Putting SIA to the Test as a Method for Implementing Responsible Tourism Practice

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HYPOTHESIS.
Existing approaches to planning & managing the social impacts of tourism have been largely unsuccessful. We need an approach that is pragmatic and shaped by real world operational constraints & the existing “ways of doing things” used by tourism businesses.

OUR TRIAL STUDY.
We worked with two communities in Bulgaria - Kalofer and Gorno Draglishte – and the local travel company Odysseia-In which specialises in walking tours.

CONCLUSIONS:
Trial SIA has value as a practical method for implementing responsible tourism development but needs to be further adapted to address key challenges within this (and other) tourism contexts. Next step requires collaboration between responsible tourism & SIA practitioners.

Advantages
• business case benefits
• positive community impacts
• rapid & cost-effective profiling of communities and social impacts
• opportunities for product development & embedding proposed actions

Challenges
• capacity building/mentoring staff to identify & implement social impact management plan
• ownership of SIA process by staff

QUESTION.
Can SIA offer responsible tourism a practical approach to embedding the management of tourism’s social impacts into the existing planning, product development & operational processes of tourism businesses?

OUR 6 PHASE SIA.
Scoping
Predicting Impacts
Embedding
Mitigation Strategies
Capacity Building
Monitoring

What is responsible tourism?
An approach for managing any form of tourism that requires “producers and consumers to identify sustainability issues which they can address, that they take responsibility for doing so and demonstrate the outcomes” (Goodwin, 2011:19).

What is social impact assessment?
“Analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions and any initial changes invoked by those interventions so as to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environments” (Vanclay, 2003:6).

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