# Sustainable Tourism Transport and the Economic Crisis in Iceland
-
## A Critical Discourse Analysis

**MSc Thesis Leisure, Tourism and Environment**

**Wageningen University and Research Centre**

**Department of Environmental Sciences**

**Cultural Geography Chairgroup**

**Course Code: GEO-80433**

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**Supervisors: Dr. Machiel Lamers (ENP)**

**& Dr. Martijn Duineveld (GEO)**

**Wageningen, 4 October 2012**

WAGENINGEN **UR**
For quality of life

# *Kemst þó hægt fari*

(You will reach your destination even though you travel slowly)

(Icelandic proverb)

(Landsbókasafn Íslands, 1980: 71)

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Wageningen, 1 October 2012

# Foreword

This master thesis is the result of more than 20 years of education. After primary school and secondary school, my BSc in human geography and urban planning in Utrecht shaped my interests in regional development issues at Europe's peripheries as well as the tourism sector. During the first year of my MSc I became more aware of environmental issues. Together with my pre-existing interest in policy issues and transport, these interests have led me to write this thesis on sustainable tourism transport in Iceland. Doing research on this topic was tough sometimes. However, other times it brought a lot fun as well. Often I had the feeling that the research was going very slowly but now I have reached the destination, a finished MSc thesis. After researching for more than one year, I have some mixed feelings about being finished with it. I am glad that I made it to the end, but I will miss discussing all kinds of problems encountered with my fellow students. Also, the many lunches we had together, as well as chats on Facebook I will miss. Hermineke, Swen, Lusine, Charlotte, Nowella and many more, you helped me a lot during several stages of the research. That said, I want to thank my supervisors as well. Machiel and Martijn, thank you for your critical questions and inspiration! Moreover, this research would not have been possible without the great help of Edward H. Huijbens from the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre. Although I spent only one instead of six months in Akureyri, it was an interesting experience and your contacts were crucial to find the necessary participants needed for the empirical part of this research. I hope my work helps you in the job you are doing at the ITRC. I would like to thank the interview participants as well. Doing interviews by Skype was not always easy but thank you for the information you gave! I want to thank Jennifer for the spelling and grammar check.

Further, I really want to thank my family. Their support was crucial at moments when I was fed up with the research. You brought me inspiration and energy to keep on going and finish my thesis. Thank you dad and mom, my sister Rienette and my brother Erik-Jan. My brother deserves special thanks for the cover page he designed. The last person I want to thank is my lovely girlfriend Marjan, who has been of great help in the whole thesis-writing process from the very beginning when we got to know each other. Without you, writing this thesis would have been much harder. You supported me in working on and finishing the research and stayed interested in the research, although it was not always clear for you what it exactly was I was working on. Thanks a lot!

My research has come to an end after more than a year of reading, thinking, writing and learning about sustainable tourism transport in Iceland. I (sincerely) hope that by a gradual process the country will reach it goals to make (tourism) transport more sustainable. In addition I hope this research will serve as a starting point for others interested in this continuously changing topic, whether their interest goes out to the Icelandic context or to a place somewhere else. Let's make holidays, one of the most pleasure-giving activities in modern life, more sustainable and let's start with transport!

Jaap Sytsma

Ede, October 2012

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# Abbreviations, Tables and Figures

