

Monique Pool was born in 1964 in the Netherlands of Surinamese parents. When she reached the age of thirteen her parents decided to return to Suriname, where she finished her secondary school. In 1982 she left Suriname to study in Belgium and England. Ten years later she returned to the country of her ancestors, where, in addition to translating and writing, she became increasingly interested in environmental issues. In December 2004 she started her own business, Suriname Environmental Advisory Services NV io, which is involved in promoting the green image of Suriname inside and outside of the country (see www.seasn.v.biz).

DEVELOPING ECO-TOURISM IN A RESOURCE-RICH ENVIRONMENT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I was just introduced to you by Mr. Dawson the only thing I need to add is that I am a naturalist, for those of you who are not familiar with the word I cite naturalist Michael Ellis, he says: *“For me, a naturalist is the liaison between the academic world and the guy on the street. I try to bridge the gap between the Stanford microbiologist and the UPS deliveryman.”*

I delight in telling you more about the dolphins you can watch in the Suriname river on a lucky day, or about the amazing blue frog that is only found in Suriname. Or about all these funny lizards we can see around us, especially the one we call wai-wai anu, waving its leg before setting off to another sunny spot. Or about how special sloths are and why we should preserve them and their habitat. And about the beautiful savannahs that this country has. And what could happen or probably already happens when we create a landfill without a proper lining next to a body of water (Para River). Am I a scientist, no, I don't go out and take samples to check the water, but I do have some common sense, and read what these scientists do and try to translate that for you. Into an interesting story. Today though, I will not tell you about the beautiful landscape I experienced in the far south of our country. Today I will place some critical notes to what is happening in nature conservation and also provide you an example of how it could be done differently.

In Martin's presentation it already became clear to you that Suriname is unique in many ways, and one thing that I like to repeat here, is that we still have all options open. We have not yet completely destroyed our environment, so we still have a chance to make the right decisions and choose a path of sustainable development based on our standing forests. However, I am fully aware that in a resource-rich country like Suriname this is not self-evident.

As most of you are probably aware, Suriname was once listed (in 1995) as the 17th richest country in the world. The methodology that was applied is known as green accounting. Capital was redefined in this case by Worldbank economist Serageldin¹ beyond the

¹ According to Vice President Serageldin:

Conventional national accounts may serve macroeconomists and central bankers well, but they do a poor job of measuring sustainable income or changes in a nation's productive capacity. That includes estimates

classical definition as: man-made (produced), natural, human, and social. Janet Chernela of Florida International University states in her 1997 paper “The Wealth of Nations”² that the new calculations make Suriname the only South American country among the 25 wealthiest with a wealth per person of US\$ 389,000. Mind you we are talking here about 1995. A more recent report of the World Bank (2006)³ lists Suriname as the 51st country in terms of total wealth (based on figures of 2000) and we have made a sheer drop (we dropped more than the 20 places we rose in 1995) in wealth per person to US\$ 47,128. This recent World Bank Report states that: “The establishment and good maintenance of protected areas preserve an asset for the future, and therefore protected areas form an important part of the natural capital estimates.” That is why in our natural capital estimate, the protected areas make up almost 50% of the total natural capital figure. However, we did drop from being the 17th wealthiest country to the 51st, despite the fact that we increased our protected areas. One reason could be that as a country we are consuming more than we are reinvesting back into our country, for example into education. And it is also necessary to note here that we are talking about a potential here and not what we really have. We just have a potential to have a per capita of US\$ 47,128, but it needs good thinking and a clear vision to realize that potential. Summarizing, we can conclude that by depleting our non-renewable natural resources we are losing part of our wealth, which would not be such a problem if we would invest our income in education and creating opportunities for future generations. That’s sustainable development. How could we do that?

The definition I want to use here of sustainable development is the one used by the UK government⁴ in its sustainable development strategy: “to enable all people throughout the

of depreciation of man-made capital, but not that of natural capital....For example, when a tropical forest is logged, no estimate is made for the loss of an irreplaceable asset. When land cultivation increases the loss of topsoil, which subsequently accumulates in a reservoir, no allowance is made for the harmful effects on soil and water storage.

