

## CHAPTER 4: AGENTS PARTICIPATING IN ECOTOURISM TRAIL PLANNING

*"Ecotourism involves a large cross-section of people. It's a joint operation, combining the input of several role players on many different levels. Each of these role players has an important function in the development, operation and marketing of ecotourism, ..."* (South African Tourism Board, n.d:7)

In this research the role players that will be investigated are those agents that form part of the actual domain of the research and who are the subjects that can participate in the ecotourism trail planning process. These agents engaged in ecotourism trails and consequently experience environmental education.

Wearing (1993:125) states that it is important to consider the interests of potential agents as role players in the ecotourism planning process to ensure that sustainable tourism is achieved. Wight (1993:3,8) supports this idea and is of the opinion that a fundamental principle which underlies sustainable ecotourism is not only the involvement of these agents like the host community, trailist, authority, trail planner and trail owner but that the education of these role players is also important. The implication of Wight's opinion is that all the agents that are part of the ecotourism trail planning process should be exposed to some form of education such as environmental education during the planning process.

The agents that will be discussed are the trailist, host community, trail planner, trail owner and the authority. The agents are discussed in the context of ecotourism and the implied responsibility to achieve sustainable development through facilitating environmental education. Although the agents place other demands on a trail like, recreation, leisure, enjoyment and exercise, the focus in this study is on the environmental education demand and how this demand can be

accommodated in the ecotourism trail planning process.

The host community, trailist, authority, trail planner and trail owner operate within a broader agent namely the trail environment. None of the agents can operate on their own in a vacuum and the trail environment does have an influence on them (Cater, 1995:21). Each of these agents functions and coexists in the environment and although each has a different stake or interest in the development of that environment they all appear to have mutually-reinforcing aims to ensure that the tourism development is sustainable (Cater, 1995:21; Hughes, 1995:51).

Each agent is discussed separately, but it is important to realise that in spite of each agent's separate interests and demands, they are interrelated and dependent on one another to form a dynamic system in the trail environment.

#### 4.1 The trailist

Trailists are those tourists who, in the end use the trail. They span a broad spectrum of age, interests and abilities and go on trails for a variety of reasons. Trailists are part of the demand sector of an ecotourism development. In their diversity trailists can have certain things in common, such as wanting to re-establish their interrelatedness with the environment and to engage with the environment (Goodey, 1979:286,287; Porritt, 1996:17). Trailists tend to choose a specific trail according to a need felt at that moment which could be personal or group related. Therefore, some go on a trail for recreation purposes while others go to watch birds and collect butterflies (Hultsman et al, 1987:69). Others might go for social interaction, bonding, aesthetic experiences, spiritual growth, adventure and education (Boo, 1990:xiv; Coetzee, 1995:6; Hattingh et al, 1996:3).

By implication this means that the trailist does not only want to move from one point to another but has other deeper interests while engaging in the trail



experience. Trailists also have preferences regarding other aspects like group size, type of hut and facilities, distance, type of environment and signboards (Britton, 1981:4,5). Gustke and Hodgson (1980:53) are of the opinion that if the trailists have pleasurable aesthetic responses to the trail, environmental education can be facilitated and positive resource values reinforced. In this way the trailist forms an important part of the demand analysis of ecotourism trail planning and through the successful interrelatedness of the diverse needs of the trailists, the foundation of sound planning can be established.

In ecotourism planning there is still not much information available according to Milne (1998:42) on whether ecotourists actually travel with the intention of minimising negative effects and maximising the positive, or against what factors ecotourists weigh up their decisions when deciding on an ecotourism product such as trails. From an environmental education perspective, trailists that go on trails come from a wide range of people and can, according to Keene (1994:408) be grouped into four potential user groups namely an education group, interested information-seeking adult non-specialists group, thoughtful adult non-information seekers, and mass general public.

The four user groups identified by Keene are considered in the next sections. Their demands regarding environmental education and the implications for the trail planning process are investigated.

#### *4.1.1 Education groups*

This first group can include school groups, tertiary level students and organised adult groups that usually have some foundation knowledge and are going on the trail seeking to expand their existing environmental understanding (Keene, 1994:408). Their interest is primarily educational. In using a South African example, Ballantyne & Attwell (1985:75) found that urban trails provide a useful framework within which environmental values and attitudes can be developed to

enable individuals to behave in an informed, environmentally responsible manner and become actively involved in environmental decision-making which is ultimately what environmental education is all about. The implication of this for an ecotourism trail is that the trail should take on an interactive and question- and decision-making approach. When the trail is implemented, different age groups within this group must be catered for because each age group requires different levels of interactivity and questioning that fit their development phase. This would imply that a variety of educational materials like brochures, guides, videos, cassettes and talks be prepared in a differentiated format to accompany the trail.