## Abbreviations

CDA    Critical Discourse Analysis

DA    Discourse Analysis

EU    European Union

GHG    Greenhouse gas

NGO    Non-governmental organisation

STT    Sustainable Tourism transport

STTP    Sustainable Tourism transport Policy

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# Abstract

This study explores sustainability discourses used by stakeholders on the supply side of the tourism industry in Iceland in the wake of the economic crisis that hit Iceland in the autumn of 2008. The focus is on the development of policies that aim to make transport of tourists more sustainable. The objective of this research is to identify the discourses used by various stakeholders and how they influence the policies that are developed to reduce tourism emissions. Also the influence of the economic crisis on the discourses is part of the research. In this research, three stakeholder groups are considered; non-governmental organisations, private companies and governmental organisations. A Critical Discourse Analysis is used, which for this specific study is based on a field visit and nine in-depth interviews with the involved stakeholders of all the three groups. Also, articles from American, British and Dutch newspapers have been analysed, as well as a selection of Icelandic websites that aim to inform international visitors. This research shows that private companies and to a large extent also governmental organisations say they want to behave sustainably. However, the concept of sustainability is interpreted differently. If behaving sustainably brings economic advantages as well, it is more likely they will put their words in practice. Non-governmental organisations see sustainability as a value that needs to be embraced. All the stakeholders, however, see the sustainable development of tourism transport as a possibility to attract more tourists. The economic crisis has, in fact, had its effects on the discourses used by the stakeholders, and it has also shaped the policies that have been developed. The crisis has led to financial troubles, which resulted in budget cuts on financial incentives to support sustainable (tourism) transport. Moreover, it has also led to an increased interest in more economic sustainable transport modes, which often turned out to be environmentally sustainable as well. It can be said that the different sustainability discourses (used by the involved stakeholders) clearly have had its effects on the stakeholders, the policies that are formed and the current and future use of tourism transport modes, whether they are sustainable or not. Another consideration is that the stakeholders are also affected by the context they act in. Two aspects have influenced the context in particular: the division between formal and informal power relations, which has led to unclearness about which stakeholders are actually in power, and the economic crisis. Being aware of this context is crucial to understand the stakeholders' discourses as well as their practices.

**Key words:** Iceland, Sustainability, Tourism, Transport, Economy, Critical Discourse Analysis

# 1. Introduction

Since the 1970s and especially in the past few years with the start of the economic crisis  growing awareness about climate change and rising fuel prices have influenced how people think about transport issues. This master thesis is all about transport, or more specifically, it is about the transport of tourists in Iceland and how this is influenced by policies, both public and private, and the economy.

## 1.1 Sustainability and the Economy

Especially since former US vice-president Al Gore published his documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth' (2006), public awareness of environmental problems, and climate change in particular, has grown. More and more private and public organisations are now claiming to develop policy to reduce the impact of their activities (Boykoff et al., 2009). Similarly, the global tourism industry is gaining more interest in the effects of climate change; however, this seems limited to the public policy arena. There is a *"low awareness of climate change and little evidence of strategic planning in anticipation of future changes in climate"* (Scott & Becken, 2010: 286) amongst tourism operators. Scott *et al.,* state that research on the contribution of tourism to climate change tends to focus on the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) caused by the transport of tourists from and to their destinations. This is the main contributor of the sector to global warming but other contributors are often neglected, they argue (Scott et al., 2010). Also in Iceland, interest for climate change and its relation to tourism has risen (Ministry for the Environment, 2002).

The Icelandic Ministry for the Environment calls climate change *"one of the greatest challenges to mankind in the 21st century"* (2007: 3). Climate change is causing a rise of temperatures and according to researchers from the Icelandic Meteorological Office and Environice, temperatures haves already risen in Iceland over the past decades (0.35°C per decade since 1975, the global trend is 0.2°C per decade), and glaciers have shrunk. They state that it is very likely that both trends will continue in the future and that it will influence the ecosystem. Depending on the precise amount of emissions tourists cause, it is expected that temperature will rise  an additional 1.4-2.5°C this century (Björnsson & Gíslason, 2010).

The economic crisis that started in 2007 has seriously influenced the tourism sector  in many countries, Smeral (2009) argues. In Iceland, however, the tourism sector has hardly been affected. International tourism figures decreased by 1-2% (2009-2010), however, the growth rate increased again with 10% in 2011 (ITB, 2012). Still, Iceland is considered as one of the most seriously affected countries in this crisis since the three major banks in the country collapsed within one week in October 2008. It was the first developed country in 30 years that needed to ask assistance from the International Monetary Fund (Danielsson, 2008). Its GDP declined in 2009 by almost 7% and an additional 4% in 2010, while in previous years there were growth rates of more than 7% (2004 and 2005) (The World Bank, 2011). However, last year, the increase of economic growth was 4% again. (The World Bank, 2012).

Different opinions exist whether an economic crisis hinders development towards sustainability. According to some scholars, economic growth facilitates environmental protection, which results in a reduction of environmental protection when the economy slows down (see e.g.

