



JOURNEYS OF SUSTAINABILITY:

**a Handbook on Sustainable Tourism
for Europe-Asia Volunteers**



**JOURNEYS OF
SUSTAINABILITY**

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How to use this book

This handbook was designed in order to achieve two main goals: to present a Europe-Asia project on sustainable and responsible tourism and to provide a toolkit for future projects with the same type of cooperation and covering such topics as sustainable development, responsible tourism, community development, environmental awareness, intercultural communication and capacity building among youth.

This source can be used when leading an Asia-Europe project for young people and not only. In the same time it can be useful for projects operating in other geographical contexts as it raises and discusses questions that are vital for the environment and development of the whole world.

The concept of the project discussed in this handbook is based on the use of informal education tools for learning about sustainable development, focusing, in particular, on sustainable tourism.

The readers are introduced to the combination of ways in which young people can acquire knowledge about principles of sustainability.

In particular those ones, which very often are left not acknowledged because they happen sometimes subconsciously, like learning through emotions or while participating in banal practices, such as consuming or cooking food. The handbook is divided into three following sections:

PART I

Discovering Ways to Learn:

Presents different situations in which participants learned about sustainable and responsible tourism and provides examples of practices that contribute towards sustainable development in Asia and Europe.

PART II:

Changing Attitudes and Perspectives:

Advices on Sustainable Behaviour tells which actions and things should be avoided for a better development of our world and discusses whether living sustainably is really possible in the 21 st century.

PART III

Prospects for the Future of Sustainable Tourism:

Presents a collection of witnesses and of personal reflections on the impact of the project.



FOREWORD

Our fascination with Asia dates back to 2001, when the – now legendary – ASEF funded project “Asia Europe Volunteer Exchange” was launched. This was a great opportunity to explore youth work in a region of the world that had remained under-appreciated. One of us (Abel) had the chance to attend one of the first ever workcamps in Indonesia, which inspired him. ASEF remained the main source of funding for Asia-related projects for some years, until the European Commission started funding larger (12 and now 24 month) projects allowing us to work regularly with the region. This was a great change and allowed us to develop our personal and organisational competencies as well as regularly to liaise with the two regions we were working with. We started with the project “Sustainable Development in Cultural Diversity”, coordinated by Estyes (Estonia) and awarded the global education award in 2011. We continued with two projects centred on China, resulting from the Europe-China year of the youth.

After several years of work in the field of intercultural education and learning, we felt the need to work on a narrower specialisation and the current project was conceived. We were inspired by some of our partners working in the field of responsible and sustainable tourism to think how we could engage young people with a two-fold goal. First, to explain what are the (positive and negative) effects of

tourism on some world regions. Second, to look for inspiration about how tourism could help local communities to escape poverty. We had in mind not only exotic places in Asia but also less known places in Europe, and this is why we decided to hold an event in Latgale, a beautiful but under-visited and virtually unknown place outside of Latvia. We also had the chance to visit community-based projects and homestays in Vietnam, Cambodia and, thanks to several job shadowing, to better understand a number of realities.

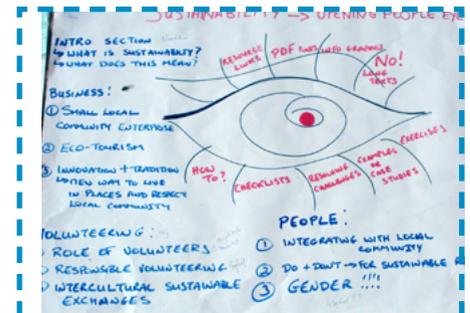
The results of our visits, our efforts, and our new understanding of tourism coming from the process are in this handbook. We would like to thank all the volunteers that contributed to it, all our partner organisations and all the people who inspired and motivated us during this journey.



INTRODUCTION

A DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM SECTOR

In the 21st century probably many of us at least once asked ourselves how one should live in a more ecologically sustainable manner? Scientists and environmental activists more and more often urge us that many corners of our planet are facing ecological catastrophes and that if people, governments, corporations would not take any immediate action to prevent or at least to minimize it, then the worse is still about to come. In the same time a number of other urgent issues, like poverty of the majority of world's population, lack of equity in social protection and medical care represent main problems not only of our days, but also of the future generations.



Tourism, as one of the fastest growing industries in the world, has a large impact on the above issues. By choosing a right strategy to develop such industry people could make significant changes first of all to the level of poverty among world's population and environmental pollution.

When tourism is being unsustainable it represents various social and ecological threats. It causes great stress to the remaining biologically diverse habitats and also to indigenous cultures.



As for the moment, the effect of tourism, either it is positive or negative, remains to be a very disputable issue and it is difficult to find a ratio of positive and negative effects that it brings to our world.

South Asia has been largely affected by the influx of tourists over the past decades. Local governments realized that tourism industry can bring them high economic advantages and therefore allow to develop their countries. However, behind such general economic attractiveness of tourism for national economies, there stand a lot of pitfalls that can undermine the wellbeing of local population and preservation of environment.

First of all, while making dependent local economy on tourism, governments become less motivated to develop other industries and consequently care less for those who work outside of tourism. Also, though tourism can bring a relatively fast income, to guarantee that it will be equally/fairly distributed among local population is rather difficult. Thus, in particular, rural local population, in whose 'habitat' tourist attraction might be situated, often do not get any benefit from the presence of tourists, but only suffer from it.

Sustainable tourism is an approach in tourism that is sensitive to such dangers and threats. Following it, people can show more respect to the nature, local population and ensure a further sustainable development of a tourism industry. Our experience, also as recent reports on the South Asia, show that the principles of sustainability in tourism industry remain to be scarcely applied in the region and the number of actors engaged in it is still very low.

This is a result not only of ignorance of principles of sustainable development, but very often of simple lack of knowledge of them. How to apply such concepts in practice very often remains to be in a question form. Thus one of the goals of this project is to educate young people how to make tourism more sustainable, in particular in remote areas, which might be in a more vulnerable situation than others.



In order to make tourism more sustainable first of all people who participate in it, whether they are those who travel or those who host, should feel responsible for their actions. Indeed we can now often hear governments or NGOs talking about responsible tourism in parallel to sustainable tourism. While having in principle the same goals of sustainable development, responsible tourism is not a strategy, but rather a type of behaviour that is required in order to guarantee sustainable development of tourism industry. Responsible tourism asks all type of

actors, like individuals, businesses, governments, NGOs to take responsibility for their decisions and actions while providing or experiencing tourism.

The next section, while exploring further the principles of sustainability, gives already a more concrete guidelines to follow in order to ensure a sustainable development of tourism.



Voluntourism - is a form of tourism where people while traveling participate in different projects as volunteers. Such projects usually aim to help local communities within short period of time.



Every year we leave into atmosphere about 40 million tons of carbon pollution.



COMMITTING TO THE BETTER FUTURE: Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Volunteering

(by Niamh Rooney, Kimmage Development Studies Centre)

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

Before exploring ideas and means to promote sustainable tourism and responsible volunteering, we first need to broadly define what we mean by sustainable tourism. This section is intended as a brief introduction to the topic. Readers are strongly encouraged to research the topic further, adapting to suit specific contexts. Sustainable tourism and responsible volunteering are essential to ensure sustainable development. The most widely held definition of sustainable development is taken from the Brundtland Report¹ which states that:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

So how do we explore whether tourism and volunteering initiatives meet the needs of the present generation and ensure that they don't compromise the needs of future generations?



We need to look at the key pillars of sustainability: the economy, society, and the environment.

How can we assess sustainability?

If we look briefly at each of these pillars and apply the concept to tourism and volunteering, what are some of the questions we could ask to assess sustainability?³

HOW CAN WE ASSESS SUSTAINABILITY?