A trail can, environmentally, educate this group of trailists in three different ways. Firstly, it can educate them *about* the environment through formal and transmission-reception type methods just providing sufficient basic information about the trail and the environment in which it is located. Secondly, it can also educate the trailist *from/in* the environment in which the trail is located by using an issue-based and person-centred approach. Thirdly, the trail can educate the trailists *for* the environment by helping trailists to develop environment centred attitudes, values and behaviour by exposing them to situations that require the examination of moral, social, economic and political factors that surround the trail (Ballantyne & Attwell, 1985:76). It is in this last way of education and the successful integration of all three ways of teaching environmental education that the value of an ecotourism trail lies. The trailist can be stimulated through an ecotourism trail to consider official policies and plans alongside values and opinions of other "non-official" groups and individuals about environmental issues. In this way the trailists explore a range of viewpoints and can ask informed questions and make informed decisions. Therefore, the trailists become involved in real issues, processes and become more environmentally literate in the process.

A further planning issue that should be considered for this group is whether the trail should take on a specific thematic form. The implication of this for trail planning is that the successful planning of a specific theme or themes can require



progression in the unfolding of the trail theme/s e.g geology of a specific area. The sequential unlocking of the theme requires involving subject experts as well as local experts to develop the identified theme on the trail. These experts should be involved from the start of the planning of the trail to allow them to identify problems, theme sequences and walking time constraints.

Furthermore, it is important that if the trail aims to educate trailists that the degree of the trailists' interaction with the trail environment and with one another be carefully considered (Keene, 1995b:7). Trails of this kind are more mission-driven and involve active questioning and decision-making activities. In this way the users can become more informed, more appreciative and more willing to cooperate with the administration of an ecotourism venture of this nature (Abbott, 1979:44).

When the trail is used by more specialist education groups such as students and teachers a workbook version of the trail guide can be compiled. The trail guide that is made up of simple commentary in large print and includes anticipated questions, can be adapted. The workbook version can exclude detail and fine print and include questions and problems with spaces for answers (Keene, 1989:16). In doing this the workbook creates an opportunity for the trailist to enquire and interact with the questions and problems. The use of differentiated material like a trail guide and a workbook makes it possible for one trail to be used by a specific educational group as well as the general public.

#### *4.1.2 Interested information-seeking adult non-specialist*

A second group of trailists are those members of the general public who are committed to seeking information. According to Keene (1994:408) they are responsive, appreciative and interactive and need little encouragement. This motivated non-specialist group would not mind an active, questioning type of trail such as developed for the specialist group (Keene, 1995b: 8). However, it is

important that the questioning approach of a trail for this group be less direct, integrated into the text and asked in a semi-rhetorical way. Perhaps it is better for the trail to try and anticipate the sort of questions that might be raised by the curious non-specialist. In this way the trailist can be tempted to be involved yet, it allows an option to be passive (Keene, 1995b:10). If some specialist terms are included in the trail guide they should be clearly explained in the text or contained in a glossary (Keene, 1995b:9).

Trail guides for this group can be presented in two formats. The one format of the guide can have a left page that contains simple directions with straightforward commentary in large print and anticipated questions the trailist might have. This format will suit the needs of the unmotivated non-specialist general public. A second format a guide can have is to include on the right hand page in a finer print detailed specialist information (Keene, 1995b:8). Janet Keen's (1988) "Oxford Ecology Trail" (Appendix 1.1) and Childs and Cornford's (1989) "Geology at Hartland Quay" (Appendix 1.2) are examples of such guides developed and used in the United Kingdom.

Another aspect that needs to be considered is whether certain concepts and background information should be provided to the non-specialist group to allow them to participate successfully in the trail (Keene, 1995b:10). Such information could be provided before the trail starts to avoid overburdening the trailist while walking. This can be in an oral or written format and should be kept simple. It can also be disclosed within an appropriate environment as the trail progresses.

Keene (1995a:15,16) found on a visit to 36 sites in the United States that to differentiate between the different trailist's interests, information could be unlocked in three ways. To fulfil the trailist's immediate curiosity a signboard can be placed at a specific site that stimulates enquiry. For information on a more advanced level the trailist can refer to detailed colour brochures which address more detailed processes. A third level of interpretation could be provided by



displays, films and books made available at the visitor centres associated with the trail.