To address some of these deficiencies, the Bank has been collaborating with the United Nations Statistical Office and with others to develop a new system of environmentally adjusted national accounts...[known as]...Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounts....Operationally, this translates into: encouraging the growth of natural capital by reducing our level of current exploitation; investing in projects to relieve pressure on natural capital stocks...and by increasing investment in human resources particularly of the poor who are both the victims and the unwitting agents of environmental degradation in many of the poorest societies on earth.

(“Sustainability and the Wealth of Nations: First Steps in an Ongoing Journey”. World Bank Draft: September 30, 1995, pp. 14, 18)

² *The Wealth of Nations*, Janet M. Chernela .*Hemisphere* (ISSN 08983038), Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University. 1997.

³ *Where is the Wealth of Nations*, World Bank. Washington. 2006.

⁴ One future – different paths, the UK’s shared framework for sustainable development. London. 2005. Crown Copyright. “The New Framework Goal for Sustainable Development. The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations. For the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, that goal will be pursued in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment, and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being. This will be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment, and use resources and energy as efficiently as possible. Government must promote a clear understanding of, and commitment to, sustainable development so that all people can contribute to the overall goal through their individual decisions. Similar objectives

world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.” Because the quality of life focus shifts the emphasis more on solutions than problems and no one can say, as I have often heard said by irresponsible people, that first we need to have a good life ourselves and then we will think of our children. A very hedonistic world view of people who do not wish any kind of development, and that is only focussed on present-day pleasures, forgetting that our forefathers worked very hard to ensure that we would have a good life. To achieve sustainable development can be done in many different ways. This is exactly what the UK strategy implies.

I will only present you my view that comes from the perspective of someone who believes in the potential to generate income from our forests without cutting it down. And I will provide you an example of a country (Costa Rica) that is not doing so well if we look at their natural capital, but which is still capitalizing on the little they have, because they have a vision of who they want to be as a nation, through innovative thinking and through education. Their per capita education expenditure is higher than the Netherlands and the United States.

Protected Areas

Suriname's first steps on the path to taking legal measures for protecting its nature began in 1948 with the establishment of a Nature Protection Commission and in 1954 the adoption of the Game Act and the Nature Protection Act. Followed by the establishment of a number of nature reserves⁵. After that a significant fact is the establishment of STINASU (The Foundation for Nature Preservation). STINASU was probably established as a government foundation to create room to engage in activities that fall outside the working area of government institutions and to generate funds that would not directly flow into the coffers of the government. A mechanism to create an income flow to ensure the sustainability of the proper management of the nature reserves. Then the Nature Protection Decree of 1986 introduces a new concept, namely that “traditional” rights and interests of peoples living in tribal communities in or around protected areas are maintained in newly to be established nature reserves. Recently, the Game Act was amended to comprise the whole country and sea area, including the 200 mile zone, and also includes a bag limit for each hunting trip. Again population of the interior living below a certain line do not have to keep to the hunting seasons. In the government statement of 2000-2005 measures were announced for sustainable management and use of protected areas and wild fauna and flora, including measures to restructure land

will inform all our international endeavours, with the UK actively promoting multilateral and sustainable solutions to today's most pressing environmental, economic and social problems. There is a clear obligation on more prosperous nations both to put their own house in order and to support other countries in the transition towards a more equitable and sustainable world.

⁵ 1961: Brinckheuvel (6000 ha), Wia Wia (36000 ha) and Raleighvallen-Voltzberg (56000 ha); 1966: Coppennamemonding (12000 ha), Tafelberg (140000 ha), Eilerts de haan gebergte (220000 ha); 1969: Galibi (4000 ha); 1972: Hertenrits (100 ha), Sipaliwini (100000 ha); 1986: Peruvia (31000 ha), Boven-Cusewijne (27000 ha), Wanekreek (45000 ha) and Copi (28000 ha); 1998: Central Suriname (1.6 million ha)

policy⁶. Unfortunately, there was nothing about protected areas in the 2005-2010 Government Statement. A vague statement was made in the tourism section that sustainable use of culture and nature would be the starting point for tourism policy⁷.