If we look briefly at each of these pillars and apply the concept to tourism and volunteering, what are some of the questions we could ask to assess sustainability?

ECONOMY:

- How is the local economy affected, positively or negatively by tourism?
- Does the government have a strategy which addresses and promotes local tourism development?
- Are there initiatives to promote the employment opportunities for rural and urban poor communities?
- Is informal trading by local communities supported and promoted in tourist areas?

SOCIETY:

- How is the local community affected, positively or negatively by tourism?
- Is the voice of the local community heard in relation to tourism and volunteering initiatives?
- Are local people engaged in initiatives to promote sustainable tourism?
- Are there opportunities for the local community to provide tourism facilities, tours etc.?

ENVIRONMENT:

- How is the local environment affected, positively or negatively by tourism?
- Do government policies on natural resources cover threats and opportunities related to tourism?
- Are the effects of tourism being sustainably managed at cultural heritage sites?
- Are service providers regulated and held to account for the effects of tourism on the environment?



Buying local could achieve a 4-5% reduction in greenhouse gases emissions due to large sources of CO2 and non CO2 emissions during the production of food.

¹ United Nations, (1987) *Our Common Future - Brundtland Report*.

² http://theverdantdawn.blogspot.ie/2013_11_01_archive.html

³ Adapted from: <http://www2.unwto.org/en/content/sustainable-tourism-development-developing-countries-document-three-interlinking-parts>



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “RESPONSIBLE” TOURISM?

In order to look at the idea behind the concept of “responsible” tourism and volunteering, we can refer to the definition offered by the 2002 Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism⁴, which states that, “Responsible Tourism” is tourism which:

- minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well being of host communities;
- improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage embracing diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people;
- is culturally sensitive, encourages respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence”⁵.

If we define “sustainable tourism” as an approach or a strategy, then “responsible tourism” is rather a type of behavior that a tourist may follow while traveling. What is defined as responsible may differ depending on places and cultures. Since this project united people from different Asian and European countries, we had a chance to look for answers on what is sustainable and responsible tourism from many cultural perspectives.

It is important to remember that everyone is accountable for their part in ensuring sustainable development, this means that whether you are a local or international tour operator, a tourist (and remember that volunteers are tourists), a member of the local community, a government representative, a host organisation, or a volunteer sending organisation, you are accountable for the way in which you think, act and engage.

⁴ International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations (2002) The Cape Town Declaration, Cape Town
⁵ https://www.capetown.gov.za/en/tourism/Documents/Responsible%20Tourism/Responsible_tourism_bro_web.pdf

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT AND LIST OF PARTNERS



Project description

HOW THE IDEA WAS BORN

After a number of projects implemented together with some partners from Asia in 2010, 2012 and 2014 on youth unemployment and targeting people with fewer opportunities, our interest in Europe-Asia collaboration became ever stronger. Involvement in previous projects has enabled us, inter alia, to build a solid network of organisations with similar priorities focusing on Europe-Asia cooperation. While discussing possible ideas of a project, some of our European and Asian partners have convinced us of the importance of a project with a focus on interaction between formal and non-formal education and the recognition of the benefits of voluntary and youth work beyond the youth sector. Such project would enable us to target directly people with fewer opportunities, and organisations working with them, living in deprived areas.

OUR GOALS

A major aim of this project is to build capacity of young people in Europe and Asia allowing them to act as multipliers in the course of this project and beyond. This included to inform them of their potential role and the fact that follow-up action depend on their initiative.

Also as every multi-partner project, this project aimed to create great connections (beyond the network), which could lead to other new projects. Working together for 2 years enhanced the capital of trust within the network and beyond it, thanks to its capacity to build bridges with other major stakeholders.

In particular, aware of the importance of tourism as income generating activity, we believe that sustainable and responsible tourism is an area that has an enormous potential for young people, who are the most open to change and new learning experiences.

The value of our project is the involvement and promotion of a variety of European partners that were able to guarantee diversity of approaches and knowledge, recognition and dissemination beyond national borders (in several languages and diverse events organised by our partners) while benefiting a large amount of European areas, from convergence regions and countries to less developed areas where young people have fewer opportunities. In this respect, in addition to a Europe-Asia interaction, a crucial element of this project was also collaboration within Europe. Central and Eastern European partners were pivotal in sharing their experience as knowledge transfer receivers, taking now an active role in showing how knowledge transfer towards less developed regions can be best achieved while respecting local culture, realities and with higher awareness and understanding of the local reality.

Planning & meeting the objectives:

1. Cooperation was addressed by encouraging collaborations, dialogue and reflections on current and future projects between the partner organisations (EU, Asia). The consortium gathered the sufficient amount of capital of trust and understanding to improve quality and variety of exchanges, and projects, between the two regions.

2. Quality of youth work. Youth work, volunteering and non-formal learning was the leitmotif of this project, engaging both formal and non-formal education partners in the development and conceptualisation of a training kit, Webinars and testing of new tools developed in the course of the project. The quality of the tools was tested by the advisory board and external evaluators both in formal

and non-formal educational settings to be then adopted by our partners in order to demonstrate its value well beyond the youth sector.

3. Tools. Partners prepared together an open access Training kit that will be made available publicly and freely.

4. Opportunities were addressed by giving the chance to not less than 150 young people to participate in mobility activities, during which they were guided through a learning process to gain awareness of their potential contribution to the society while developing their professional and personal skills. Thanks to this programme we managed to reach 510 youth workers and volunteers (multipliers) and over 1500 local marginalised people (thanks to the local trainings).

5. Mobility increase between the regions and allowing to maintain it after the project lifespan, enabling youth workers to become multipliers for topics related to sustainable tourism, entrepreneurship, training of marginalised and low-income communities. Most of our partner organisations targeted either depressed areas (Narva in Estonia, Kysuce in Slovakia, Southern State and Delta region in Myanmar, Kompong Chhnang in Cambodia) or rural settings (Okhaldhunga in Nepal, Corella in the Philippines, different rural regions in Lithuania, several farms in southern France). Most of the mobility activities were organised in rural areas so to engage with local communities from deprived areas. Individual mobility, in particular, was characterised by learning-by-doing approaches.

6. Learning. The project fostered a dialogue between formal and non-formal education partners, as well as stakeholders from the private and government sector. This was done through a coordinated series of training and dissemination events generating capacity and explaining how this capacity can be used for the job market, the society and several sectors in all the participating countries.

Non-formal learning approaches were used to make more accessible and interactive a training kit on how to use tourism as a resource and create micro-enterprises in depressed and poorer regions while training young people in entrepreneurial skills.

In particular, this project focused on emotional and learner-centered education. Learner-centred approaches were promoted during individual mobility and network activities thanks to an extensive use of non-formal learning methodologies that integrated emotional learning with learning of practical and theoretical elements. We extensively involved stakeholders beyond the Youth Sector so to facilitate recognition of this learning approach and the new competencies gained.

PARTNERS

A core group of tested partners was enriched by well-established partners with a good reputation. Our goal was to ensure geographical diversity not only in type of locations, in which different phases of this project were implemented, but also in the type of partners. Partners from several parts of Europe and South East Asia, representing different work and lifestyles, approaches to youth issues, understanding of responsible tourism and different stages of development were involved.

! Fertilizers, which are widely used in agriculture, in particular in Southern countries are one of the major drivers of biodiversity loss. Any decrease in biodiversity dramatically affects productivity of remaining plants.





LIST OF PROJECT PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

Center of Youth Voluntary Activities „Deineta“ (Lithuania) - is an independent non-political voluntary service organization established in 1988. Deineta is coordinating and sending organization of EVS and other youth voluntary projects. Among the main aims of the organization there is promotion of international co-operation and understanding among young people from different countries and different cultures; helping young people realize their voluntary ideas; providing opportunities for young people without distinction to race, language, religion or social status, who wish to acquire cross cultural skills and gain international experience for their personal and professional development. Deineta is a member of Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organizations.



