found throughout the globe in historic cities like Krakow, Poland to historic districts in developing countries like Kanchanaburi, Thailand to marketplaces like Sam Chuk in Suphan Buri, Thailand. What these sites have in common are a combination of maps of a district, signage, heritage trails, small museums, and small businesses promoting the history with creative products. Some of these could do better to note different eras and culture groups and approaches but generally they are strong. The commonality shared by these projects is that the efforts are driven by communities, themselves, generally with their own funds, based on local pride.
• Partial Approaches to Protection that may endanger environment or cultures (1 to 3 points)

Most UNESCO sites in developing countries end up in this category, scoring only 1 to 2 points because they take an historic era out of context, presenting what is beautiful for architects to restore in a theme, and avoid any discussion of the peoples or history. They offer the equivalent of a theme park for governments to use their heritage in ways that they can exploit to foreigners and that can politicize history. Sites like Lijiang in China and Luang Prabang in Laos are good examples. Hoi An in Viet Nam, a market town, scores better because some of the cultures that traded in the town still have descendents who protect their ancestry.

Some “community museum/homestay/visit” tourism and “community eco-tourism” can fit into this category (or better) if they include educational approaches to protecting culture and environment, if they are a source of pride and discussion, and if they are part of the restoration of cultural practices without turning people into performers dependent on outside income or attempts to create mythical narratives about living or historical cultures, scoring 3 (or 4) points. Certain model projects of “Pro Poor Sustainable Tourism” of SNV and other “Community Based Tourism” models can potentially score at this level if they pay attention to education and pride. They do not earn points for addressing the threats to cultures, directly, or for seeking to create a fully sustainable culture, or by integrating profits with protection, but they may not be able to, given political realities. Similar are projects like the Swedish government’s support for ethnic museums and the German government’s support for translating ancient manuscripts.

• Colonial exploitation that merchandizes cultures rather than protects them ((-8) to 0 points)

Most international projects to promote “sustainable tourism” actually end up here, like the New Zealand Aid “Sustainable Economic Tourism” project in Laos that coordinates with the Asian Development Bank’s Greater Mekong Sub-region Tourism Initiative, with the goal of generating quick income for a few tour operators but with no
interest in cultural heritage or environmental protections. Although they seem to be different by working at the community level, the “Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism” approaches of SNV, the Community Based Tourism approach of New Zealand Aid, Oxfam and other projects to promote handicrafts at the village level, and the Spanish government’s projects to turn indigenous peoples into performers that are an example of promoting artistic “performances” of native peoples (Lempert 2011b) are generally attempts to commoditize cultures and peoples without concern for their cultures and environments, though they can score better if they incorporate these concerns more directly. Most of these projects are negatively scored (-4 points) (See the Annex Tables showing the scoring for this approach).

Luxembourg Development’s projects to build tourism/ hotel management schools that mostly train local peoples as servants for major hotels is typical of this colonial mentality, scoring (-1) point. So are “Destination Marketing” approaches of SNV in some regions (like Ghana), Swiss Development, and GTZ (building handicraft markets) that seek to send tourists to an area for a specific product as a way to exploit an asset for commercial purposes.

Slightly better but with no cultural or environmental protection impact are a number of “restoration” approaches supported by foreign governments that pick specific sites to protect such as the German Ambassador’s Fund and the U.S. Ambassador’s Fund, scoring 0 points.

**Conclusion: Next Steps**

The irony of exposing the flaws in tourism interventions today is that the “experts” who are in the position to make changes have little incentive to change because they benefit by serving as intermediaries in the exploitation. Meanwhile, those whose cultures and environments are at risk are the least informed and organized about where or how to begin to push for reforms. An accountability indicator like the one presented here in this article can facilitate change, but like other tools, it must be in the hands of those willing and able to use it.
Organizations that score the worst on the new indicator in this article will likely not even recognize their failures and will deny that they are part of the problem. Since they have placed themselves in networks that are seemingly above the law, there is now little expectation that they will change.

The only way that change can really occur is if those public voices who have an interest in the oversight act collectively to protect their interests. This article offers one tool, a weapon of empowerment, to at least facilitate that effort, as part of a codification of laws and standards that could ultimately be enforceable both by those paying for the interventions and those at the receiving end. This indicator takes away excuses that oversight is too difficult for ordinary citizens and that we must simply wait, pray, and rely on experts to change in ways they have little incentive to change, rather than to take on the burdens of citizenship to protect the public interest in promoting effective, efficient and law abiding development interventions.

