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ADU-AMPONG, Emmanuel <<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6285-3875>> and KIMBU, Albert Nsom <<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8505-6705>>

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The past, present and future of sustainability in tourism policy and planning in Sub-Saharan Africa

Emmanuel Akwasi Adu-Ampong

Department of Service Sector Management, Sheffield Business School,

Sheffield Hallam University, UK

*School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, College of Business and Economics, University
of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa*

e.adu-ampong@shu.ac.uk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6285-3875>

Albert Nsom Kimbu

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management,

University of Surrey, UK

*School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, College of Business and Economics, University
of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa*

a.kimbu@surrey.ac.uk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8505-6705>

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Tourism is currently growing faster in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and in many other developing regions compared to the rest of the world. The UNWTO estimates that in absolute terms there were 63 million international tourist arrivals in SSA for the year ending 2017 – a 9% growth rate. However, this is only 5% of global international tourist arrivals with the share of receipts for SSA at 3% (UNWTO, 2018). While tourism in SSA has long been touted as a potential vehicle for economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction (Novelli, 2015), the outcome has been inconsistent and implications at the local level questionable (Adu-Ampong, 2017, 2018; Mbaiwa, 2005; Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2013). Nonetheless, the growing influence of the tourism sector in SSA calls for careful consideration of the past, present and future planning and policy contexts through which tourism can be leveraged to achieve sustainable outcomes.

This Special Issue on *Sustainability in tourism policy and planning in Sub-Saharan Africa: past, present and future*, reassesses the process of tourism policy and planning in SSA over the years. This is set against the wider context of the UNWTO having declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) having three of the seventeen goals making an explicit reference to tourism in goal 8: economic growth and employment, goal 12: sustainable consumption and production, and goal 14: conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (UN.org, 2016). The tourism sector is ergo being called upon to explicitly integrate sustainability in its economic, social and environmental dimensions than has been done previously. This Special Issue therefore considers how the increasing focus on sustainability in policy discourses are shaping current and future tourism policy and planning in the SSA context. The papers are drawn from across all the different sub-regions of sub-Saharan Africa and provide a critical (re)examination of the role of tourism policies, plans and practices in achieving sustainable development in SSA.

Contributions to the Special Issue

The seven papers in this Special Issue are empirical and grounded within relevant sustainability and policy related theoretical and conceptual frameworks that explore one or more of the economic, social, cultural, political, organisational or environmental dimensions of the subject. In particular, the papers critically analyse and discuss the characteristics, past and present successes, and challenges as well as the future implications of incorporating sustainability into tourism policy, planning and development in Sub-Saharan African countries.

The first paper, “*Historical trajectories of tourism development policies and planning in Ghana, 1957 – 2017*”, by Adu-Ampong, examines the change and continuities in tourism development policies and planning in Ghana over the last 60 years. Using the “Development First” and “Tourism First” framework (Burns, 1999) and through a detailed contextual analysis of key national economic development plans and national tourism development policies and plans, the paper identifies four broad political eras that have influenced the evolution of tourism policy and planning in Ghana. The paper highlights how the distinct historical contexts of state involvement shape the present and future characteristics of tourism development in the

country. The study's findings suggest the need for more detailed exploration of the historical processes of tourism development policies and planning in destinations in the Global South.

Degarege and Lovelock in their paper, "*Sustainable tourism development and food security in Ethiopia: policy-making and planning*" contend that despite its considerable potential in relation to food security (Hall & Gössling, 2016; Richardson, 2010), the tourism-food security relationship is one of the most critical yet overlooked areas of sustainable tourism development policy, particularly for developing countries in SSA. With a view to casting light on the tourism-food security relationship, their paper presents an analysis of Ethiopia's tourism development, with a focus on tourism policies and strategies that are linked to food security. The findings reveal that while eradicating pervasive food insecurity is a priority development concern of Ethiopia, existing tourism policy does not directly reference food security concerns. Rather, employment, income and poverty reduction are the foci of tourism policy and can be considered as, at best, implicit policy pathways to food security. They argue for the tourism sector to be guided by policy prescription and instruments that mainstream food security concerns into practice in order to achieve more effective food security in the country.

It has been shown that while women make up a greater proportion of the tourism workforce, they tend to occupy the lower rungs of managerial and supervisory roles (Baum & Cheung, 2015). To empower women within the tourism sector, the right policy approach needs to be adopted (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016, Ngoasong & Kimbu, 2019). Kimbu et al's paper on "*Collaborative Networks for Sustainable Human Capital Management in Women's Tourism Entrepreneurship: The role of tourism policy*" therefore argues that tourism policies can significantly contribute to the sustainable human capital management (HCM) in African women's tourism entrepreneurship. Through a narrative analysis of published academic and policy literature, the authors argue for tourism policy to help to break existing stereotypes and barriers to women's HCM by supporting collaborative networks that enhance the HCM of women entrepreneurs. Drawing on a cross-country case study of Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon, the authors develop a conceptual framework of four determinants of collaborative networks that influence the HCM of women entrepreneurs in tourism. These four determinants – type of network, resources, social capital dimensions and human capital management – are shown to have important implications for government policies that seek to encourage, develop and sustain the HCM of women entrepreneurship in tourism. In view of the findings, the authors among others recommend governments to prioritise and encourage more women to join collaborative networks as this contributes to ensuring the sustainability of their businesses and the tourism development impacts of women entrepreneurs.