#### 4.1.3 *Thoughtful adult non-information seekers*

Not all trailists want an educational experience. This group of trailists will turn away from an information board because they see it as an intrusion on their experience of the environment. They resist interpretive control of the environment but not necessarily education (Keene, 1994:408). The challenge is in an informal and subtle way to build in an "enlightening experience" on the trail. Therefore, a trail aimed at this group would take on a more passive and descriptive design. The trail will be less interactive than that for the specialist group (Keene, 1995b:7). Brochures and guides should not be compulsory to enable trailists to complete the trail. However, it is important not to design such a trail without clear precision of thought and objectives otherwise it becomes too open-ended (Keene, 1995b:6).

#### 4.1.4 *The general public*

According to Keene (1994:408) this group of trailists visit a trail without any interest in the specific environment. They have little concern about acquiring the same level of understanding the first two groups seek. This group of trailists requires freedom of choice.

To cater for this group a trail should adopt a less formal education strategy, be community-based and interdisciplinary. The trail should try and connect the educational with the recreational, open space and aesthetic value (Keene, 1994:410). A more integrated approach to development is required to make the trail interesting and create in the trailist an emotional awareness and a supportive understanding attitude for conservation. In this way the trailist might realise that this is not an academic ploy but rather a method of enlightenment that will motivate the trailist to protect a valued local environment and at the same time

participate in decision-making related to environmental issues and conservation (Keene, 1994:410).

Farrell (1981:257) suggests some aspects that can assist in inducing the public to venture into the natural environment. These can easily be applied to environments of a broader context. Aspects that can help are:

- to allow trailists to move on lines of least resistance along the trail avoiding inclines that are too steep, long distances and providing attractive stop and rest places at frequent intervals;
- to make the trailist aware of points of interest to stimulate them in moving further along the trail;
- to include diversity of space like sun, shade, intimate and larger open space;
- to make features such as waterfalls and trees on the trail accessible to the trailist otherwise they will destroy the environment to get to them and expose themselves to dangerous situations; and
- to ensure safety and security like providing safety rails at high places and avoid obstacles like steep slopes or dangerous areas. Avoid scarred landscapes and rubbish dumps unless they provide an educational experience.

Assessing the diverse interests of the above four possible trailist groups, from an educational perspective it is possible to place these interests on a continuum. The interests of the trailists can be one of environmental awareness and sensitivity that can be obtained through a casual walk through an environment (Boo, 1990:xiv; Engleson & Yockers, 1994:63). The trailist at this point is sensitive to, aware of and open to environmental inputs but does not seek control by mechanisms such as guides and brochures (Opie, 1987:39). The trailist exhibits a more passive participation. The other end of the continuum would be those trailists seeking specific educational experiences where they can be actively part of the education experience in exploring, studying and researching the area through which they walk (Boo, 1990:xiv). This group is inquisitive and wants to develop informed



decision-making techniques because they have already established a certain environmental value system for themselves and an intention to act on environmental issues (Opie, 1987:39; Engleson & Yockers, 1994:63). This group looks for well constructed brochures and trained guides to enhance their experiences.

This continuum of interests would imply a variety of other interests between the above two. To encompass the interests of all possible trailists would mean that a trail should be developed to serve many purposes and try to provide for a wide range of interests. It should attempt to be enjoyable, informative and enlightening to the trailist (Bewsher et al, 1995:8) all in one. The trail should prompt the trailists to adopt more environmentally sensitive attitudes and beliefs, and this ultimately can change their behaviour to be more environmentally and ecologically sound (Orams, 1995:3,6). However, the development of such trails should not be approached in too general a fashion (Keene, 1995b:6), or contain unlinked facts and be without focus and clear aims and objectives (Keene, 1989:16). Development should rather be a dualistic process that enables the trailists to enjoy the trail and be environmentally educated at the same time (Roux, 1994:117). This focus should be established in the initial planning phase of the trail to prevent an unstructured trail that is open to vandalism by those not primarily interested in the full educational experience (Hultsman et al, 1987:70).

Hultsman et al (1987:88), suggest that more than one type of trail should rather be developed as part of a network of trails to allow trailists to choose the trail that suits their interests and preferences. In this way trailists can start designing the type of experience they want. What is important is that if a trail is developed from an ecotourism approach which implies an environmental education responsibility, the planning of such trails should attempt to primarily provide for an environmental education experience that can be interlinked with secondary experiences such as enjoyment, exercise and recreation.

The complex needs of the different trailist groups and the accessibility of the case studies to the researcher narrowed down the group of trailists that the research will focus on. The research focuses on the first trailist group, namely the education group (4.1.1) that uses trails in a formal education situation.