This author has suggested the formation of Donor Monitor NGOs as a public advocate (Lempert 2008) as well as other approaches for protecting endangered cultures and their environments (Lempert 2010, 2013a, b) that can be undertaken as a complement to use of the indicator in this article, as a way to strengthen demands for accountability to international law and standards. Although there are already several private companies “certifying” that businesses meet the UNWTO standards, this one can be used to “certify” public projects to assure that they follow international law, at a level precedent to these business certifications and in a way that also seeks to hold these business tourism certification industries, themselves, accountable.

Who will act to make this a reality?

**Annex**

Testing the Indicator on New Zealand Aid’s (NZAID) Community Based Tourism for Sustainable Economic Development (CBT-SED) Project in Lao P.D.R.:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Information for Assessment*</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The NZAID Project Overview, Phase I and II</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Project Goals and Approaches to “Sustainable Economic Development” and “Community Based Tourism”** | **Objectives:** The project’s only goal was “pursuing growth” of short-term profits “with an active private sector” [the “tourism growth sector”], not on protection of cultural or environmental heritage, promotion of education, or sustainability (Clark 2014, p. 16 and Terms of Reference p. 45). The only sustainability goal was “commercial sustainability” (p.1).  
**Approach:** The main approach was “destination management”, which promotes specific areas to the international tourist market in a general way and then opens up an area to tour companies and services. Phase II was to focus even more on site marketing and on working with the existing private sector.  
**Activities/Inputs:** Activities included construction of “tourism information centers” and, not confirmed, “accommodation lodges”, “entrepreneurship training for local people”, the development of “tourism site management plans”, and the production of brochures (now already out of print and not reproduced). Other activities mentioned that cannot be confirmed to date are: guidebooks, promotional videos, touch-screen kiosks, and a hotel and guesthouse classification. The monitoring report notes but does not name a few “community based tourism products” that were generated but notes only “temples, caves and hot springs.” These may be sites that were previously open for free that the project convinced locals to monopolize with ticket charges, or to promote in order to extract revenue from foreigners. |
Results/Impacts: None were measured by the project. According to the monitoring report, “The jury is still out on whether such impacts [“on the overall development of tourism”] will occur. (Clark 2014, p. 16) Further, “As they stand, many CBT-SED products [mostly Visitor Centers and tourist brochures fully funded by New Zealand and with no local financial commitment] will struggle to be sustainable in the long term.” (Clark 2014, p. 22)

Overall analysis of the CBT-SED

There is nothing in this project related to heritage or environmental protection other than some incidental eco-tourism and community tourism that is largely outweighed by short-term exploitation of sites. This is a short-term business promotion project to benefit a small number of Lao tourist businesses, Lao government officials (possibly linked to those businesses) and, apparently, New Zealand businesses. The project worked to exploit areas for quick profit rather than to protect cultures or sites, with hard sell promotions to lure tourists to areas with little to see and where there was little information or protection and to create charges for public sites; commoditizing what was public with no value-added.
## Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Scoring</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Cultural Sustainability Protections Under International Law</strong></td>
<td>While the New Zealand government and the Lao Ministry of Culture use the words “sustainability” and “community based”, there is no attempt to protect cultures or sustainability, only to generate profits from tourism. No attention is paid to the objectives of international law. (-3) points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Recognition of a system of cultural and environmental heritage assets?</strong></td>
<td>No. Not only does this project do no inventories of sites, knowing that the heritage of the country is in danger, but it simply relies on a list of government approved tourist areas and promotes them without even recognizing the full range of sites or the cultures affected. (-1) points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Protection and promotion geared to specific endangered heritage and the underlying threats?</strong></td>
<td>No. There is no mention of root causes of harms to sites and no intention to protect areas. The goal is to quickly exploit for tourism what exists now and then to move on to other areas as these tourist areas are exploited for other purposes. (-1) points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>Recognition of cross cultural and internal solidarity over protection to address underlying international threats?</strong></td>
<td>No. There is no recognition of cultures across borders, no attempt to understand history, and no attempt to involve foreign governments and investors that are involved in destruction, in solutions for protection. (-1) points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. **Protection of Rights to Learning about Culture and Tolerance**