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Feindt & Cowell, 2010). Others argue that economic growth automatically leads to environmental harm and environmental sustainability leads to an economic slowdown (Alier, 2009; Mills & Waite, 2009). However, Jänicke (2005) states that an economic crisis is an excellent opportunity to turn the economy towards a more sustainable future.

## 1.2 Tourism in Iceland

According to Jóhannesson *et al.* (2010) tourists often come to Iceland because of its nature. Its natural resources, such us the glaciers, volcanoes, geysers and wilderness, have contributed to a large share of the growth in tourist arrivals over the past years. Also, the increased competition between airlines on routes to Iceland as well as a decreased value of the Icelandic Krona have contributed to more rising tourist numbers (since 2008) (Jóhannesson et al., 2010). 96% of the tourists visiting Iceland travel by plane to and from their country of origin, the other 4% of tourists arrive by ship (ITB, 2012). It is stated that air transport is the 'lifeline' for tourism in Iceland. It is not surprising that so many tourists arrive by plane because the country is relatively remote. Tourists are responsible for 18% of the country's total $CO_2$ emissions and 15.6% of its GDP, research shows (Jóhannesson et al., 2010; WTTC, 2012). To put these numbers in perspective, global tourism is responsible for 5% of the total emission of GHG (WTO & UNEP, 2008), while the tourism business is responsible for 11% of Sweden's $CO_2$ emissions, although it only contributes for 2.8% to its national GDP (Gössling & Hall, 2008). The total emission of GHG in Iceland rose from 3,415 Gigagrams $CO_2$ equivalents in 1990 to 4,880 in 2008. In 2009 there was a decrease of 5.3% in GHG emissions compared to the previous year, as a result of the economic crisis (Environmental Agency of Iceland, 2011).

Most tourists in Iceland use rental cars to travel across the country; geographically speaking, they stay relatively close to Keflavík International Airport in what is called the Golden Circle (figure 1.1). This is where there are the most visited tourist attractions.
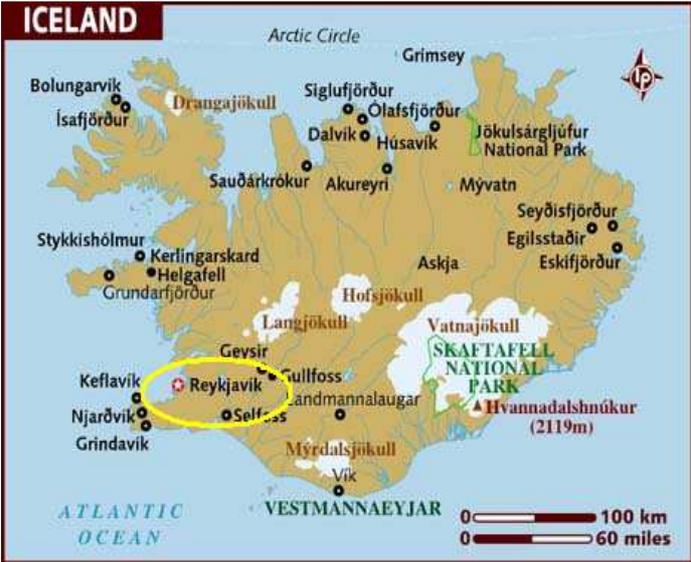


  **Figure 1.1: Iceland with in yellow the area of the Golden Circle.** Source: Lonely Planet, 2011.

Those who travel further often take 'the ring road', route number 1. This route is along the coast of

the island, and when they want to see the highlands, a four-wheel drive car is chosen as the mode of transport. Of course, public transport is also available across the country. Three bus companies (Sterna, SBA-Nordurleid and Reykjavik Excursions) connect the different parts of the country serving locals as well as tourists (Trotter, 2011). However, public transportation in Iceland is relatively underdeveloped compared to other countries, partly because of the low population density which makes it expensive to run buses frequently (Jóhannesson et al, 2010).