On an international level Surinamese government representatives to the 2003 World Parks Congress signed the Durban Accord. The Durban Accord requests commitment to specific principles, including an integral relationship of people and protected areas, as well as giving local communities and indigenous peoples a say in the establishment, proclamation and management of protected areas. The Durban Accord also urges commitment to ensuring that people who benefit from or are impacted by protected areas have the opportunity to participate in relevant decision-making on a fair and equitable basis taking their human and social rights into consideration.

You are probably surprised that I don't mention the establishment of the Central Suriname Nature Reserve and the Multiple-Use Management Areas on the coast, as well as the Suriname Conservation Foundation. I am very proud of the Central Suriname Nature Reserve as a unique wilderness reserve, but without proper management it will remain a paper park. As long as it is possible that people just go into the park and perform acts of management, like making a helipad on top of the Tafelberg, it is not something to be proud of. And what of the fact that helis are landing on our turtle beaches, what kind of effect will it have on male turtles who are swimming along our coasts looking for a partner. Do we know? I don't, but I would not risk seeing what kind of effect it has in 10 years time, because then it is too late. That is the kind of management we provide for our protected areas.

Why am I worried? It looks like we have all the local legislation in place and we have committed ourselves on an international level to a number of conventions to help us protect these areas. But all these words are like the parks, they are paper words. There is no enforcement, and no action to back up what we have committed ourselves to on paper. Many people are not aware that they enter a nature reserve and they are even less aware of a code of conduct in a nature reserve. Many people here don't even know what a nature reserve is. Information is often insufficient and inadequate and in most cases obsolete or even lacking. The question we need to ask ourselves is whether the government learned from the way they have been doing things and are they satisfied with the results? Why doesn't the government act. A good first step would be to eliminate the confusing situation that now exists – where the roles of Nature Conservation as part of LBB and STINASU are unclear. To give you an example: where do you go as a tour operator to obtain permission for example to enter the reserves and where do you pay a fee for entering the reserves. STINASU or NB. You may find that for some reserves you have to go to STINASU and for other reserves to NB. It would help if this situation is

⁶ Ook zal de Regering maatregelen treffen in het kader van duurzaam beheer en duurzame benutting van beschermde gebieden en in het wild voorkomende fauna en flora evenals maatregelen ter herstructurering van het grondbeleid. (Regeringsverklaring 2000-2005).

⁷ Uitgangspunt voor het te voeren beleid is duurzame benutting van cultuur en natuur, dat wil zeggen met respect en bescherming van de rechten van in het bijzonder de inheemsen en marrons, en met behoud van de biodiversiteit en van sociale structuren. (Regeringsverklaring 2005-2010).

simplified, and not made even more complex. The President stated yesterday that LBB /NB and SBB will be made into one institution, however, what will this mean in respect of STINASU's role?

Then the participation of local communities needs to be institutionalized. Who is present, for example, when you enter the Sipaliwini Nature Reserve? Who makes sure that you cannot leave the area with your pockets filled with stones, the special grass we find there (which is said to cure baldness) and some okopipis? The local people! They are used to living in the environment and long before a city person knows, they have communicated to each other that outsiders have entered their territory and they are watching you. They are the logical wardens of these nature reserves.

One of the most important problems mentioned to ensure good management is a lack of money. Well, that's no longer a problem. Although so far the Suriname Conservation Foundation (SCF) has not done that much – at least if they have, it is not public knowledge – they have the money to ensure good management of the reserves. The financing provided by the SCF is sustainable financing. They have some US\$ 15 million and they can only spend the earnings on their investment. It would be rather startling if the Board and Director of the Fund would refuse to provide financing for management of the reserves if the government presents sound plans based on the management plan and operations plans that were written for the nature reserves.

Why are protected areas so important?

Protected areas can provide a number of benefits ranging from existence values⁸ to recreational values. They could form the basis of a thriving tourist industry that could become a very important foreign exchange earner for Suriname. Research has shown that there is a willingness to pay for protecting forests and wilderness areas and for visiting these. As Jonathan Nash stated in an article on eco-tourism: "Eco-tourism is responsible travel to natural areas that safeguards the integrity of the ecosystem and produces economic benefits for local communities that can encourage conservation. And he continues to say that: "To ensure that eco-tourism fulfills its promise, policymakers, promoters, and participants should make sure that all tourism activities have minimal environmental impact, that such development is welcomed by local communities, and that it promotes stable and equitable economic development."