## 4.2 The host community

The complexity of the trail environment has been discussed in Chapter three and it is noted that ecotourism developments like trails rely not only on the natural environment through which the trail passes but also other domains of the environment such as the cultural environment. Furthermore, ecotourism emphasises the protection and minimal disruption of these environments. This implies a sensitivity not only to the natural features but also to the people in the trail area namely the host community. Aspects like traffic, road construction, noise pollution, overcrowding, crime, rapid changes in land values are but a few impacts an ecotourism development can have on the host community (Boo, 1990:8).

Sproule (2000:3) describes a community as *"... a group of people, often living in the same geographic area and who identify themselves as belonging to the same group."* Sproule warns though that although communities have things in common like religion and language they are not a homogeneous group. There are many sub-groups in a host community and not all of them will value trails in the same way. For this reason it is important that broad participation takes place in the planning process (Macdonald, 1998:25).

Many ecotourism researchers agree that the host community forms an important agent in tourism planning because without host community involvement progress can be hampered (Gunn, 1989; Boo, 1990; Cowling, 1993,1996; Robinson, 1993; Singh, 1993; Valentine, 1993a; Hattingh, 1994b:4; Khan, 1996). It is also, almost unavoidable that the host community through which a trail passes will have



certain fears and expectations regarding such development. The community has a need to know how the development of a trail and accompanying changes will affect the community (Huggins & Barendse; 1994:2), understand why the trail is placed there and how the community can benefit from such a development. A community needs to know whether it is going to be removed and severed from resources on which it has been dependent for its livelihood because access is denied to the area or it is too expensive to use (Boo, 1990:20). Ecotourism offers an opportunity for the host community to participate in the development of a venture like a trail. How a community chooses to define this participation is important because it will only participate on its own terms should it so desire (Sproule, 2000:31). When it chooses to participate its traditions and lifestyle must be respected (Gunn, 1989:116).

The potential of the host community's participation in ecotourism trail developments is great. Involvement holds social and economic benefits for the people depending on the level of involvement. Community participation plays a significant role in improving the quality of life of host communities (Cater, 1995:21). One such benefit is that through cultural diversity, sharing and interaction, intercultural understanding can be promoted (Wearing, 1993:129; Porritt, 1996:17). Economically the host community can benefit by becoming part of service delivery, management, maintenance, interpretation, recording and construction of the development using local materials, products and people (Boo, 1990:xvii,18; Odendaal, 1993:3; Coetzee, 1995:139). In this way an ecotourism development can encourage capacity building and participation in the community allowing its people to take ownership of the development and motivate them to protect the environment in which they live.

Members from the host community can be used as guides, assist in the development of brochures by including things like indigenous information, stories and songs (Kerry, 1979:32). They can also sell curios. Involving the host community from the start in the development of a trail creates a better

understanding of the project proposal and accompanying environmental decisions which make the process more socially justifiable and manageable (Goodey, 1979:287). Such an approach extends beyond mere financial benefits, it allows for political involvement and decision-making that would empower the community to take ownership of the trail, conserve and protect it and at the same time allow the community to financially benefit from it and hopefully help improve its quality of life. All these are aims of ecotourism and environmental education.

However, potential economic benefits like job creation, infrastructure and foreign exchange can be offset by related social, cultural and environmental costs (Pleumarom, 1995:70). High entrance fees aimed at foreign tourists can limit access to the trail for the host community (Wearing, 1993:128,129). Therefore, it is very important that there be consultation and negotiation with the host community to give its people opportunity to contribute to decisions from the start of the planning stage (Mosidi, 1996:29). Brandon (1993:139) suggests that "... *ecotourism planning needs to view local people as their counterparts and use both the planning process and ecotourism activities as tools that empower local people to exercise greater control over their lives*". This will provide an opportunity for the host community to understand what ecotourism involves, create an opportunity to make decisions about the nature of their participation and help minimise impacts. The success of an ecotourism development will depend on achieving a long-term balance between the three variables; commercial success, the resilience of cultural integrity and social cohesion, and the maintenance of the physical environment. This allows the community to appreciate their environment as a resource, take ownership of it and become active partners in the utilisation of it and not remain passive beneficiaries (Sproule, 2000:5).