## 1.3 TransTourism

It is important to know that this report contributes to the TransTourism partnership. The Icelandic Tourism Research Centre, which is supported by different universities across the country, is partner to an international project funded by the European Union and falls under the Northern Periphery Programme (Northern Periphery Programme, 2012). This partnership *"is developing and implementing solutions for transport services adapted to rural tourism areas in the Northern Periphery"* (TransTourism, 2011: homepage). By doing research and developing new transportation services, it aims to lower car dependency and to increase accessibility to public transportation in Europe's Northern Periphery. It is anticipated that this development will also  lower the GHG emission of tourism transport. These solutions need to be economic viable and environmental friendly. Other areas involved in the partnership are located in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland and Sweden (TransTourism, 2011). This research will investigate what discourses stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism transport use when they discuss the implementation of policy that is developed to support modes of transport with lower GHG emissions, including buses. Hereby, this research will contribute to the goals aims of the TransTourism partnership.

In the following sections the problem statement will be formulated, and also the research' objectives. Together these will lead to a central research question and also several  sub-questions which this research seeks to answer.

## 1.4 Problem Statement

Figures show that the level of car dependency is high in Iceland, both among Icelanders as well as tourists, which causes a high emission of GHG. Especially during the summer, large numbers of tourists use rental cars to explore the country. They often use four-wheel drive cars because of the rough terrain, especially in the highlands. Tourist numbers have increased rapidly during the past decades and so did the number of cars hired by tourists (ITB, 2012; The Economist, 2011). The Icelandic government seeks to  increase the number of tourist  because of the growing importance of the tourist industry for its national economy (Ministry for the Environment, 2006), and to a certain extent, because of the economic crisis (The World Bank, 2012). Economic growth and environmental protection seem to contradict each other; however, the crisis might also be an opportunity to enhance the government's policy towards a sustainable future, as some scholars said in the aftermath of the Icelandic crisis (Alier, 2009; Mills & Waite, 2009). It is argued by the Ministry for the Environment that economic growth should go hand in hand with measures to protect nature from damage caused by tourist activity. Besides, Mowforth and Munt (2008), argue that the tourism industry has been increasingly attentive to issues of sustainability. Moreover, the Ministry for the

Environment argues that protecting the country from the negative effects of the increasing amount of international and domestic tourists, and also reducing the country's GHG emissions will help to sustain the country's reputation as a place where nature and wilderness still can be found (Ministry for the Environment, 2002). With respect to transport, the Ministry wants to stimulate the use of low-emission vehicles and public transport. It is anticipated that with these goals, people's car dependency will be reduced when people travel across the country (Ministry for the Environment, 2006).

The Icelandic government sees the public's active participation  as essential for progress towards sustainable development, and also for reducing the emission of GHG emissions by tourists. Individuals, non-governmental organisations as well as companies are encouraged to do what they can in order to attain the goals of the government by participating in the decision-making of environmental policy (Ministry for the Environment, 2006). Big and small tour operators, car rentals, bus companies and other public and private organisations are stakeholders in the Icelandic tourism policy-making process as well as they are active in the tourism sector. In this way they influence the mode of transport tourists use while they travel across the country. However, it can be questioned whether the involved non-state actors really feel they participate in this process and whether the state really knows what the real problems are for the Icelandic people. Do the Icelanders see climate change as a problem or are there other issues which prevail in times of an economic crisis? This is closely related to the discourse on sustainable tourism transport that the different stakeholders use because different interests exist. Is it so that they all use the same discourse but act differently in real-life practice, or is it so that they use different discourses and therefore have different practices?

The discourse of stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism transport policy used in the policy making process is central in this research. What is also important is how tourists are informed about the (sustainable) transport offers in Iceland. This discourse is influenced by a wide range of issues and affects how sustainable tourism transport policy is made, implemented and evaluated. The various discourses used by the stakeholders involved in the policy-making process will be identified and discussed. It is also relevant how the various transport modes are presented to the (potential) tourists as this influence the use of the transport modes. Especially the attention for environment-related issues on these websites will be considered. Besides, the economic crisis will be taken into consideration as well because it possibly has affected the policy-making process. This research is an explorative research as there were no similar studies found, based on the objective or the theories. However, this will be further discussed later on.