EstYes (Estonia) - is a non-profit, non-political, non-governmental, international youth organisation. It was established in 1991 with the purpose of promoting youth and cultural exchanges for learning and better mutual understanding. EstYES was a pioneer organisation in the field of international youth voluntary service in Estonia. EstYES is involved in the international voluntary service seeing in it a great tool of non-formal education. EstYES works mainly with young people 14 – 30, but not only. As a matter of fact EstYES voluntary projects are open to people of all ages without limits. Young people with fewer opportunities are the group of special consideration of EstYES. Every year EstYES runs over 40 short-term voluntary projects (work-camps) in Estonia hosting up to 500 international volunteers and sends over 150 Estonian volunteers to similar projects abroad. In the recent years EstYES was particularly engaged in the development cooperation in the field of international voluntary service with the partners from South East Asia and Latin America.



CONCORDIA

Concordia (France) - non-governmental and non-profit organisation has been promoting peace and intercultural exchanges through international voluntary service projects since 1950. Working with a large number of partners around the world, our work consists in organizing voluntary projects in France; giving French volunteers the opportunity to volunteer on our partners' projects; preparing and leading training sessions and seminars on many thematics based on informal and non-formal education methods.

The voluntary projects we offer in France are short term (International Workcamps) and mid/long term (EVS, Service Civique) - and no two projects are the same! Helping out on one of our projects can mean protecting the environment, restoring a classified monument, promoting cultural or traditional heritage, plan activities for a youth community centre, supporting a local, charity.

Viaje a la Sostenibilidad (Spain) - promotes cultural exchange and mutual understanding between young people and local youth participants, organises awareness-rising actions with talks, meetings and graphic materials. Our team is composed of six active members and 10 volunteers regularly helping with our target group, who are young people (18-30) among which we prioritise people from rural areas and those with less opportunities for intercultural learning is a non-profit non-governmental organisation, established in 2012 and based in Zaragoza. Its main goal is to promote sustainable tourism and the idea of living in a more sustainable world through various educative activities. Viaje a la Sostenibilidad organizes youth exchanges, trainings, workcamps and online courses.



Associazione Il Vagabondo (Italy) - established in 2000, has been one of the first organizations in Italy to deal with responsible tourism. It operates through 2 groups of association members: one in Naples and one in Matera, which is one of the most depressed regions in Italy. Its key activities deal with responsible tourism incoming activities, research in the field of responsible tourism, environmental sustainability, consulting activity to private companies and public local authorities on responsible tourism, environmental sustainability. We work closely with AITR (Associazione Italiana Turismo Responsabile) and have, as target group, young people in particular school pupils. Occasionally we have worked with children who dropped out of school or who were in prison. Our network includes grassroots organisations, mainly based in Napoli and Matera that share our same values and prioritise rural areas, valorisation of local culture and people, use of local products and an alternative and sustainable approach to tourism.





Keric (Slovakia) - is a non-profit non-governmental organisation working mainly with children and youth aged 4-30 as well as adults. We offer a wide range of activities with an extra added international dimension which develop the personality of children and youth and differ based on the needs of participants. Our mission is to connect our region Kysuce with Europe and the whole world. KERIC was founded in February 2003. Our main activities are conversational language courses, computer courses, international youth exchanges, summer and winter camps, seminars and trainings for youth workers from all over the world, creative workshops in the KERIC Underground club or at local school, sending and hosting volunteers to and from Europe and Latin America.

The University of Latvia - has been founded in 1919 and currently, with its more than 14 000 students, 13 faculties and over 20 research institutes and independent study centres, is one of the largest comprehensive and leading research universities in the Baltics. The University offers more than 130 state accredited academic and professional study programmes. At University of Latvia, research is conducted in over 50 research fields which represent four main areas of inquiry: the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences.



The University of Latvia pays great attention to the development of international collaboration.

The University of Latvia devotes great attention to development of international collaboration to promote its identity internationally and to strengthen the reputation of the University worldwide.

Kimmage Development Studies Centre (Ireland) - For 40 years, Kimmage DSC has facilitated education and training for development practitioners working in a range of occupations from over 65 countries. We have a strong reputation in development studies in Ireland and abroad and offer an inter-cultural and experience-based learning environment. The ethos of Kimmage DSC is embodied in a teaching approach based on participatory learning and critical thinking which seeks to empower course participants with the skills and knowledge essential for development work today.



Centre of Sustainable Development Studies (Vietnam) - a non-profit, non-government organisation based in Hanoi, Vietnam with a strong focus on developing the capacity of young people to effect change in society. Since its establishment and legal registration in 2009 it has successfully implemented a wide range of community projects to improve the livelihood, education and wellbeing of the Vietnamese people through sustainable development.



Khmer Youth & Social Development (Cambodia) - established in 2003, has a central office in Phnom Penh and regional offices in 3 target areas: Kompong Chhnang, Kompong Speu, Kratie Province. Its main fields of action are: Youth and Employment, Youth and Good Governance; Youth and Natural Resource Management; Youth and Information Communication Technology. In addition to youth in general, it gives special attention to women and ethnic minorities in Cambodia.



Charity Oriented Myanmar - based in Yangon, COM is non-profit, non-government organization for community development established by local youth, with staff of 50 and 800 participants in insofar activities. It operates since 2005 with a mix of formal and informal methods to deliver vocational trainings in socio-economic participation, IT literacy and language training. In 2008 COM provided support to the victims of Nargis cyclone. In 2010, thanks to the new political developments in Myanmar COM was formally registered with the goal of promoting human rights and boost public participation in the country's life with a vision of "Praise youth and it will prosper - Think Peace".

Better World (Korea) - its main goal is to contribute to create a global players with awareness of sustainability issues, responsibility of international development and cooperation. It educates young people as global citizens by developing their competence through global action since 1999 with the establishment of International Workcamp Organization. Its main office is located in Seoul and counts 35 full-time staff members. Its main activities are global education and youth development in particular through the use of international volunteerism and a learning by doing approach. Target group are Korean and international youth aged 14-35. We have a special programme for less privileged youths of local communities and and refugees from North Korea.



Volunteers' Initiative Nepal - established in 2005 by a diverse group drawn from development workers, educationalists, social activists and other professionals, is a non-religious, non-political, non-profit, and non-governmental organization (NGO). VIN has been officially registered under the Society Act with the District Administration Office, Kathmandu (Reg. No. 147/062/63), and affiliated with the Social Welfare Council Nepal (SWC) (Affiliation No. 20910). VIN focuses on community-based projects involving local volunteers backed-up by international volunteers in Nepal.



VIN has been mobilizing local and international volunteers in various development sectors including educational programs, trainings and counseling that significantly contribute to enhance the livelihoods of poor and marginalized / disadvantaged communities in Nepal. VIN has also been deploying its volunteers in teaching, teacher training, environment, health and sanitation, helping children in orphanage, women empowerment support, youth empowerment and entrepreneurship development.

University of Hanoi (Vietnam) - one of the oldest institutions of higher education in the capital, Hanoi University (HANU) combines the best of a rich cultural heritage of Hanoi with a vibrant academic experience. Today, HANU is offering multi-disciplines courses at under-graduate and graduate levels delivered in foreign languages (e.g. English and Japanese) and continues to build on its main strengths and foundation that supported the college at its beginning more than 50 years ago. We remain committed to values-centered education.



Pannasastra University of Cambodia – was established in 1997 initially started with English pre-academic programs. On January 1st, 2000, PUC began its full academic programs. PUC was founded by a group of Cambodian expatriates from the United States of America, whose objectives are to contribute to the development and enhancement of Cambodia’s human capital, and play an active role in the “nation building” process for future generations. It is one of a select few universities in Southeast Asia to offer all instructions in English. In addition, and as part of its general education requirement, its undergraduate and graduate programs are enriched with courses in Khmer and Asian Cultures and Civilizations, Ethics, Good Governance, Philosophy, Gender Studies, Psychology, and Environment.