Mosidi (1996:48) identifies some key issues that should be taken into account to ensure that the trail planner, trail owner or authority who initiates a trail development, and the host community are equal partners in negotiations and any decisions taken. This approach can empower the community to take ownership



of the trail development. The key issues that Mosidi identifies can be applied to host community participation in the planning of an ecotourism trail as follows:

**TABLE 4.1 HOST COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ECOTOURISM TRAIL PLANNING**

1. Information	The idea of an ecotourism trail is communicated to the host community.
2. Involvement	The host community is encouraged to participate in the trail planning process.
3. Participation strategy	Leaders from the host community and government together with the trail planner form a task group/s.
4. Advice	Ecotourism and environmental education expertise are called in to give the task group/s advice on the ecotourism trail project.
5. Information gathering	Collection of detailed information from the host community through postal surveys, interviews and open-ended meetings.
6. Analysis	Sifting of information from the host community by the task group/s.
7. Synthesis	Joint decision-making by both the host community, the trail planner, subject specialists and authority.
8. Implementation	Decisions taken are implemented and the ecotourism trail is built.
9. Review	The entire process is reviewed to close any gaps that might exist.
<i>Source: Adapted from Mosidi, 1996:48</i>	

From Mosidi's model it is clear that, for a host community to take ownership of a development like an ecotourism trail and make it sustainable, host community participation should extend further than merely participating. The planning process should be a form of community development that takes place in conjunction with intended trailists, trail planner, trail owner and strives to improve the quality of the

host community's life, environmentally educate the people and include their indigenous knowledge and experience (Hughes, 1995:58,59). The ideal would be for the trail to be community-managed in the end (Bruce & Archer, 1996:19). However, to accomplish this, training programmes will have to be made available to host communities to equip them with the appropriate skills to participate actively and confidently in the trail planning process (Jacobson & Robles, 1992:710).

### 4.3 The trail planner and trail owner

The trail planner is the business link between the trailist and the trail environment. A trail owner can be someone who owns a piece of private land and chooses to plan a trail or uses a specialist trail planner. The government, like the private trail owner, can do the trail planning itself or acquire the services of a specialist trail planner. The most preferable option is for private trail owners and government trail owners to make use of someone with the necessary knowledge, expertise and experience in trail planning. If the trail is an ecotourism trail the planner should have the related knowledge because according to Wight (1993:4) the planner has the potential to significantly influence tourist behaviour and numbers at a destination. The planner plays a pivotal role in developing sustainable ecotourism. Furthermore, in realising that ecotourism has an environmental education function and that it is a lifelong process that should start at pre-school and extend to adulthood it is implied that provision should be made to educate businessmen like private trail owners, the government, and specialist trail planners as well. These groups traditionally have been excluded in the process of creating environmentally literate persons. Ecotourism trail planners can be included in this group and instead of concentrating only on their financial interest they should be made environmentally literate and take cognisance of the host community.

In the United States, national parks staff are taught that " ... *from interpretation comes understanding; from understanding comes appreciation; and from*



*appreciation comes preservation*" (Keene, 1995b:17). Therefore, if the trail planner understands the total environment through which a proposed ecotourism trail is passing the planner will learn to appreciate the total environment's uniqueness and problems. This can motivate the planner to try and preserve most of the resources used for the trail. Adopting such an approach can ensure the sustainability of the trail. However, training and skills development for the trail planner will be necessary (Robinson, 1993:8; Keene, 1995b:18).

The trail planner needs a support system or organisations that can assist in the development of the trail and the appropriate environmental education material to accompany the trailists on the trail (Goodey, 1979:287). Organisations can assist by providing expertise and writers for brochures and guides. These guides and brochures can be used for self-education on a self-guided trail. More advanced and supportive literature can be designed to be used by specialist education groups (Keene, 1996:14). Multi-agency partnerships can help to avoid misunderstandings and duplications (Hughes, 1995:55). These agencies can put money back into the planning of trails and in this way assist in subsidising educational programmes.

Other aspects that the trail planner should consider include environmental impact studies for economic, ecological and social sectors of the environment. Ecological and social carrying capacity studies should be undertaken especially with regard to the aesthetic experiences of the trailist (Robinson, 1993:7). These studies will enable the planner to determine how many users can be accommodated on the trail at a specific time without damaging the trail environment or it being experienced as overcrowded. These studies should be part of the initial planning phase as well as during the management phase when utilisation is monitored at regular intervals.

Trail planners and trail owners should receive training in areas such as ecology, environmental education, environmental and resource management,

communication and business skills. Such training should be competency based and tailored to the particular requirements of training and be provided in a culturally appropriate manner.