What is so special about the Costa Rica model?

The Costa Rica example shows⁹ that the management of these areas can be done with the participation of civil society, the private sector and anyone interested in constructing an

⁸ Existence Value - A concept used to refer to the intrinsic value of some asset, normally natural/environmental. It is the value of the benefits derived from the asset's existence alone. For example, a tree can be valued in a number of ways, including its use value (as lumber), an existence value (simply being there), and an option value (value of things that it could be used for). Existence value is separate from the value accruing from any use or potential use of the asset. Canadian Government Website.

⁹ Christopher Vaughan, Carlos Manuel Rodriguez. *Managing Beyond the Borders: The Costa Rican National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC)*.

environment that is healthy and ecologically balanced¹⁰. How does it work? Important to note is that it is an integral approach, where protected areas are not seen as islands.

First of all, they divided the land in conservation areas and each area is managed on its own with civil society in a participatory structure. Each conservation area functions as a separate technical, financial and administrative unit. Each conservation area includes wildlands, agroscares and urban areas. Second, each conservation area has three major sectors: Promotion, Control and Protected Areas. The promotion sector deals with the facilitation and promotion of responsible management and active conservation of natural resources by private enterprise. The control sector focuses on promotion and execution of natural resource control and will train employees and civilian groups so they will be able to protect natural resources in the region. The protected areas sector focuses on management actions in the protected areas.

The funding strategy was also very important for this model to be successful. It is a tiered strategy. A key element is that the Conservation Areas had to be financially self-sufficient and also that all income generated in each area should be maintained totally in those Conservation Areas. 20% of the funds come from the General Budget of the Costa Rican government, 50% of the funding is produced general entrance fees, research permits, royalties from commercial products (medicines, agricultural products, industrial products, etc.), charges for environmental services, income from concessions, licenses and use permits, administration or services. 15% of the funds are produced from international aid (GEF, BID, ASDI, NORAD, USAID, NGOs, etc.). And the remaining 15% is interest produced from endowments, trust funds, and debt swaps.

However, the likelihood of this model to be successful in other countries, including Suriname, is low. Why? The commitment to conservation is very high in Costa Rica. And only a few tropical countries enjoy the political stability and level of education as Costa Rica. Maybe some of you would disagree with me.

Kabalebo Nature Resorts may offer an interesting alternative for Suriname. It is what in Costa Rica would be called a private nature reserve. Why do I say that? Because you cannot hunt, you cannot fish without releasing the catch and you are not allowed to take anything from the Resort when you leave. And I believe Karel when he says he ensures that the guests do not take away things from the Resort. I would not like to be in the shoes of the person who tries to steal anything from the land and is then caught by Karel. In general it is not true that Karel has more people to watch over the reserve, he has the same favorable condition as most nature reserves, and that is that you can only reach it through one gateway. So you have to go past him or his staff. Only thing is that he is enforcing the rules he has set for his resort. Because he cares.

¹⁰ "El SINAC es un concepto de conservación integral, que ofrece la posibilidad de desarrollar una gestión pública responsable, con la participación del Estado, la Sociedad Civil, la empresa privada, y de cada individuo del país interesado y comprometido con la construcción de un ambiente sano y ecológicamente equilibrado". <http://www.sinaccr.net/informacion.php>

Let me conclude by saying that developing eco-tourism in a resource-rich environment is probably more difficult. Why? Because it is a long-term strategy and it is an integral approach. You need to have a vision of where you want to go as a country and you need to invest in education. Your people need to become aware that the biodiversity conservation strategy is a long-term strategy, that is beneficial to all. Extractive industries are fast income earners and they don't require any significant investment in education. Most companies get all their staff from abroad, and once they have exhausted the resource, they will move on to a next area and leave behind a ghost town. It's a no brainer. Sustainable development requires commitment and a long-term strategy. It requires a mind-shift.