The role of tourism policy in achieving sustainability is continued in the next paper which examines how to unlock the policy-related impediments to the sustainable operations of small- and medium sized hotels (SMSHs) in Sub Saharan Africa using the case of Cameroon. In this paper, "*Unlocking policy impediments for service delivery in small and medium-size hotels*", Tichaawa and Kimbu draw on evidence from semi-structured interviews with 30 owners and managers of SMSHs in Cameroon. Their findings demonstrate how tourism policy and planning can help to address the current impediments of low hotel occupancy rates, limited hospitality skill training opportunities and poor destination competitiveness. Tourism policy, the authors argue, must be developed through trust between the SMSHs and the public sector and need to take cognisance of local destination realities. This will ensure the realisation of the potentials of SMSHs in contributing to the sustainable economic

diversification, structural transformation and destination competitiveness of emerging SSA destinations such as Cameroon.

In their paper on *“Living Inside a UNESCO World Heritage Site: The Perspective of the Maasai Community in Tanzania”*, Melubo and Lovelock, consider the rhetoric and reality of community participation in benefit sharing schemes for ensuring the long-term sustainability of World Heritage Sites (WHS). Through a qualitative research approach involving semi-structured interviews, the authors draw insights from the perspectives of Maasai communities living in the WHS of Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) in Tanzania. The findings show that there are some significant opportunities of supplementing declining pastoral incomes through tourism for some community members. However, the development of tourism within the NCA has also resulted in reduced access to land resources, threat of relocation and inadequate involvement in decision making and benefits sharing. This has led to a negative attitude and perception among community members toward the principles and policies of conservation in the NCA. This has important implications for the current and future sustainability of conservation and tourism development within the NCA. The authors recommend a full involvement of the Maasai communities in the decision making, management and revenue sharing process in the conservation and tourism development activities within the NCA to change the perceptions and attitudes of community members and to safeguard the sustainability of the NCA as a site of conservation and tourism development.

Even though most research on the community-based tourism (CBT) model is premised on the notion of participation and empowerment of local communities in conserving the biodiversity of park resources to achieve sustainable development through tourism (Okazaki, 2008; Mayaka, Croy & Cox, 2018), a critical contextual appraisal of CBT policies and projects is necessary to have a better understanding of their effectiveness. Sène-Harper and Séye’s paper *“Community-Based Tourism Around National Parks in Senegal: The Implications of Colonial Legacies in Current Management Policies”*, examines the implications of colonial legacies in current management policies related to CBT around national parks in Senegal. They argue that the social, economic, and environmental impacts of CBT remain elusive for communities around national parks in Senegal primarily due to the effects of the former French colonial policies that are still reflected in the ways national parks in Senegal and other former French colonies are managed. Such policy frameworks are inconsistent with participatory management approaches and overall goals of tourism development and thus limit the contributions of CBT to local community development. The paper discusses how these issues reduce the channels through which locals can benefit from tourism, the collaborative space between community members and park administrators, and ultimately, precludes the sustainability of CBT projects in Senegal.

In the final paper in this special issue, *“Forty years of climate and land-cover change and its effects on tourism in Kilimanjaro National Park”*, Kilungu et al., explore the issue of climate and land cover changes in the Kilimanjaro National Park (KINAPA) and the resulting effects on tourism attraction resources. The authors note how the physical and sightseeing aspects of trekking as the main form of tourism activity in the KINAPA remain the most vulnerable to climate and land cover changes. Using the hazard-activity approach to structure the analysis, they identify the main form of climate change in the KINAPA to be higher temperatures and reduced rainfall which have lowered the risks of landslides, rock fall and mountain sickness. Higher temperatures and reduced rainfall have led to Montane forests giving way to heathlands in the KINAPA. While this has improved physical trekking conditions, it has also

resulted in the loss of wildlife, waterfalls and snow on the summit of mountains in KINAPA. The irony of sustainability concerns is that the alarming loss of snow in the short run, can add to the mountain's appeal through an increase in "last-chance tourism" although the loss of snow in the long term will make the mountains less attractive. This paper shows the need to plan for the long-term sustainability of tourism activities in the KINAPA through a diversification of activities to include the rapidly expanding heathlands with its many attractive flowers and giant groundsels in the context of ongoing climate and land cover changes.

Conclusion

This Special Issue has (re)examined how the new focus on sustainability fits into ongoing tourism policy and planning development in SSA in a bid to leverage tourism for economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction. The carefully selected papers in this Special Issue explored some key policy perspectives on the developing debates about the need for a more responsible and inclusive approach to tourism policy formulation and implementation in emerging destinations in different sub-regions of Sub Saharan Africa if the desired effects are to be felt by all stakeholders. These debates, and the ethical issues associated with them, lie behind many of the wider discussions about the sustainability of tourism policy and planning in destinations of the Global South. The papers in this special issue therefore constitute a significant source of information and contribution to the ongoing debates on sustainability in tourism development specifically, and sustainable development in general.

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