#### 4.4 The authority

The authority that can be part of ecotourism trail planning can include private land owners, local government, provincial and national government. These authority sectors can identify ecotourism trail opportunities, provide infrastructure, provide maintenance and marketing, provide management support, develop strategies, develop policy documents and provide funding and training. The South African government commits itself to participating in tourism planning and management by stating as part of Goal 2 in the Environmental Management Policy for South Africa (South Africa, 1998:33) that people should strive:

- *"To ensure that tourism is sustainable and not damaging to the environment.*
- *To ensure that local communities, particularly previously disadvantaged communities, benefit through active participation in tourism associated with protected areas and sites.*
- *To ensure the sustainable management and respect for the integrity of landscapes and other environmental assets."*

Sproule (2000:8) mentions a number of ways in which authorities who are committed to be part of ecotourism planning, can help a community to develop an ecotourism enterprise. Taking South Africa as an example, authorities can, according to Sproule, provide coordination between a local project and other related projects in the area. Authorities can also provide technical assistance via departments such as the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. The



authorities can also share market research information and give promotional assistance to the project through national tourism bureaux like SATOUR (South Africa) or provincial tourism bureaux. Financial assistance and reduced tax rates can be given to planners and host communities. Finally authorities can assist in developing and implementing policies. In South Africa the department that is formally responsible for trails is the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF). The Department has a committee called the Forest Access Committee that deals directly with trails.

#### 4.5 The trail environment

Ecotourism is an environment-dependent industry (Goodall, 1995:29). The ecotourism trail environment is the broad agent in which the other four agents as participants in the trail environment are active. The ecotourism trail environment forms the space in which the trail event takes place and is discussed in Chapter three. Although it appears from Chapter three as if the majority of trails focus on the natural environment (Table 3.4), the conceptual analyses of the term environment have proved that they include a broader environment. Trails can pass through natural areas, urban areas and even the inside of a building like a museum. Furthermore environment refers to more than the physical world, it includes people and their social structures (EEPI, 1993:17).

Placing an ecotourism trail in any of these environments will have some influence on the environment and result in many discontinuities between the environment and the ecotourism development (Cater, 1995:25). It is important to keep the interests of the specific environment through which a trail passes in mind. If a trail passes through a natural area there are certain requirements that should be met to prevent the deterioration of the environment. Aspects such as soil, vegetation and gradient should be considered when a trail is planned (Wahl & Hugo, 1995:2,3). However, part of the environment is the people living there with their economic and social interests as well as the political climate and decisions that

have to be taken.

It is necessary that the ecotourism trail planning principles that facilitate environmental education incorporate management strategies as applied to the broader environment. The principles should in the long-term assist in improving and protecting the environment thus actively contributing to the improved health and viability of the environment (Orams, 1995:6).

#### 4.6 Revised ecotourism trail planning principles

From the above analyses and according to Jacobson and Robles (1992:703) it can be concluded that the major agents participating in ecotourism planning all have interests in long term sustainable ecotourism planning. Hattingh (1994b:5) is of the opinion that ecotourism is of necessity and by definition sustainable tourism. The need for sustainable ecotourism planning and the fact that a number of agents are part of the planning process and that these agents are in many ways tied to one another and to sound environmental practice, have planning implications. It is important to as far as possible include all the agents that are part of the ecotourism planning process if ecotourism wants to fulfil its environmental education responsibility. This approach will assist in ensuring that the very resources on which trails are dependent, are respected and maintained for the future.

The multitude of interests of the different agents make a completely sustainable outcome more of an ideal than a reality. A planning strategy is required that at least tries to unite these interests into a symbiotic relationship and not only looks for whom the development is but also by whom and, when and where it is taking place (Cater, 1995:25). This implies that an ecotourism trail should be planned taking into consideration the diverse interests of the agents within time and space and, in recognising this, come to a compromise or trade-off that will satisfy as many agents as possible by taking the total trail environment into consideration.



Approaching ecotourism trail development in this way demonstrates a long term vision that involves a wide range of agents in the context of a broader environment. According to Bates (in Wearing, 1993:134) this approach will help to improve local economies, assist in the retention of local customs, preserve the environment and still result in profits for the trail owner who wants to practise sustainable tourism.

The revised ecotourism trail planning principles proposed in 3.3 are now reviewed and adapted for the different agents that can play a role in the ecotourism trail planning process. The seven broad principles up to now are theoretical and it would be difficult to apply these principles pragmatically to an ecotourism development and determine whether or not the development applies these ecotourism principles. To make the principles more applicable as a planning tool it is necessary under each principle to identify planning criteria that are ideal or desired and can be used in a practical way to guide the planning process for each agent. These criteria can be used to determine adherence to each of the principles given. The agents mentioned in the literature that forms the actual domain of this study, namely the trailist, trail planner and trail owner, host community and authority are used in Table 4.2 as four categories in which these principles and criteria can be categorised. The biophysical environment in which the trail event functions and which forms the real domain of the study is added as a fifth category to which the principles apply because it forms the broader agent in which the other four agents operate. The ecotourism trail planning principles and related criteria for each agent are contained in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2: Ecotourism trail planning principles and related criteria for each agent

