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# Shortcomings in planning approaches to tourism development in developing countries: the case of Turkey

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## Abstract

Many developing countries have prepared plans particularly at the central level to guide tourism development, as they have recognized the tourism sector as an important source of foreign currency earning and employment. In this context, mainly aims at analyzing the shortcomings of the planning approaches to tourism development in developing countries by exemplifying the points made with special references to Turkey. There appears to be several defects in the planning approaches to tourism development. Concludes that there is the need for political stability, establishing supportive institutions and decentralization to develop and implement an appropriate contemporary tourism planning approach by taking into account destination specific conditions, and collaboration and cooperation of western governments and international agencies.

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## Introduction

During the post-Second World War era, tourism demand has rapidly increased and tourism has become a world-wide phenomenon. Not surprisingly, this post-war boom has drawn the attention of many developing countries, and tourism as one of the growing industries of the world economy has enticed many entrepreneurs and governments of various countries to invest in the tourism industry without proper planning and preparation. The case of Turkish tourism development seems to provide a general reflection of the outlook of tourism development in many developing countries. Crippling debts, low export potential and the loss of remittances from Turkish workers living abroad have meant that since 1981, with the encouragement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Turkish governments have prioritized the development of the tourism industry. The intense intervention of the international donor agencies in the economy of Turkey has accelerated the implementation of outward-oriented neo-liberal development strategies. Thus, successive governments have given generous and extensive fiscal and monetary incentives to the tourism sector. This has ushered in an unexpected and rapid growth of tourism in the absence of proper planning and development principles and alongside inadequate private sector experiences.

The main objective of this article is to examine the defects of tourism planning in the context of the developing world with special reference to Turkey. However, it should be noted here that it may not be possible to find evidence to support every contention about the defects in planning approaches to tourism development owing to difficulties in obtaining information from

public and private sources and the lack of written material about ill-planning issues in many developing countries, where almost every kind of information is treated as confidential. Therefore, this paper may reflect in part a polemic based on the authors' observations.

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## The concept of tourism development planning

The US Planning Association defined planning in a 1979 policy statement as "a comprehensive, coordinated and continuing process, the purpose of which is to help public and private decision makers arrive at decisions that promote the common good of society" (Stiftel, 1990, p. 67). This definition, though brief and simple, is meaningful and comprehensive. National development plans seek to increase the common good of society, which should be the ultimate aim of every person and every sector of an economy. The tourism development plan as a component of a national development plan must contribute to this ultimate aim as well.

Although tourism development planning does not have a unique definition, with the recent growth of mass tourism world-wide, tourism planning has become a specialized area and it has developed its own specific techniques, principles, and models while drawing on general planning methodology. Generally speaking, tourism planning has been defined as a process based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality (Tosun and Jenkins, 1998). This definition reveals that tourism planning does not solely involve the number of tourists and their economic consequences. Its emphasis is on achieving goals of development. Thus, tourism planning should relate tourism development to the more equitable distribution of wealth that is one of the main aims of national development planning. In this respect,

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tourism planning is a component of national development planning and strategy.

Moreover, it includes a decision-making process between the tourism industry and other sectors of the economy, between various sub-national areas and between types of tourism. It requires the integration of the tourism industry into other sectors such as agriculture, industry, transportation and social services (Timothy, 1999).

### **Shortcomings of planning approaches to tourism development in Turkey**

The common shortcomings of planning approaches to tourism development in the context of the developing world, but with special reference to Turkey as a developing country, will be analyzed under several sub-headings to exemplify the points made. Indeed, it is suggested that these are main obstacles to implementation of contemporary tourism planning approaches and, thus, sustainable tourism development in many developing countries. Before analyzing the defects in planning approaches to tourism development in detail, it is useful to illustrate those shortcomings. Based on current literature dealing with tourism planning and development (see Hall, 2000; Reed, 1997; Tosun, 2000; Timothy, 1999) and the present situation in Turkey, Figure 1 was developed to illustrate the shortcomings of tourism planning approaches in developing regions. This framework guides the remainder of this discussion.