## 1.5 Research Objectives

*The objective of this research is to find out what the discourses used by the various stakeholders are and how they influence the policies that are developed to reduce the emission tourists cause by travelling across the country. Also the influence of the economic crisis on the discourses will be taken into account.*

Analysing the discourses of stakeholders will reveal what the differences are between the various stakeholders. As discourses can change over time due to a variety of reasons, attention will be given to these changes as well. The focus will be on the stakeholders at the supply side of the tourist

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sector, i.e. governmental officials, entrepreneurs and non-governmental organisations. Websites and newspaper articles that that are used by tourists to plan their trip will also be analysed. This research aims to analyse the discourses that the involved stakeholders use when discussing policies regarding sustainable tourism transport and how this affects the tourism transport mode choice.

The research will show differences and similarities between the involved stakeholders regarding the sustainability discourse they use in the tourist sector. This might give insights on how the mobility of tourists might be steered towards more sustainable transport for tourists in the future using environmental policy. Websites and newspaper articles will show whether low-emission tourism transport modes are presented as a viable alternative to unsustainable modes, both from the demand side and the supply side point of view. This may show which factors play a role in the future as well, giving suggestions for new policy. This will help Iceland to reach the goals set up in Iceland's National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The research will show how the stakeholders interact, form coalitions, use power and rules in order to achieve what they aim regarding sustainable tourism transport in Iceland. Moreover, how the created 'truths' of the stakeholders regarding sustainability emerge will be considered and how the social realities and practices are changing. Analysing how stakeholders in Iceland try to make tourism transport more sustainable will lead to a better understanding of the policy making process in Iceland as well as what the effects of external factors, such as the economic crisis and the growing awareness regarding climate change, are on tourism transport in Iceland. Analysing newspaper articles will show whether there is a difference in how sustainability policies that are made, and the reality that is shown to tourists.

## 1.6 Research Questions

Before elaborating on the specific Icelandic situation and the theoretical backgrounds of this research, it is important to ask questions which will guide this research and show what kind of research is needed to address the stated problem.

For this research, a research question was formulated:

- *Are there differences between governmental organisations, private companies and non-governmental organisations in how they evaluate sustainable tourism transport policy implementation, how they talk about sustainability issues in the interviews on websites and in newspaper articles and has there been an effect of the economic crisis on this?*

The problem statement, research objectives and research question will guide this research throughout the project. It will be further elaborated on in the section concerning the theoretical framework as well as in the process of data collection and analysis.

## 1.7 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter forms the basis for the remainder of this research. The scene will be set (chapter 2) by shedding a light on the most important aspects of this research; sustainability,

tourism, transport and economy. It also explains the Icelandic context and how the country is influenced by external factors, such as the economic crisis. The theoretical framework given in chapter 3 explores and explains the theory used to perform this research: the Critical Discourse Analysis. The research methodology and methods are presented in chapter 4, operationalising the main concepts as well as explaining the methods that have been  used. In chapter 5, the research outcomes are described, which are based on the interviews and website and newspaper analyses. In this same chapter, the discourses used in the sustainable tourism transport debate in Iceland are analysed as well, using a Critical Discourse Analysis. Then, the results based on the literature review and empirical research are discussed (chapter 6). Also, comparisons with other studies are made. In the final section, in chapter 7, the research question is answered and suggestions are given for future research.

# 2. Setting the Scene

It is argued by e.g. Meadows *et al.* (1972) that over the past 140 years, concerns about the environmental conditions on our planet have slowly grown. After the foundation of the first National Park (Yellowstone, USA, 1872), the Limits to Growth-book (Meadows et al., 1972), the Brundtland-report (1987), and a diverse range of conferences organised by the United Nations (e.g. in Stockholm in 1972 and Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the Kyoto Protocol was ratified in 1997. This was the first global agreement to fight climate change. The Protocol is now ratified by about 170 countries, including the members of the European Union and Iceland. It aims to co-ordinate measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change (Purdy, 2010). Since former US vice-president Al Gore published his documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth' (2006), public awareness about challenges of environmental and climate change in particular, accelerated even further, Ruhanen (2008) states. It is nowadays generally acknowledged that many of the world's ecosystems are damaged and biodiversity is declining as a result of human interventions (*ibid*). As a result, answers concerning sustainability are sought in different fields of research and according to McElroy and Potter (2006), it is likely that this phenomenon will dominate the economic-sustainability debate this whole century. An increasing number of private and public organisations in the tourism sector are now developing policies to reduce the negative impacts of their activities; they want to become more sustainable in their operations (Boykoff, et al., 2009; Ruhanen, 2008). Introductory sections on the topics discussed in this research can be found in this chapter, which give insight to larger issues this study focuses on related to sustainability, tourism, transport and the economy and how this is seen in Iceland.