*Learning and promotion of tolerance was incidental to the project goals. While some may have occurred, it was overwhelmed by other objectives promoting globalization.*

(-1) points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.</th>
<th>Promotion of learning for local people and not just foreigners, with learning objectives for both groups?</th>
<th>No. The information presented in tourist guides has no research behind it and offers mythology without question. While the original New Zealand project at Nam Ha had some environmental and cultural education in it, that objective is now lost in current approaches.</th>
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<tr>
<td>(-1) points.</td>
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<tr>
<th>5.</th>
<th>Promotion of educational content in a way that increases understanding of cultural sustainability and tolerance?</th>
<th>Debatable. At best, some of the eco-tourism and minority village areas that are opened for tourism might include some tours that offer information on culture and the environment, but educational objectives are not built into the project design.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 points.</td>
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<tr>
<th>6.</th>
<th>Promotion of intellectual products and intellectual activity through small businesses (SMEs)?</th>
<th>Debatable. The project originally tried to create Community Based tourism that used local handicrafts, culture, and ecology as a basis for local tourism but this ultimately led to outside tour companies as the promoters, with little real development of local pride and promotion of information.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>0 points.</td>
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### III. Integration of Tourism Businesses into Goals of Cultural Sustainability

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Tourism profits protect the culture and sites in a way integrated with them rather than to commoditize them?</td>
<td>No. While some of the community based teaching of the project sought to use ticketed entrances to public resources as a way to protect them, and began with an idea of communities (though not “cultures”) controlling their own resources, there was no real local control or incentive for protection since the project’s ideology was exploitation. This exploitation by outside business and “destination marketing” has now replaced the community based approach in Phase II. 0 points at best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Expansion of diverse culture sites rather than copying and competing?</td>
<td>Debatable. The goal of starting with communities to identify something of local value is a way to promote diversity, but the current focus of the project only on economic value, to foreigners, and to a “destination market” rather than to differentiated markets of tourist interests just reinforces the idea of making quick profits off of sites given the ability of cheap and exotic tourism in Laos today, before industrialization and commercialization destroys its attractions as it has elsewhere. 0 points.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total  | (-4) points. Failed, Colonial Approach to Sustainable Tourism. It would be difficult for this project to score much lower. This was a top-down, income-generation approach with the goal of commoditizing culture and the environment for the short-term gains of businesses, with no attention to protections of heritage and no concern for education or tolerance. While it started with some local objectives as the driving force, its ideology of commoditization, promotion of existing businesses, and subsidizing (and pandering to) government officials without establishing any kinds of standards or conditions, including a basis in international law, undermined the potential that the project may have had.

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**Notes**

*David Lempert* was awarded his PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of California Berkeley in 1992 and his MBA from Stanford Graduate School in 1985. He was appointed as a Member of the California Bar Association of Stanford Law School in 1985 and obtained an Accelerated BA in Economics & Political Science from Yale University in 1980. His current positions are Chairman of the Board and C.E.O. of Unseen America Projects, Inc., San Francisco, California and International from 1988 to the present and Promoter and Chair of Touring Southeast Asian History and Cultures on Two Wheels/ Popularizing Lao History/Building Bridges across the Mekong. Email: superlemp@yahoo.com

1. This project, though funded by a donor government and carried out by government in the area of tourism, is not at all transparent, but the monitoring report conducted by NZAID and the summary response by the commissioning agency of the New Zealand Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (a combined Ministry with these competing functions) are available on the Internet for the Phase I (Clark 2014; NZ MFAT 2014). There were some articles in the Vientiane Times announcing Phase II in the summer of 2015. Materials produced by the project were available to tourists in Laos in 2012 – 2014, though they quickly disappeared. The author used them in tourism in the country. The author also held discussions about the project with Lao
government partners, with the New Zealand MFAT, and with the director on Phase I, and offered ideas (uncompensated) for improvement of the project during Phase I and before the start of Phase II. Those discussions are reported here while protecting the names of officials. While the project heralds an earlier phase of eco-tourism development in the area of Nam Ha, that has been widely praised and reported elsewhere, this project does not replicate that one.

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