#### **Over-centralization of tourism planning and improper practice of public administration**

The planning apparatus is highly centralized in most developing countries. The planning office is usually located in the office of the national chief political executive, who may

even have a direct role in its operations. By and large, the operations of national planning agencies are centralized and resist efforts to bring about such devolution in management and functions. For example, in Turkey the central government is the only body deciding on the scope of planning not only for tourism, but also for all the sectors of the economy. The State Planning Organization (SPO) is under the direct management and control of the Prime Minister. In this planning process, local bodies have been used as an extension of the ruling party to facilitate implementation of the central government's priorities, or they are forced to follow central government decisions via various economic and political pressures.

Scholars in the field of development studies and planning have recognized that state planning is no guarantee of success as measured in terms of development. Indeed: at times it may be counter-productive . . . central planning in the Third World (and elsewhere) has led already inefficient and perhaps corrupt governments to interfere with free trade, with disastrous results. Stretched to carry out even the "essential function" of government, they have failed (Harrison, 1988, p. 168).

Moreover, developing countries are often anxious to plan but unable to govern. They too often accept the apparatus, symbols and rhetoric of planning, but lack the discipline and forethought to carry it out. One study by the World Tourism Organization (1980) concluded that 43.5 percent of 1,619 assorted tourism plans were never implemented.

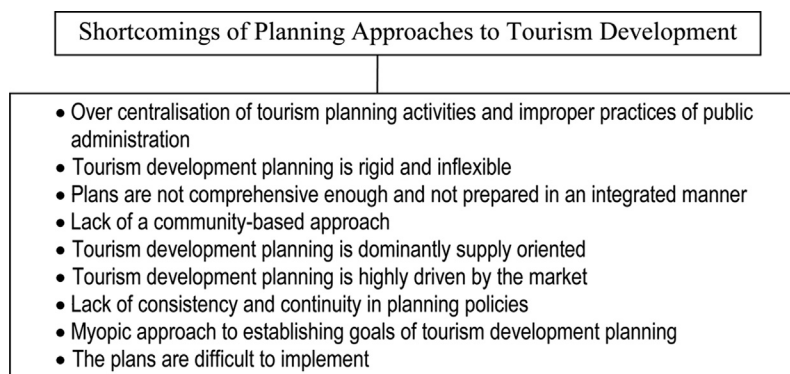
As implied, one of the main problems of tourism development in Turkey is the highly centralized state administration that leads all decisions and implements plans without carefully taking into account regional and local conditions. A lack of homogeneity in conjunction with the highly centralized, rigid public administration system have made the state ineffective in responding to problems of the tourism sector, which requires day-to-day and season-to-season operational decisions. In the context of Turkish tourism development, it is suggested that to achieve sustainability planning should take into account regional and local conditions. This cannot be done by a macro- or national-level approach, but instead requires regional and destination-specific planning (Tosun, 2001).

#### **Tourism development planning is rigid and inflexible**

According to the current 1982 constitution, the SPO must prepare a national development plan every five years by

**Figure 1**

Defects in planning approaches to tourism development



consulting the Prime Minister and relevant ministers. Preparation of a development plan takes approximately 2.5 years (Milli Guvenlik Kurulu Genel Sekreterligi, 1993). Within this rigid planning framework, the central government is the only authority to decide on the form and style of tourism development. Hence, the flexibility of the planning process is reduced. If a local body faces problems during the implementation of centrally made decisions, it is required to consult with and wait for the response of the central government, which may take some time. In this context, the Municipal Governor of Kusadasi (a well-known coastal resort on the Aegean Sea) stated that the population of Kusadasi has been dramatically increased as a result of new jobs in the tourism sector and those who settled here to spend the rest of their lives, mainly retired people. Moreover, the population has been further increased during the summer season:

In spite of this, the revenues of the municipal government have not increased to be able to meet the additional demand for services. In grants extended by Ministries and other bodies . . . to the Municipalities, population is a criterion besides other characteristics of the town (Suyolcu, 1980, pp. xii-xiii).

The statement of Kusadasi's mayor seems to have become more valid for most local tourist destinations in Turkey, since not much progress has been made in terms of decentralization of the public administration system since 1980. In fact, decentralization practices created an opposite move toward centralization in the 1980s and local bodies have been organized in a way that can still be used by the ruling party in Turkey. Hence, if central and local government are not of the same political party, this creates conflict and further problems in terms of flexibility, owing to issues of partisanship.