Youth for Sustainable Development Assembly (Philippines) - was established in 1994 as a national youth-serving organization in the Philippines. We support youth involvement in all aspects and levels of sustainable development of the local community. Our aspiration is to create a critical youth base for sustainable development advocacy and environmentalism in the Philippines by supporting youth-led community-based sustainable development demonstration projects and providing platforms where young people can voice out their concerns. YSDA trains youth leaders, mobilizes local and international volunteers and assists local communities. It has two training centers, and 7 full time staff member and is affiliated with several national and international organizations such as the NVDA and CCIVS.



PART I: Discovering Ways to Learn

LEARNING THROUGH EMOTIONS

Many acknowledge that emotions play an important role in learning process. Emotions have an immense and often overlooked power on our thoughts and behavior.

For instance, our emotional state can directly influence the amount of information we are about to learn, or on our interpretation of it.

However emotions are not only a complex impact factor, but as we are going to show in this part are also ‘tools’. With the help of such tools we can learn about something that is not easy to explain and then ‘digest’ if taught through just formal ways of education.

HERE IS THE STORY OF OUR PARTICIPANT IEVA OZOLA FROM LATVIA

If emotion is energy in motion, then our “Journeys of Sustainability” group made every molecule move in Latgale region, because of the countless impressions we had at every turn. Through our emotional journey we reached the goal - to learn from others, and even I as Latvian learned many valuable “lessons” by seeing how foreign people enjoy just an ordinary meadow or take many photos of usual Latvian forests. What if natural treasures of Latvia are the things we have to cherish the most instead of industrialization, architectural masterpieces?



On this journey I never stopped to learn. I learned from the tears that came to my eyes when 20 hugs from Cambodia, Myanmar, Italy, Ireland, France, Vietnam, Philippines, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania made me feel loved in my birthday despite the diverse religious, political and cultural positions. I was learning from a confusion of eating rice too frequently, as I am used to eat only potatoes at such frequency. While traveling across Latvia I learned from locals' willingness to help, to show their best with openness and friendliness. The folk dance and music concerts in Briežciems and Kubuli highlight the value all tourists desire to find while traveling – being taken care of. Whether it is hospitality in the smallest county of Latvia, Rugāji, or pride of preservation of the natural environment, as it was in the local farmer's countryside where sheep were bleating – it all made me learn something that I would never learn from books.



In the International Youth Forum in Rīga, I heard how three young people in Myanmar started voluntary service involving local youth, how united local and voluntary action in Nepal can effectively solve problems caused by natural disasters and other bright experiences of this project. Such stories revealed me how many truly great and inspiring people I have met during my journey of sustainability and I am thankful for the opportunity to learn from others through my emotions.

Impact of emotions on the learning of what is sustainability in our project is not something that we could have plan or calculate in advance. However at the stage of elaboration of our project we strongly believed that emotions that participants are going to experience throughout their journeys of sustainability and job shadowing will represent one of the main pillar of the informal education that this project aimed to provide.

! When yearly over 1,1 billion of travellers (acc. to the World Travel & Tourism Council) cross international borders, they automatically become potential bearers of exotic insects, fungi and seeds. Such species turn into invasive species on a new territory. The main harm of invasive species is that they can seriously decline the percentage of local species.

LEARNING THROUGH FOOD

Food is an indispensable part of any culture and therefore it is an essential part of any trip, on which we are eager to explore a new culture with its traditional food. Greeting a guest with some food (and very often with the best one), it is a host side tradition, shared and practiced in many societies. For hosts offering some food it is a way to show hospitality, to welcome their guests, but it is also a way to learn about each other cultures and an indispensable tool to establish a first contact between each other.

Our volunteers had visited different homestays in Vietnam, run by local families and were always pleasantly surprised by the sincereness and unlimited smiles with which food was offered to and shared with them by their hosting families.



"We were welcomed as members of the family, they shared their food and their beds, we even got to taste fresh fruit from their trees!"

Anne Luiza Berzina

Consuming food sustainably, while traveling first of all means trying to eat what locals eat, following their habits and enjoying their favorite tastes in their company. In South Asia, eating in local night markets, at the small family run cafes or street food points is not only an opportunity to get the most authentic meals, but also very often such places are the safest ones and the most beneficial for the local communities.

Buying from a local vendor, rather than from a big supermarket or eating some street food rather than choosing a tourist-oriented restaurant, not only helps the community of your hosting country, but saves your pocket, health and creates additional opportunities for interaction with locals.

Our participant Anne from Latvia, shares her impression from eating at places in which usually Vietnamese people eat.

“Surprisingly I really liked the traditional food places better and not just because I just really adored Vietnamese food, but because I felt like I was a part of the city, I was somehow contributing to the character of the never ending liveliness of the streets. My favourite place to eat was the “ice cream” – just cut up fruit with ice and coconut milk, oh my, simple, but amazing.”

For Anne, meeting Vietnamese cuisine in such a simple, mundane settings is a way to contribute to local life, to feel part of it, even if just for one evening, one hour.



In a way, what we witness now in many tourist destinations, could be described as a vicious circle. It is difficult to tell who was the first to start it, picky with a reactionary mind tourists or an opportunistic local or it is one of the negative influences of large international corporations. Local, hosting people might be of the impression that all foreign tourists would prefer to eat British breakfasts, pizzas and drink coca-cola and Nescafe. Selling already widely promoted dishes and drinks can bring to a faster income. Still a faster income does not mean durable/sustainable one and the side effects of switching to imitations of what is considered to be Western cuisine might bring to serious consequences for the whole local community.

In the same time one should not think that it is a completely wrong thing to adapt to tourist’s/visitors’ tastes. A hosting community can adapt sizes of food portions (in some countries portions can be extremely big, which in case of unaccustomed tourist to such amount food, can cause additional food waste).

Also the intensity of spices used in a local dish, if possible, might be varied in order not to loose clients who can not eat

very spicy things. A presence of vegetarian and/or vegan option, which is much more sustainable, in the menu will also attract more clients and should not affect seriously the average amount of expenses. One of our project members, Abel, have shared his impression of how women of local community in Latgale (Latvia) had taken care of their guests and adapted to their dietary needs.

“But the most amazing thing was interaction with the people. The kitchen staff baked, fried, boiled, steamed tasty things for us. They adjusted their cuisining to a variety of diets (Hindu, vegetarian) always with a smile on their face. They were attentive to what people would eat more for breakfast so to increase the quantity of what was more popular and decrease the rest. Virtually everything was prepared in that magic kitchen with careful ladies making us feel comfortable all the time.”

Not only visitors have an opportunity to learn about local culture through food. People who cook for guests, if attentive, can learn about others while not living their usual surroundings. On the example of above experience, we can see that while welcoming such an international group of guests like our participants were, the hosting community of women could learn about different cultures, religions and in the same time share the best of their own ones.

“While traveling, also we need to keep in mind the impact of our meat consumption. A plant-based diet cuts our carbon footprint by 50%”

If behaving in such or similar way when selecting how to satisfy our gourmet needs, we are encouraging local population, working in tourism and food sectors to continue to follow their traditions and perform the best of them. In a way a tourist, if preferring sustainable places to eat can not only help financially local people, but indirectly expand their pride in their traditional cuisines.

It is a sad state of affairs, to admit that a tendency among tourists to eat as locals, supporting small businesses, continues to be very marginal and is preferred only by those who favor some non-conventional ways of experiencing tourism. Usually people are fearful of something that they do not know. Stereotypes about other exotic societies generate additional prejudices that prevent tourists from giving up their consumption of Western like, globalized products, even when they have at their disposal a very rich local cuisine.