## 2.1 Sustainability

In 1987, a UN commission chaired by former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland published '*The Our Common Future Report*'. In it the socio-cultural consequences of economic growth is combined with the strive for environmental sustainability (WCED, 1987). It accepts that economies can continue to grow but socio-cultural and environmental resources should be conserved as well (Bowers, 1997). Environment and economic development are clearly linked in the report (Holden, 2005). The definition of the UN commission regarding sustainable development has been widely cited by scholarly and political publications: *"sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs''* (WCED, 1987: 8). To achieve this goal, a long-term perspective is needed, several scholars argue (Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Wilkinson et al., 2001). The Brundtland report was followed by the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which is more practical, and reads like roadmap towards sustainable development, Agenda 21. The principles found in this report are widely used among tourism developers on different governmental levels. The Kyoto Protocol was ratified in 1997 and aims at fighting climate change. It wants to co-ordinate measures for mitigation and adaptation for climate change (Purdy, 2010). The World Tourism Organization uses a similar understanding of sustainability. According to UNEP and WTO (2005), sustainability has three dimensions, or 'pillars': an economic, social and environmental dimension. These three are interdependent and together they form sustainability. Something cannot be fully sustainable if

attention is only paid to one or two pillars, they state. The three pillars can reinforce each other, but they can  also be in competition with each other, which makes is necessary that a clear balance is found so that they reinforce each other, which then leads to sustainable development (UNEP & WTO, 2005).

Sometimes the strive for sustainability is criticised; many people seem to agree with what is meant with sustainability, although in the end the concept is still interpreted differently (Holden, 2005; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Since the start of the sustainable development discourse, it has been described as *"ambiguous, vague, parochial, sectorial, a cliché, a mythical concept, and a ´lion´s den´ of semantics"* (Ruhanen, 2008: 434). It has led to confusion over what the concept actually means, which leads to questions about whether, in the end, it is possible to achieve sustainability (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Although sustainable development is a holistic concept involving an entire system, often only a single sector is positively influenced by a new development, sometimes at the expense of others (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Sustainable development is, according to Ruhanen (2008) and Wall and Mathieson (2006), often seen as an ´oxymoron´. From the one hand, sustainability is something which is guided by a long-term perspective, however, therefore it has to aim at sustaining current properties, while development implies change towards a new, preferable better, state. However, from the start when the concept was introduced, it has been believed that it can go hand in hand, as long as attention is paid to encompassing all the three pillars, one of which being  the economic pillar (Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

Governmental institutions are very important for developing and introducing environmental standards, several investigations show (UNEP & WTO, 2005; Wilkinson et al., 2001). However, governmental policy has been criticised for *"hijacking, and even abusing the sustainable term"* (Ruhanen, 2008: 436). It is said that governmental sustainable policy is sometimes nothing more than loose statements and rhetoric. Governmental policies related to sustainability have to deal with the apparent contradiction of economic growth and environmental conservation (Jänicke, 2008). Different countries have developed environmental standards and policies to gain leadership in environmental technology. What is of key importance in fighting natural environmental problems is the economic viability of the solutions proposed, since without economic viability the measurement cannot be sustained by its developers, Feindt and Cowell (2010) argue. A balance is necessary between a change led by the government and the free market model since both extremes have proven to be unsuccessful (Feindt & Cowell, 2010; Wilkinson et al, 2001).