The above discussion reveals that tourism development planning in Turkey largely refers to preparation of the end state master plan which is usually too rigid to cope with rapidly changing socio-cultural, economic, technological and other conditions under which the tourism industry operates. Thus, it may be naive to expect that such a rigid tourism planning approach will contribute to achieving the objectives of development.

#### **Plans are not comprehensive enough and not prepared in an integrated manner**

It is argued that there is a lack of integrated planning in Turkey, where sectoral planning in isolation dominates. The plans have essentially consisted of volume/value objectives designed to be achieved through an allocation of state-owned resources and

the provision of a range of incentives to help facilitate the achievement of these goals. In the broader context of sectoral development planning, these activities in relation to tourism growth in Turkey are not effective planning and do not reflect concerns of contemporary approaches to tourism development. While the tourism industry is subsidized through generous incentives, agriculture seems to be ignored even though 46.8 percent of all human resources is in agriculture (State Planning Organisation, 1994), and it is one of the main sectors which is necessary for a healthy tourism industry. By giving generous incentives, the central government itself has created an unrealistic image regarding the profitability of tourism. Therefore, many farmers in popular tourist destinations have sold their lands, most of which were valuable agricultural areas, to finance tourism-related business during the 1980s and 1990s. They became hoteliers, restaurant owners, shopkeepers, etc., without knowing what they really wanted to do and without considering the viability of tourism. That is, in common with other developing regions, tourism was seen as a way of replacing, rather than supplementing, meager incomes from traditional farming in prime tourist destinations in Turkey. As a result, most of these former farmers have failed in their attempts to operate a profitable small tourism business in the tourism sector in Turkey.

The Turkish tourism experience suggests that any tourism development plan has to be integrated into the nation's socio-economic and political policies, the natural and built environment, socio-cultural traditions, other related sectors of the economy and their financial schemes, and the international tourism market. Without considering this approach, many socio-economic, and environmental problems will emerge as an obstacle to implementing the principles of development as stated at the outset of this article.

#### **Lack of a community approach**

Within the developing world, there is a lack of political will to implement a participatory tourism development approach because of its implications for the distribution of power and resources (Timothy, 1999; Tosun, 2000). Often, governments in power are indifferent toward indigenous development practices, which exist in many traditional social forms. Moreover, the government is not only disinterested in development, it also "[r]igorously suppresses the effort of progressive elements to bring about meaningful changes" (Midgley, 1987, p. 11).

Consequently, Third World politicians seem to be far from the realization of development ideals, particularly the participatory development strategy. As a result, the participation of the local community in their affairs is a missing ingredient of development in many developing countries. Tourism as a relatively new sector of economies of developing countries is not exceptional in this regard. As noted previously, tourism development in Turkey reflects the concerns of the central government and its clients. Government departments are unwilling to accept participatory development approaches since their role or public representation may be questioned through moves toward citizen empowerment.

Since the main goal of tourism development is to increase foreign receipts, many other dimensions of tourism are not taken into consideration. Therefore, tourism continues to be driven by upper levels of government rather than community interests. In Turkey, tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon seems to reinforce the limitless power of the government. This is due to the fact that tourism is developed, planned and managed by the central government, which is directed by patron-client relations, in collaboration with international tour operators, who shaped tourism development for their own interests rather than for the common good of the whole society.

The above argument may suggest that although the participatory tourism development approach has been popularized as an instrument for achieving more sustainable tourism development in the developed world, this pro-active approach has not been recognized in Turkey and elsewhere in the developing world (see Timothy, 1998, 1999). However, without the operation of a participatory tourism planning approach, tourism growth may make little contribution to the objectives of development.

#### **Tourism development planning is dominantly supply-oriented**

Building physical facilities, such as hotels, restaurants, telecommunications systems, and transportation, has been the main instrumental concern of tourism planning in many developing countries. Thus, tourism planning was seen as a simplistic process of encouraging new hotels to open, making sure that there was transportation access to the area. For example, in Turkey, private sector representatives have influenced the central government to give generous incentives to

increase bed capacity. The result has been a sudden boost in facilities, such as hotels and air and road transport, in places that were becoming popular holiday resorts. However, these facilities have been developed haphazardly. Although the superstructure of the industry has reached a high level, infrastructure has not been developed to the same extent. That is, tourism development has taken place in prime tourist areas such as Marmaris, Bodrum, Kusadasi, Fethiye, Oludeniz, and Side Urgup in a *laissez-faire* fashion or free-for-all type of development. As a result, physical construction in these tourist destinations has damaged natural resources in the regions that tourists have come to see (Morrison and Selman, 1991).