! *Because beef meat production is the most water consumptive, eating but could be considered as one of the unsustainable food consumption practices.*



LEARNING THROUGH HANDCRAFTS

Though initially we did not plan to focus on the role of production of handcrafts as a practice of sustainable development, in the end, while implementing our project, craftsmanship became for us a tool to understand better a concept of sustainability. Our participants' experience demonstrate that preservation of traditional craftsmanship can be one of the ways to develop sustainably a local community, in both South Asia and in Eastern Europe.



Very often objects of handcraft are not only “cute handmade things”, but are also material representations of a culture, from which they come from. Through handcrafts our participants were able to learn about different cultures they were meeting on their study visits and in some situations they served as tools needed to minimize intercultural misunderstanding.

We saw how touching handmade things, trying them on and even learning how to make some of them - all contributed to the understanding of this project's goals.

! *The role of women in the economy of developing countries is usually underestimated. In Africa, women farmers produce up to 80% of the continent's food (according to UN report), therefore when the environment degrades it becomes first of all a women problem.*

In Latgale (Latvia) region we visited several small craft businesses, usually run by local women, had a chance to talk to many of them and hear their success stories. Each of this story was very emotional, as almost in every case it was telling about a small (and not that small) dream, which in the end came true. We could see and touch the beautiful evidence of these dreams and learn about different aspects of leading a small craft business in Latvia. The quality of handmade crafts, their originality, but also a smart combination of traditions and modern knowledge was worth of 1000 compliments.

AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMON GOALS COULD BE:

- community engagement;
- increasing in a sustainable way the quality of life;
- 'slow' movement approach to business;
- creation of collective structures for economic activity;
- economic development at the local level.

However what probably impressed many of us the most is the harmony in which all these local entrepreneurs were working. Mutual respect towards each other, which for sure contributes to the enforcement of the local community spirit, a very careful attitude to the land, natural resources and a will to preserve old traditions – were the most important proofs of sustainable development taking place in Latgale region.

Indeed, handcraft practices share some common goals with the goals of sustainable development.



According to UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, traditional craftsmanship should be considered as an intangible heritage, which is to be protected as well as historical or natural heritages of one place. Traditional craftsmanship is not only material products, but more practices and knowledge that is needed to produce them.

“Any efforts to safeguard traditional craftsmanship must focus not on preserving craft objects – no matter how beautiful, precious, rare or important they might be – but on creating conditions that will encourage artisans to continue to produce crafts of all kinds, and to transmit their skills and knowledge to others.”

UNESCO

127 countries from Albania and Algeria to Zambia and Zimbabwe have signed up to the convention, effectively making Intangible Cultural Heritage part of their cultural policy.

Still, traditional handcrafts industry (if ever it could be called industry) faces serious threats and needs an immense amount of support from local governments, but also from ordinary people, for whom there are many ways in which they can do it.

Many skills, for example, like weaving, forging and soldering are in danger of being lost, as demand for them falls in the digital age. Another problem is that many traditional crafts, no matter in which part of the world they are made, are mastered by elderly craftspeople, and the passing of knowledge to young generations is very insufficient, if not absent in some cases at all, for a number of reasons. Thus some crafts, not living among each generation, are at risk of fading away in the next years.

Another role of handcraft is a support of vulnerable groups of population, like in some contexts, women might be.

While being on our journey in Vietnam, we have visited several small villages where the crafting of bracelets, souvenirs and traditional costumes, provided local communities of women with additional income needed to sustain their families in their quite remote regions.

The Convention of UNESCO is mainly concerned with the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the craft products themselves. Rather than focusing on preserving craft objects, safeguarding attempts should instead concentrate on encouraging artisans to continue to produce craft and to pass their skills and knowledge onto others, particularly within their own communities.

In South Asia production of tourist souvenirs is one of the sectors that feeds not only families but the whole villages. It is typical to encounter villages or communities specialized in one type of craftsmanship. In such context, the passing of knowledge is more successful, as when the wellbeing of the whole community depends on one activity, the old generation will make sure that their descendants learn a craft that will 'feed' them and their children in the future.

Traditional craftsmanship is perhaps the most tangible manifestation of intangible cultural heritage. Globalization poses serious challenges to the survival of traditional craftsmanship. Mass production can supply more than enough of manufactured goods, souvenirs at a way lower cost, both in terms of currency and time, than hand production. Many craftspeople struggle hardly to adapt to this competition. In a tourism industry cheap souvenirs, unsustainably produced mainly in China, available at every corner and sold for low prices, put at risk production of more exclusive, authentic, but more costly to make and promote things.



There are numerous solutions that will help traditional craftsmanship to survive and thus contribute to the sustainable development of this world. From one side, legal measures need to be taken in order to guarantee the rights of communities to get resources for production of their crafts (minding environmental protection) and to guarantee a fair trade and promotion. According to observation of UNESCO, sometimes, legal measures intended for other purposes can undermine, but also encourage production of crafts. Ban of some polluting products, like plastic bags, can motivate local craftspeople to make alternative bags or containers, thus allowing traditional skills to survive.

In the same time craftsmanship needs not only legal, but also substantial financial support from the government and private investors.

Individuals can contribute not only by buying handcrafts, but also by just expressing interest to it.

For example, visiting communities that make their living from handcraft making or even participating in a workshop in order to learn different techniques and bring back home a lot of positive emotions.

To conclude this section, we would like to share one of our participants, Anne Berzina, impression, after wearing a traditional handmade dress, while visiting one of the Vietnamese homestays.

“The highlight of this place was being able to try on their traditional outfit, turns out these are handmade from 4 to 6 months. So beautiful and delicate, you can see how much work it is invested in each of such outfits. It differs between making 2 – 3 outfits each year, made me wonder how these people sustain themselves if it is their only job and there is no other monthly income... Also we learned that in this homestay they only get a few visitors each year, since it is such a small village and quite far from any cities”.



LEARNING THROUGH TRADITIONS

Learning through traditions it is a practice-oriented learning. Starting from our childhood we learn that some families eat different foods and celebrate different holidays than our own ones.

Apparently if we appreciate strongly the traditions of our own families and cultures, we can better understand and appreciate traditions shared by other people.

The following reflection by Lihn Pham on her visit to Balvi region in Latvia shows how crucial are traditions for the development of communities. They are binding people together and thus make them more attached to their land and its resources, they make them respect the place where they live. Also if practiced they can become a main tourist attraction, which if managed smartly will contribute to the sustainable economic and cultural development of the region.

It was the community spirit in the traditional dances and songs in Balvi that impressed me the most in this trip. They organised a special show that was meant to be the end of school year get together, which should have involved only children. The number of performing groups grew



larger and eventually involved people of all ages. It was easy to see their joy in dressing up in traditional clothes and that they were having a great time performing to the special audience, which were easily outnumbered by the performers.

! 1 star hotel consumes on average 157 kWh of energy per square meter, while 4 star hotel is consuming at least twice more, on average 380kWh per square meter.



It was sensible they keep the traditions going by putting their dances and songs in schools, regularly practice them in public and performing in competitions, and welcome people from all age groups to participate. This type of tradition helps keep the community together, build up the links among local people, bring about pride for their own culture, and can easily become a tourist attraction.

In some ways, tourism can help to promote local traditions. It was obvious in this instances that we as tourists caused a small stir in the community and the local were eager to perform the dances and songs. More tourists may mean more reasons for the community to be together and do what they're proud of doing. Tourism can also help to revive some of the traditions that are disappearing, such as the royal dances in Hue in Vietnam.