Agent	Principle	Criteria
Trailist	1. Ecotourism	1.1. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the natural world and its organisms.
	2. Sustainable	2.1. Sustainable tourism is tourism that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
	3. Responsible	3.1. Responsible tourism is tourism that takes full account of the economic, social and environmental consequences of tourism in business, and the expectations of visitors, and seeks to maximize benefits for all stakeholders.
	4. Ethical	4.1. Ethical tourism is tourism that is based on a set of moral principles that guide the behavior of tourists and tourism operators.
	5. Educational	5.1. Educational tourism is tourism that provides opportunities for learning and personal growth.
	6. Cultural	6.1. Cultural tourism is tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the cultural heritage of a destination.
	7. Adventure	7.1. Adventure tourism is tourism that involves the pursuit of new and exciting experiences.
Trail planner	1. Ecotourism	1.1. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the natural world and its organisms.
	2. Sustainable	2.1. Sustainable tourism is tourism that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
	3. Responsible	3.1. Responsible tourism is tourism that takes full account of the economic, social and environmental consequences of tourism in business, and the expectations of visitors, and seeks to maximize benefits for all stakeholders.
	4. Ethical	4.1. Ethical tourism is tourism that is based on a set of moral principles that guide the behavior of tourists and tourism operators.
	5. Educational	5.1. Educational tourism is tourism that provides opportunities for learning and personal growth.
	6. Cultural	6.1. Cultural tourism is tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the cultural heritage of a destination.
	7. Adventure	7.1. Adventure tourism is tourism that involves the pursuit of new and exciting experiences.
Trail owner	1. Ecotourism	1.1. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the natural world and its organisms.
	2. Sustainable	2.1. Sustainable tourism is tourism that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
	3. Responsible	3.1. Responsible tourism is tourism that takes full account of the economic, social and environmental consequences of tourism in business, and the expectations of visitors, and seeks to maximize benefits for all stakeholders.
	4. Ethical	4.1. Ethical tourism is tourism that is based on a set of moral principles that guide the behavior of tourists and tourism operators.
	5. Educational	5.1. Educational tourism is tourism that provides opportunities for learning and personal growth.
	6. Cultural	6.1. Cultural tourism is tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the cultural heritage of a destination.
	7. Adventure	7.1. Adventure tourism is tourism that involves the pursuit of new and exciting experiences.
Host community	1. Ecotourism	1.1. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the natural world and its organisms.
	2. Sustainable	2.1. Sustainable tourism is tourism that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
	3. Responsible	3.1. Responsible tourism is tourism that takes full account of the economic, social and environmental consequences of tourism in business, and the expectations of visitors, and seeks to maximize benefits for all stakeholders.
	4. Ethical	4.1. Ethical tourism is tourism that is based on a set of moral principles that guide the behavior of tourists and tourism operators.
	5. Educational	5.1. Educational tourism is tourism that provides opportunities for learning and personal growth.
	6. Cultural	6.1. Cultural tourism is tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the cultural heritage of a destination.
	7. Adventure	7.1. Adventure tourism is tourism that involves the pursuit of new and exciting experiences.
Authority	1. Ecotourism	1.1. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the natural world and its organisms.
	2. Sustainable	2.1. Sustainable tourism is tourism that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
	3. Responsible	3.1. Responsible tourism is tourism that takes full account of the economic, social and environmental consequences of tourism in business, and the expectations of visitors, and seeks to maximize benefits for all stakeholders.
	4. Ethical	4.1. Ethical tourism is tourism that is based on a set of moral principles that guide the behavior of tourists and tourism operators.
	5. Educational	5.1. Educational tourism is tourism that provides opportunities for learning and personal growth.
	6. Cultural	6.1. Cultural tourism is tourism that involves the study and appreciation of the cultural heritage of a destination.
	7. Adventure	7.1. Adventure tourism is tourism that involves the pursuit of new and exciting experiences.

**TABLE 4.2 ECOTOURISM TRAIL PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FACILITATING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

PRINCIPLES	AGENTS				
	BIOPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	HOST COMMUNITY	TRAILIST	TRAIL PLANNER AND OWNER	AUTHORITY
1 The total environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Inclusive use of the natural and built environment</li> <li>* Careful consideration of environmental aspects in plans for development and growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Inclusive use of the cultural, social and political environment of the host community</li> <li>* Respectful acknowledgement of the value of the cultural environment of the host community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Respectful and holistic recognition of the needs of the trailist namely the cognitive, affective and psychomotor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Supply-oriented management practice that recognises the total environment on its terms and recognises its limits</li> <li>* Environmental impact studies done</li> <li>* Carrying capacity studies done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ensure that sustainable management strategies are applied and that the environment is respected</li> <li>* Ensure that local and national environmental policies are adhered to</li> </ul>
2 Responsible and sustainable planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Responsible use of the environment as resource causing minimal disturbance</li> <li>* Sustainable development of the environment as resource to ensure its long-term health and viability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Responsible utilisation of the cultural environment causing minimal disturbance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Encouragement of responsible behaviour and actions towards the total environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Responsible, interdisciplinary and sustainable planning methods used in a holistic and balanced way</li> <li>* Responsible use of local, national and international cooperation in the prevention and solution of environmental problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ensure that the trail is sustainable and not damaging to the total environment</li> </ul>