Even marketing has not been considered in full measure. Competition from alternative destinations has not been taken into sufficient account, and broad-based cooperation has been ignored. In other words, entrepreneurs have ignored (or comprehended too well) what others have been doing and have planned their investments accordingly. The ultimate result is high inefficiency and low profitability from investment ventures (Tosun, 1999). Consequently, Turkey has become popular as a cheap alternative to other Mediterranean destinations. In fact, according to a survey conducted by the Association of Tourism Investors, Turkey is the second cheapest holiday destination in the Mediterranean after Tunisia (Turizm Yatirimcilar Dernegi, 1997). In brief, in addition to environmental problems, the domination of supply-oriented tourism planning has created excess capacity in the tourism sector, which cannot be stored for the future. This may reflect an inefficient use of limited resources and an approach to development that primarily emphasizes economic growth.

#### **Tourism development planning is highly driven by the market**

After the high supply-oriented tourism development stage, competing with similar destinations and organizing promotional campaigns have become important components of the plans in many tourist destination countries in the developing world. As Butler (1990, p. 16) stated:

Implicit in any planning of tourism is the need to acknowledge that most planning to date has been marketing rather than planning, and in such a situation capacity parameters (environmental and human) have rarely been considered. Emphasis has traditionally been on attracting tourists rather than planning for appropriate development and management of resulting effects.

Since supply-oriented tourism development may have caused over-production to take place, marketing-oriented tourism development seems to have been a necessary reaction. For example, after being given generous incentives, private and public entrepreneurs have invested large amounts of capital in the tourism industry. Today, there is over-production in the accommodation sector particularly in main tourism regions such as the Aegean Coast, Mediterranean Coast and Cappadocia in Turkey. Naturally, in Turkey and elsewhere, much tourism development is market driven. The short-term needs of tourists and the provision of interesting experiences have directed planning and marketing efforts in the industry. In brief, short-term, market-determined criteria have been the yardstick, and the future use of resources has not been acknowledged in the development of facilities for mass tourism.

The main goal and prime motive of supply and myopic marketing-oriented tourism development and planning have been commercial and economic gains on the part of both private and public sectors. While the private sector provided for a growing tourism market, governments supported them in various ways, such as through the provision of leisure and cultural facilities. Moreover, the Ministry of Tourism (MT) and other related public bodies in Turkey have made significant contributions to promotional campaigns, but they ignored the social, cultural and environmental implications of such endeavors. They supported the projects simply by accepting the economic case for tourism development, the prime reason being that tourism was evaluated as a component of an export-led economic development strategy.

#### **Lack of consistency and continuity in planning policies**

Political inconsistency is one of the main problems of sustainable development in Turkey. As stated by the most powerful Turkish businessman, Rahmi Koc, "We (the Turkish people) are losing out a lot because of political drawbacks" (*The Times*, 1997, p. 8). The 1990s have become Turkey's lost decade, during which few structural reforms could take place owing to political instability that has prevented the emergence of a strong government essential for public sector reform and establishing political and economic stability. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the average term of duty of every government in power was 1.3 years in Turkey. The Ministry of Tourism (1997) reported that between 1963 and 1996,

30 ministers were appointed to this position. The average term of each Minister of Tourism was 1.1 years – too short a period to achieve much, particularly at the national level. This suggests that the historical position of the Turkish State with respect to tourism has been fairly inconsistent, which may have been ushered in by the appointment of too many ministers in a very short time.

Moreover, as part of political traditions of favoritism, ministers and even appointed bureaucrats replace the former personnel in their "territory" (department) with new ones with whom they want to work, without considering the efficiency and effectiveness of their departments. This is a reflection of corrupted party politics in Turkey, as in many other developing countries. The MT may not be exceptional in this regard. As Brotherton *et al.* (1994) pointed out, the change in government gave birth to something of a political hiatus and re-ordering of priorities, changes in policies and personnel. These unstable policies have caused uncertainty, which has led to the emergence of a *laissez-faire* approach to tourism development.