On the other hand, the impact of tourism and time and people's neglect can be harsh on these types of community rituals and practices. Large number of tourists may commercialize the tradition, making it into a tourism mass product. This will mean that only a small group in the community will benefit from the tradition and the value of community will decrease. An example of this can be found in some of the traditional dances and song in the communities in the Northern mountainous areas in Vietnam. On the other extreme, tourism can disrupt normal practice and shy away the performers. The community then will have to move their practices to a more remote area, away from the crowded tourists places. Otherwise, if community will remain to reside in the same place, they would need to adapt to the presence of tourists and make their rituals more tourist oriented and less authentic.

ACTIVITIES AND GAMES FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

HOTEL GLOCAL

(from *salto-youth.net*)

Raise awareness about our cultural identity in order to have a fruitful intercultural dialogue towards European/Global citizenship.

Description of the tool -

Participants should divide into pairs. One person of the pair will be receptionist, other one is guest. Every guest will get a problem card where his problem is written and his task will be explain his problem to his receptionist during 1 minute.

The problem can be really general e.g. The elevator is broken and the guest needs help to take his luggages up to the third floor. Then it can be specified e.g. The neighbour uses santal sticks because she is buddhist and the smoke is too strong.

The receptionist and the guest only can use their mother tongue and body language. They cannot use any common spoken languages! They cannot speak with each other before their meeting.

Every pair has 1 minute to speak and the receptionist should solve the problem. If he does not succeed during one minute, afterwards he can guess and the other participants will be asked as well. At last the guest can say what was the problem. Firstly all pairs will play and try to find solutions.

After the exercise, debriefing will happen. Debriefing can be on cultural identities, similarities and differences between cultures, intercultural dialogue, communication.

WHAT IF WE SLEPT FOR 100 YEARS

(by *Rip van Winkle*)

If we slept for 100 years, what would the world look like and what would we do? Individuals or groups can dream, draw, write, act, discuss, etc. possible scenarios. If we could switch our madness off for a 100 years, we could wake to world more equitably shared with nature. Such activities help people to envisage new possibilities for more sustainable relations with nature.

COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS

(by *John Seed & Joanna Macy*)

A role-playing workshop. Each participant plays the role of a part of the natural environment, then speak during a "council of all beings" at which no humans are present. Beforehand, participant make each make a masks to represent their particular aspect of nature. Has been used with adults, youth and children.



HUG A TREE

(by *James Neil*)

In a forested area, pairs take turns being blindfolded, lead to a tree (for touch and feel) and then lead away. After removing the blindfold, the tree hugger tries to locate his/her tree.

Start on a track in a pleasant forested area.

- This activity works well as a break during a hike.
- The purpose is to get people engaged in non-visual, intimate encounter with trees, as well as the terrain.
- The activity also works well as a trust-building activity.
- The groups needs reasonable maturity, such that the blindfolded people are cared for (golden rule: a blindfolded person must always be holding someone else's hand - or a tree).
- For mature groups, a briefing may be enough; for less mature groups, do a demonstration.
- In pairs, one is blindfolded. The blindfolded person is to be the tree-hugger.
- The tree-hugger is lead through the trees and then placed next to a special tree. The tree-hugger touches the tree and tries to memorize its size, shape, location, texture, etc.
- The tree-hugger person is lead back to the starting point, takes his/her blindfold off and tries to locate his/her tree.
- Swap. Usually participants like to have a couple of turns at being blindfolded and trying to find a tree.



ANCESTRAL VISUALIZATION

(*Wilderdom games*)

Imagine this:

All your direct ancestors standing on your left, in a line, starting with your father (or mother), your grandfather, your great-grandfather, etc.

All your future direct descendants standing on your right, starting with your son (or daughter), grandson, etc. These two lines stretch out over the horizon. Imagine being able to send messages "Chinese whisper" style up and down the line. What would you say? What would you ask? While making up your questions think about all the environmental damages that have been done so far and how is it possible to preserve nature for future generations.



PART II:

Changing Attitudes and Perspectives: Advices on Sustainable Behaviour and Intercultural Understanding

AUTHENTICITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

(by Līga Rudzīte)

IS THE QUEST FOR THE AUTHENTIC SUSTAINABLE?

Journeys of Sustainability took me around the northern part of Vietnam, providing a glimpse of what landscapes and life in the country can be. Staying in several home-stays in villages, a hostel in Hanoi and on a wanna-be-fancy boat in Ha Long Bay, I was given a chance to enjoy cultural performances, engage in discussions with other participants and our hosts and collect brief observations of realities along the way. The intense experience provided time, space and material to reflect on the hopes, motivations and the actions of people engaging in tourist activities, especially in places they consider exotic. As the journey went on it became a reflection on the intersection of quest for authenticity and sustainability.

ESTABLISHING THE AUTHENTIC

It was to become our second home-stay among the lush rice fields. We arrived in our minivan, another one just like ours already parked in the small parking lot next to a well built guesthouse. As we walked up the stairs to find our sleeping places and put our bags down, we passed another group of foreign tourists who ignored our smiling faces and quiet hello's. This was not unusual anymore, but did start a conversation within our group – what is it that makes people shut out part of the reality, part of what they see. It is not that us being tourists deserves a particular kindness from the side of other tourists.

But there is a certain kind of acknowledgment of the presence of others that is common and practiced among people outside these tourist encounters in “exotic” places. When I enter a building and someone is already there and it's not an entirely public space, it is a general courtesy to greet the other. Perhaps to show there is no hostility and no danger, perhaps just to establish a connection in a common space. But here the tourists tended to ignore each other – in home-stays, in hostel, in restaurants, on the village streets and even when in need for help.

Our conclusions at that point were that the need to shut out the other tourists comes from the need to remain in an authentic setting that is part of the imaginary of the exotic place the person has worked up the courage or interest to travel to. The place of many unknowns, when nothing functions as the person is used to – the food, the living conditions, the flora and fauna are supposed to be different and sometimes challenging. And also the people, their culture, language, behavior has to be different from what is known and belonging only to the chosen place of travel and therefore authentic. Excluding other tourists from the scenery is a way for establishing that authenticity. It becomes about one-on-one relationship, seeing up close, finding something that no one else can have access to at that particular moment. Also – something unspoiled by the globalization. Something not for mass consumption, therefore perhaps more sustainable.

AUTHENTIC AND THE MUNDANE

Yet finding the authentic is not easy. Fashion, music, trends on social media travel across the globe and manage to reach even very remote areas. We took a million selfies with our Vietnamese companions, were served beer with dinner and Coca-cola with lunch, homes looked just like any homes might have in countries where it is not freezing for the most part of the year and two out of three home-stays had WC's installed on their property. The procedures at home-stays were somewhat similar in all places and probably depended on our requests for certain services, e.g. dinner, space to interact a little with locals, place to sleep, breakfast. In two cases out of three we were sleeping in a building especially built for home-stays, while in one case we were divided in three groups and stayed each in a different family home. When talking about authentic, staying in the hostel and Ha Long Bay boat did not even come up. Out of all moments and experiences it is probably two that were considered the most authentic ones: staying in family homes and watching the cultural performance in one of the home-stays.

Both of these moments were very different in what they could tell us about Vietnam. Staying in somebody's home gave an insight in how people arrange their homes and what it feels like to spend a night in one. There was not much more than this in terms of engagement with the local life. While cultural performance showcased the traditional costumes, dances, music, songs of the people performing them. The performance also engaged the visitors, teaching them to play music, dressing them up in the costumes.

Each of these provided a different kind of engagement with the locality – one with the mundane, the other with something museum-like, unchanging and static. What both these experiences had in common, though, was that they were staged, not based in real-time and incapable of interaction that might change the authenticity needed to be performed.