PRINCIPLES	AGENTS				
	BIOPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	HOST COMMUNITY	TRAILIST	TRAIL PLANNER AND OWNER	AUTHORITY
3 Enlightening and educational experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Responsible recognition and unlocking of the current, potential and historical education and enlightenment opportunities of the environment</li> <li>* Recognition of environmental issues from local, national, regional and international points of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Active and continuous education and enlightenment of the host community about ecotourism and related issues</li> <li>* Active involvement of the host community in providing an enlightening experience to the trailists</li> <li>* Active environmental literacy programmes for the host community</li> <li>* Active development of the host community's knowledge, skills, values and environmental awareness</li> <li>* Active involvement of the host community in planning the learning experience and information material</li> <li>* Providing opportunities to the host community for making decisions and accepting the consequences</li> <li>* Using a diverse learning environment and applying a broad array of educational approaches to teaching and learning in, about and for the environment</li> <li>* Inclusion of practical activities and first-hand experiences for the host community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Active and continuous education and enlightenment of the trailist before, during and after the event about the total environment and relationships in it that will bring about understanding, admiration and appreciation for the environment and the symptoms and real causes of its problems and change the attitude, behaviour and life style of the trailist in this respect</li> <li>* Active environmental literacy programmes for the trailist</li> <li>* Active development of the trailist's knowledge, skills, values and environmental awareness</li> <li>* Enjoyable experience provided to the trailist</li> <li>* Active involvement of the trailist in planning the learning experience and information material</li> <li>* Providing opportunities to the trailist for making decisions and accepting the consequences</li> <li>* Using a diverse learning environment and applying a broad array of educational approaches to teaching and learning in, about and for the environment</li> <li>* Include practical activities and first-hand experiences for the trailist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Active and continuous education and enlightenment of the trail planner and owner about ecotourism and the biophysical environment</li> <li>* Active environmental literacy programmes for the trail planner and owner</li> <li>* Active development of the planner and owner's knowledge, skills, values and environmental awareness</li> <li>* Creative information material development by the trail planner</li> <li>* Active involvement of the trailist in planning the learning experience</li> <li>* Providing opportunities to the planner and owner for making decisions and accepting the consequences</li> <li>* Using a diverse learning environment and applying a broad array of educational approaches to teaching and learning in, about and for the environment</li> <li>* Include practical activities and first-hand experiences for the planner and owner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ensure that an enlightening experience is provided to all agents</li> <li>* Provide assistance in training the trail owner, planner and host community</li> </ul>

PRINCIPLES	AGENTS				
	BIOPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	HOST COMMUNITY	TRAILIST	TRAIL PLANNER AND OWNER	AUTHORITY
4 Conserve and protect total environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Sustainable protection and conservation of the living and non-living sectors of the environment</li> <li>* Sustainable low impact on the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Sustainable low impact on the host community</li> <li>* Continuous respect and protection of the host community's integrity, way of life, social values system and privacy as to ensure its existence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Sustainable low impact on the total environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Sustainable holistic management strategies applied by the trail planner and owner to the total environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ensure that the trail environment in its totality is protected</li> </ul>
5 Inclusion of all agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Continuous recognition of the environment in the planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Continuous and direct involvement of the host community in the planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Continuous and direct involvement of the trailist in the planning process</li> <li>* Active awareness programme for the trailist about environmental problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Continuous and direct involvement of the trail owner and planner in the planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ensure that the host community benefits</li> </ul>
6 Economic benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Responsible infrastructure development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Long-term generation of wealth and economic benefits, like job creation, for the host community to create social upliftment and well-being for it and enhance its quality of life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Long-term value for money for the trailist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Long-term financial profit generated for the trail owner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Funding and infrastructure provided for the trail development</li> </ul>
7 Participatory and interdisciplinary experience		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Active participatory involvement of the host community in the planning of the ecotourism event</li> <li>* Active participation in environmental decision-making and problem-solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Active and direct participatory experience in the ecotourism event by the trailist by using participatory activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Active and participatory involvement of the trail planner and owner in the ecotourism trail planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ensure that the host community actively participates in the planning process</li> </ul>