In brief, the current political situation in the country is a reflection of the political history of Turkey, which has prevented the implementation of a continuous and stable planning policy based on scientific research. The implication of this may be that without political and economic stability it is difficult to achieve healthy tourism development and development in general.

#### **Myopic approach to establishing goals of tourism development planning**

There is some confusion over the specific goals of tourism planning and policy making, for sub-sectors within the industry, target groups of customers, and the desired types of development have never been clearly defined. An analysis of seven Five-Year Development Plans (1963-2000) suggests that the primary concern of tourism development was/is to increase foreign exchange earnings. Increasing the physical capacity of the tourism sector and the number of international tourist arrivals were determined as secondary or instrumental objectives to achieve the primary goal, which is merely maximizing foreign currency earnings from international inbound tourism without carefully taking into account wider issues, such as environmental matters and the distribution of tourism's benefits.

If Turkey had not been in desperate need of foreign exchange earnings, the development of tourism would have been very different

from the present situation. However, even though Turkey aimed to increase foreign currency earnings through international inbound tourism, there is no reliable research that measures net earnings from these efforts. Limited research, however, suggests that leakage of international tourism receipts is high in Turkey (Tosun, 1999).

Not surprisingly, there is no serious research on the environmental impacts of rapid tourism development in Turkey. However, one of the authors' knowledge, based on his extensive experience in the country and particularly in popular local tourist destinations, as well as an analysis of regulations in the tourism sector, show that there are no strict planning regulations, and local authorities have little power to prevent or minimize the negative impacts of tourism development. Hence, ribbon development has occurred along the coast of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, scenic routes, and in areas of volcanic beauty in the region of Cappadocia alongside socio-cultural impacts, which are not easy to measure. Although the MT has recently attempted to stop environmental destruction by irresponsible tourism development, it is unlikely that an effective measure will be taken due to the extensive client-patron relationships that exist.

These myopic approaches to tourism development planning were successful for the development of individual hotels or small resorts in the era before mass tourism. However, developing mass tourism without having a comprehensive planning approach has created environmental, social and economic problems. Since many places have approached tourism development with simple and improper plans or without having any types of plan, they have paid the social and environmental consequences of careless tourism development. Thus, the goals of tourism development in developing countries should be reconsidered and determined in terms of "development" and "sustainable development", which is primarily concerned with intra- and inter-generational equity, satisfaction of basic needs of people, and protecting and preserving natural and cultural resources.

#### **The plans are difficult to implement**

Rigid planning frameworks, lack of continuity in tourism planning, and ignoring local conditions under which the plan will be implemented during the preparation of tourism development plans have led the national team to develop a tourism plan that is not advanced enough to cope with the real

conditions. In other words, planning is perceived as a routine activity, which must be done in certain periods, rather than a dynamic and continuous process at various levels. For example, dynamic market research and evaluation are not considered an important element of tourism development in Turkey, and the MT has very little contact with university experts, who could assist in these efforts. This may be a reflection of the approach to development planning that tends to see planning as a once-over activity, as well as the lack of a research- and process-oriented approach to tourism planning, owing to limited budgets for research and development in many developing countries.

Many statements thus remain as merely nice words in planning documents, which are often used merely to show that the ruling party is doing an important job. Although actualization of plan goals is indicated as satisfactory, it may be pure tokenism. The highly political dependence of the bodies such as the SPO and the State Statistical Institution might suggest that they may adjust figures in order to increase the popularity of the ruling party, rather than indicating figures as objectively as possible, due to the possible political and bureaucratic pressures. In brief, Turkish development planning is predominantly a political activity, rather than a developmental one. One may claim that politically desirable plans will have a better chance for implementation, but if planning is too politicized to satisfy power holders at the expense of society, it can hardly be called planning at all since it has deviated from its professional base. Thus, quality and implementability of planning depend on the skills and sincerity of members of parliament in the ruling party and their bureaucrats and technicians who are too often motivated to act in their own interests.

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#### **Conclusion**

Based on this discussion, it is possible to draw some general conclusions that take the form of policy recommendations and a set of related lessons for why modern planning approaches to tourism development have not been implemented and why these defects in planning approaches to tourism development have emerged in developing countries.