In this sense a more authentic engagement with Vietnam might have come from a late night walk around Hanoi when we decided to cross the Long Bien bridge. We never managed to make the whole distance, but as we walked towards the river on the bridge, the ability to disappear in the dark and appear only in pockets of the bridge where people stopped for soft drinks and couples sat and talked, gave the feeling of getting a little peak into the authentic mundane, something even the most good-wishing local hosts are reluctant to show, because it is considered less note-worthy.

CONSUMPTION OF AUTHENTICITY

Authentic therefore often remains “easily served” - clear and obvious in its difference from the environments of the on-looker. This has become a winning formula for community based tourism enterprises around the world. Offering something that is clearly different from the hotel holidays, while making it comfortable and safe for the guests. But there are some aspects that still remain important even for those searching for authenticity – once it is found, there needs to

be something that can mark the moment of success. Often it is selfies and filtered hash-tagged photographs. Other times it is a souvenir acquired in the place and time. It can be many things – a rock from the road, a dried flower or anything else picked up and taken with you. But most often it is a magnet, keychain, bag, local artifact, shirt, etc bought in one of the souvenir stalls.



The first days we were traveling around Vietnam we were making lists of all the people we would need to bring “authentic” souvenirs to. And getting to village streets among the rice fields where every building was a souvenir shop with basically the same products made in China and Vietnam was somewhat a dream come true – most things were cheap and Vietnamese looking. But the magnitude of sameness soon brought us to confusion of not knowing what to buy and if at all.

Souvenir business must be a fascinating business to study – how globalized the production chains must be to produce the masses of cheap stuff, yet still give the sense of authenticity and belonging only to the one part of the world. And soothing the souls of travelers wondering how to establish the really authentic sense of the place and the moment and take it back home as cheap as possible.

THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM. IS THERE ANY?

Tourism is an industry of opportunities. People are curious creatures looking for something different – food, view, feeling. There’s always something new to look forward to. There’s always an escape from “it all”. With the dislike of the globalization and more awareness about the world comes also the need to experience something different from the known. Something authentic, especially if traveling halfway across the globe. And the authenticity as something outside the mainstream consumption hotel tourism can contribute to economic, environmental and social sustainability, as much as any travel across the world can ever do. But the problem with the authentic is that we still want to consume it, and cheaply while we’re at it. And it is our consumption patterns of the material and non-material aspects of authentic that either keep it sustainable or make it into another environmental and social development trap.



At the end of the journey I still do not know if tourism can ever be sustainable. Perhaps “responsible” is something more realistic, at least to begin with. And a good starting point for that could be taking the consumption out of the authentic practices.



GOOD VS. BAD PRACTICES

Throughout our journeys of sustainability our participants developed an understanding of what were bad practices that pose a threat to environment and local people living in the region of tourist attractions and those that could be defined as successful practices that contribute to sustainable development of tourism sector.

IIZE FISMESISTERE shared her negative impression when hearing Western music in a picturesque Vietnamese village:

“Sitting beside a rice field and breathing in fresh finally refreshing evening breeze when suddenly you hear western pop music from distance and can hear wild party happening near really leaves a strange feeling. I felt bit cheated like waking up from sort of dream of simplicity and calmness of nature”.

She had a similar feeling when staying at Halong Bay and came to conclusion that both a provider of touristic service and its final consumer should feel responsible for their behavior and attitude:

“What would you choose? To hear local music or something played on European Hit Radio? To eat same things you eat at home or maybe try something locally grown? To stay at hotel which is overusing resources or the one which is eco-friendly? It is all about choices you make and after this training I have made a promise to myself to make more sustainable choices.”

“Don’t get me wrong the view is amazing, breathtaking and impossible to capture on photography, but capitalization of this nature wonder felt just wrong. Maybe because of crowds of people, actually seeing negative aspects of irresponsible tourism it made me wonder more about how to stop this from happening to other places of our world. Of course government can do something about it, but I believe the answer lays in the education of today’s youth. To show them how to respect local community, leave positive impact, think about resource consumption and make tourism experience itself meaningful. Of course tourists bring money into local community and demand creates offers. So it is up to not only tourism provider to make sustainable offers but also for tourist to ask and be willing to pay for it. “

Ha Long bay provoked many reflections of our participants. Cherry noticed how such an unsustainably developed tourist attraction can cause environment pollution:

Sein Cherry Win

“When we arrive to Ha Long bay, it is very beautiful and very surprising scene. But I found out that it is a big concern for local habitats because of tourism. There are hundreds of boats and it could have waste from those boats. We can also see some plastics and cans floating on water and it could be dangerous for the ocean’s biodiversity. Ha Long Bay is such a beautiful place but we visited it while sailing around its islands and it was very hot there. When feeling so hot on the ship, I wanted to dive into the water from the ship, but it was not possible, because the water was so dirty. It made me really worry for the future of Ha Long Bay.”

Anne Luiza

“But as you see in the pictures, there are a ton of these ships, almost identical to one another. When we went canoeing it took us a long time to find ours, they looked all alike from afar in the same area. But we asked the guy who worked on our ship if this is regulated and to our surprise he said that at the same time there could be 500 hundred ships. What if it wouldn’t be regulated..? Would there be more..? Because the demand is obviously there. I got the full feel of the tourism abuse there in seeing the Surprise Cave. The name was chosen perfectly, because I was surprised by how many people were there at the same time, squished together in a small area making it impossible to pay attention to the magnificence of the place by instead focusing on trying not to step onto another tourist’s feet. And to the contrary

of surprising – of course it all generates trash, which floats every once in a while along the sides of the ships.”

Carlos

“If fact, visiting Manila, a country with endless McDonalds one cannot help but confronting the phenomenon of cultural homogenization, a global phenomenon, that seems particularly acute in this country. Listening to Philippines means hearing lots of random Spanish words but more startlingly English sentences intercalated within the Tagalog, the official language oh the country, spoken in mostly in Luzon. Tourism is still developing but already creating some impacts in the traditional culture and economy, leaving those who aren’t able to engage into the dollar-fuelled business in disadvantage with those who do. There has been some deal of commodification of traditional rituals offered to Westerners and Manila locals alike, leaving some of the proud Kalinga people unhappy about the process. While tourism is indeed benefit some, more work seemed to be necessary to implement an effective governance that is effective in shaping and controlling the tourism phenomenon before it goes out of control.”

Among the good practices many participants noticed the value of family run homestays for the community development and preservation of nature in Vietnam and the way traditions and innovation were combined by locals in Latvia, when promoting their culture.



So let's see what type of advices our volunteers brought back to their homes.

FOR EUROPE

DO'S

- Keep your identity card with you
- Feel free to say 'No'
- Work in a team, but take your own decisions
- Behave freely, but respect others



DON'TS

- Do not litter
- Do not smoke in public places
- Do not ask questions about salary, age and weight
- Do not spit
- Keep personal comments on somebody's appearance only for your close friends
- Do not take alcohol in public places

FOR ASIA

DO'S

- Smile, smile a lot!
- Address people with kinship terminologies
- Respect local cultures and traditions
- If you are curious, you can ask people about their age, salary and weight
- Remember that "You are fat" - could be an expression of caring 😊
- Accept what your hosts offer to you (as much as it is possible for you). It is impolite to refuse what was offered to you like to a guest.



DON'TS

- Do not take photographs without permission
- Do not show affections, like hugs and kisses in public places
- Do not offer food or water if it was already touched by your lips. It is considered not only non hygienic, but also disrespectful
- Do not give pens, shampoos, toys to children on the street
- Do not hug a woman or shake her hand when greeting
- Do not point with your foot
- If it happened to you to be in a conflict situation, try to avoid direct confrontation
- Restrain your complaints and criticism



QUIZ ON SUSTAINABILITY

1. Tourism industry generates:

- a. air pollution
- b. water pollution
- c. aesthetic pollution
- d. all of the above

2. In average, how much water (per day) is consumed by a tourist staying in a hotel?

- a. 3 times more than a local inhabitant
- b. as much as a local inhabitant
- c. 2 times less than a local inhabitant
- d. none of the above is relevant

3. For the hosting community which of the type of accommodation, chosen by tourists, would have a greater economic impact?