First, current defects in planning approaches to tourism development in many countries are an extension of prevailing shortcomings of public administration systems, political cultures, over-politicized

states and lack of developmental approaches to national development. That is to say, the roots of an ill-planned approach to tourism development are a reflection of the existing sophisticated socio-political and economic system that shaped planning approaches to tourism development. As Tosun and Jenkins (1998, p. 111) argued:

The choice of approach to planning assignments will be conditioned by many factors. Perhaps the predominant factors will be related to the stage of political and economic development in the particular country. The approach adopted will usually reflect past experience and current conditions, with budgetary considerations being a major issue.

In this regard, it is suggested that moving towards a more developmental, contemporary, and implementable planning approach to tourism development in developing countries largely depends on the macro socio-political and economic structure, and in this macro system the tourism planning team or the national planning organization cannot develop and implement a better planning approach to tourism development themselves unless some desirable changes in this macro system take place. This may mirror the popular assertion that tourism does not bring development, rather development brings tourism.

Second, as the case of Turkey shows, political instability appears to be one of the main obstacles to implementation of continuous planning activity and consistency of tourism policy. Within current political instability and conflicts, it may be difficult to create an enabling environment for planning to ensure the best use of scarce available resources to maximize the benefits of tourism and minimize the disbenefits. This may be owing to the fact that the most needed institution with a relevant mandate may not be built under the highly unstable political environment and uncertainty. Moreover, political instability usually creates risk for professionals, bureaucrats and politicians, and social conflicts in the developing world. Therefore, it may not even be possible to operate the existing organizational and bureaucratic structure effectively and use accumulated human resources for planning activities. That is, such uncertainty makes it unlikely to implement a comprehensive, integrated and participatory development plan to lead the tourism industry to be developed in a more sustainable manner.

Third, it has been witnessed that “once-over” and rigid national master tourism plans have failed to tackle problems of

tourism destinations in developing countries. This old approach to planning has been replaced with a new approach to planning, which is called the “contemporary approach” that involves flexible, continuous, comprehensive, integrative, participatory and system planning models. These components of the contemporary approach are not necessarily exclusive; rather they overlap each other. There are differences among the components of the contemporary approach to planning, however, sometimes some of them can replace one another to some extent. At other times they may embody a more alternative stance towards empirical reality, but at no time can one of these planning approaches alone be sufficient to function as contemporary tourism development planning.

Therefore, developing countries should develop an appropriate method of planning by using the right mix and proportion of components of the contemporary approach, taking into account their own circumstances. However, the appropriate development approach for a country may be difficult to decide or define, particularly for countries like Turkey, Indonesia, and India, which may be too large and heterogeneous to be viewed from a single perspective. Thus, destination-specific planning approaches to tourism development at the local level must be an essential ingredient of contemporary tourism development planning in these countries. There is no magical checklist for an appropriate or inappropriate approach to tourism development planning, but what may be needed is a combination of several contemporary tourism development approaches, including participatory, comprehensive, integrated, systematic, and incremental/flexible tourism development approaches, by taking into account the following factors to develop a destination-specific guide for tourism development. These factors are: socio-economic indicators of the destination, socio-cultural and economic traditions, community values, people in positions of economic and political power, characteristics of the primary components of tourism attractions and physical environment, and the main problems of the current tourism development.

Finally, the efficiency and effectiveness of contemporary approaches to tourism planning largely depend on the pattern of power distribution in developing countries. Centralized public administration systems make the implementation of contemporary approaches to tourism planning difficult. For instance, in the case of Turkey, the SPO,

which is under direct control of the Prime Minister, should become more autonomous and free from politicians' arbitrary intervention in the planning process. This may be necessary to enable professional staff in planning offices to use their accumulated knowledge and experience in the planning activities in a better way. A more autonomous and flexible structure should encourage the SPO to give consultancy service to local governments and the private sector via the collaboration of local universities.

The case of Turkey suggests that without recognizing the described institutional, political and developmental issues, and taking remedial actions based on hard political choices and a confident decision-making process, contemporary development approaches to tourism planning may not be implemented, and consequently the potential social, economic and political benefits of tourism may not contribute to the objectives or principles of development and sustainable development.

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