- a. "All-inclusive" hotel
- b. a three star hotel
- c. family-run bed&breakfast
- d. all of the above

4. In which countries do people have the smallest footprint (environmental impact)?

- a. Australia and North America
- b. India and Brazil
- c. Canada and France
- d. Russia and Poland

5. Which of the below goals are not considered to be a socio-cultural impacts of tourism?

- a. changes in traditional ceremonies
- b. threat of indigenous identity
- c. changes in morality and value system of local population
- d. change in religious confession

6. Which country can be considered as a leader in the use of bicycles?

- a. The Netherlands
- b. Australia
- c. China
- d. Canada

7. What mean of transport has the most negative impact on environment?

- a. car
- b. plane
- c. train
- d. bus

8. Which machine consumes the most of electricity in an household?

- a. clothes dryer
- b. refrigerator
- c. washing machine
- d. kettle

9. When traveling, which of the following actions will help you to reduce your environmental impact?

- a. buying from local artisans
- b. staying on market trails
- c. packing a battery charger
- d. all of the above

10. Which of the following is not a sustainable development goal by UNESCO?

- a. eliminate racism
- b. end poverty in all its forms
- c. ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing
- d. combat climate change



Check your answers:

1. d; 2. a; 3. c; 4. b; 5. d; 6. a; 7. b; 8. b; 9. d; 10. a.

PART III

Prospects for the Future of Sustainable Tourism

WHAT DID THIS PROJECT CHANGE: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL IMPACT

While the need to achieve sustainable development is widely agreed, what form this development should take in different sectors is still highly contested and uncertain. Promoting good governance is definitely one of the crucial steps. However, implementing a range of activities at the government level would be efficient only if other actors, like businesses and organizations, but also individual actors would also react and make important steps in their actions towards sustainability.

In this project we had a chance to witness and then analyze, in particular, what could be the role of youth and NGO in the promotion and enforcement of sustainable development practices in the tourism sector. Sustainable tourism implies first of all respects towards the nature, ensures that it provides local population with descent, fairly paid jobs and maintains local culture, stimulating new opportunities for local heritage preservation.

Through our study visits we had an opportunity to learn from real cases, communities, tourist sites about some practices that affect, either positively or negatively, the condition of one place, the well being of a group of people, preservation of heritages and natural habitats.

Our participants share some of their own impressions of what this project taught them and basing on their observations, give some advices for a more sustainable development of tourism.

Sothida

"After I joined this program, I felt like I need to reflect more on my actions, in particular when I visit some places, because my actions can affect communities of people and nature. After the project, I think, I started to understand what is implied under the concepts of sustainability of tourism and responsibility for our community. I can compare between the three homestays that I have already visited, and I think that their good practices could be easily applied in my home country – Cambodia. I have already planned to visit one small community in my hometown to see what I can do to help them make more sustainable decisions for their future. In these community the majority of people cannot speak English and this is already one clear disadvantage when hosting foreign visitors."

Tonia

"Then, I appreciate their ability to create local in craft project and to take care of their territory. And they seem willing to give up an intensive economy way. I think it could be possible. In Latgale people can start from scratch with modern knowledge on sustainable development models. In other places of the world, however, the lack of care and attention to the territory in the past has produced major environmental disasters. Disasters to which it is now very difficult to repair. Environmentalists say that to pollute just an hour, to reclaim an area takes years and many financial resources. It is why it is important for Latvian people to choose the development model carefully with as little environmental impact. And this is only one aspect of the so-called sustainability we love."

Anne Luize

"There are ways to prevent an area of becoming too touristic and not sustainable, but how do you change an area that is already too far gone as it is in this case. Maybe just learn from the experience and do as much as you can to prevent the same happening elsewhere choosing the value of the nature and people there over the money that it might temporarily generate."

Irakli

"Going natural all the way is that supernatural thing nowadays."

Ance

"How we perceive life is wonderful thing, the things that we take for granted in everyday life keeps us surprising when we visit somewhere new. The fresh water, the flowers, the grass in uncut field, the national folk dance or just the nightly football game between friends. Right know while I am on my way home I think about the culture, about the nature, about the place where we live, the place that is given to us. When we step out of our perceptions about what we can do in our everyday life we start see more, to receive more. From these days in Latgale I will take with me the joy of life, of living, the love to Latvian culture, to my heritage, to nature that surrounds us and the proud of Latvia what they gave me, to the human that just passed through their lives."



Ruth

"Essentially, there are more tourists now than ever before, and many travel to countries in the so-called global south in search of fun, adventure and exoticism. Yet, many of us leave our ethics in the departure lounge of our airport of origin, and commit tourism sins we wouldn't dream of doing at home. Many of us would scream in horror at this accusation and say "No, not!! I would never commit an illegal activity or disrespect the local culture and traditions" and perhaps we wouldn't engage in the commercial sex industry, drug trafficking or the purchasing of endangered animal goods. But how many of us make accidental errors when the sun is hot and the humidity is high? How many of us have drunk alcohol with a local guide to the extent that he or she couldn't work properly the day afterwards?"

How many of us have taken photographs of children without asking permission, been rude or abrupt when negotiating prices or dressed inappropriately when visiting a temple of sacred site? The list of small sins could be endless, but this does not mean we should not try to shorten it."



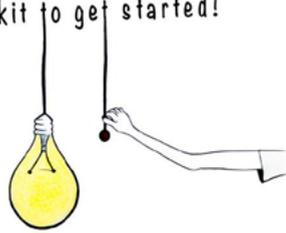
HOW TO LEAVE MORE POSITIVE FOOTPRINTS

RESPONSIBLE TOURIST'S STARTER KIT

Everyone can begin with small-scale positive effects for global sustainability, so here's your kit to get started!

SAVE ELECTRICITY

- turn off the electrical devices when leaving
- unplug devices



CHOOSE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TRANSPORT

- go by foot
- cycle more
- use public transportation instead of your own car



SAVE RESOURCES

- SORT WASTE
- DON'T LITTER
- RECYCLE
- USE CLOTH BAGS

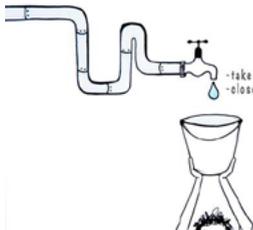


BUY LOCAL



SAVE WATER

- take quick showers
- close the tap while washing teeth/dishes



USEFUL LINKS

<http://www.journeys-of-sustainability.eu> – an official website of the project

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm – information about EU Erasmus+ programme

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/programme/partnerships/cap_building_en.htm – information about capacity building in the field of youth

<http://sustainablefootprint.org> – tutorials, lessons, interactive exercises targeted at youth to learn more about people's ecological footprint – a tool for sustainability

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org> – sustainable development knowledge platform

<http://www.conservation.org> – a website of global organization Conservation International, which empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature

<https://www.seed.uno> – a website of an organization that helps to establish sustainable businesses

<http://whc.unesco.org/sustainabletourismtoolkit/> – a toolkit on sustainable planning and development of tourism

<http://www.ecotourism.org/> – a website of the International Ecotourism Society, an organization that promotes ecotourism globally.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/> – information about Sustainable Development Goals elaborated by the United Nations



**JOURNEYS OF SUSTAINABILITY:
A HANDBOOK ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
FOR EUROPE-ASIA VOLUNTEERS**

Idea and realisation: **Oleksandra Seliverstova**

Supervision: **Abel Polese**

Design and technical assistance: **Nina Kononova**

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SUSTAINABILITY**

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