Environmental problems *"largely arise from our failure to see our relationships with the environment as critical to our future survival and to view that relationship in systemic terms. In taking the natural environment for granted, we assume it has a resilience that will absorb or intensify impact forever''* (Dunphy and Griffiths cited in Wilkinson et al., 2010: 1493). A practical model is needed, they say, which would lead to a support of the economy by the world's own ecosystems. Product and process innovations will turn out to be crucial, as well as research on the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of these innovations. As stated, focus on the public and private sector should rather be on a long-term instead of short-term basis (Wilkinson et al., 2001). Gunn and Var (2002) argue that governments or environmentalists will not necessarily be effective to bring change towards a sustainable economy. They say, voluntary action from organisations (including those developing tourism) will be most effective when they realise that it is in their own interest to sustain the quality of natural and cultural resources. This will lead to a new ethic for sustainable places, they state. This is summarised in table 2.1 on top of the next page.

**Table 2.1: New Ethics for sustainable places.**

| Current Ethic | Ethic of Sustainable Place |
| --- | --- |
| Individualism, selfishness | Interdependence, community |
| Short-sightedness, present-oriented ethic | Farsightedness, future-oriented ethic |
| Greed, commodity-based | Altruism |
| Parochialism, atomistic | Regionalism, extra-local |
| Material, consumption-based | Nonmaterial, community-based |
| Arrogance | Humility, caution |
| Anthropocentrism | Kinship |

Based on: Gunn & Var, 2002: 83

It is argued that in planning new projects, it is important to keep in mind that sustainable development is what the stakeholders want it to be, which is dependent on the agreements the various stakeholders make. Therefore people have to work together (Gunn & Var, 2002), which underlines the cooperation system Korten (2011) proposes. By learning from current successful best practices, whether it is in tourism or other sectors will further help to achieve sustainable objectives (Gunn & Var, 2002). Not working on sustainable development is not an option according to Korten (2011), despite the difficulties which are discussed in this chapter, since continuing the current approach will eventually lead to self-destruction. The tourism industry for example will face decline if nothing is done (Ruhanen, 2008). Collaboration on different levels and scales is required to prevent sustainability issues which otherwise are gradually becoming irreversible (Wilkinson et al., 2001).

## 2.2 Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism has now become a popular term although concerns on the sustainability of tourism started to arise from the late 1960s onwards (Smith et al., 2010). The development of sustainable forms of tourism has become of great importance for tourism destination planners as well as for governmental officials at all levels (Ruhanen, 2008; Gunn & Var, 2002). This has led to increased consideration from the academia and the public and private sector. Although the concept has attracted support at the conceptual level, it has also become a point of debate and disagreement, amongst tourism developers as well as amongst scholars, as Ruhanen's paper (2008) shows. Some scholars argue that tourism planners do not implement strategic and long-term approaches while researchers do not consider the practicality of their solutions sufficiently (Holden, 2005; Ruhanen, 2008). Ruhanen (2008) says that regardless of this debate, the concept has dominated the social and political agenda in many countries. A wide variety of policies, strategies, guidelines and initiatives have been developed by the government to integrate sustainability principles with tourism planning. This often involved strong public coordination since it has the mandate to represent the population. All this information on sustainable development is used to gain funding for economic development. However, often all these principles and ideas are not brought into practice. In these cases, priority is too often given to economic development instead of environmental protection (Holden, 2005; Ruhanen, 2008). Ruhanen (2008) mentions a wide variety of countries where this has occurred (e.g. Spain, Scotland, Sweden and Australia).

### 2.2.1 Defining Sustainable Tourism

According to the World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism is *"tourism that takes full account*

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*of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. […] Thus, sustainable tourism should; 1) make optimal use of environmental resources; 2) respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities; 3) provide socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders."* (UNEP & WTO, 2005: 11-12). The UNEP & WTO clearly use the definition of the Brundtland report. They apply it to the tourism sector as on sustainability in general and also on sustainable tourism development more specifically since it is not only important how things currently are but also about the future. All three pillars (economic, social, environmental) are of equal importance on the path towards sustainable development, according to UNEP & WTO (2005).

The World Tourism Organization established three criteria that recognise economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of tourism:
- • Make optimal use of environmental resources
- • Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities
- • Ensure viable, long term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits for all stakeholders (Smith et al., 2010; p. 172).

According to Wall and Mathieson (2006), sustainable tourism should be understood in a holistic way since it does not take place in isolation. In fact, it influences other sectors and communities, although a new development might initially focus on a single community. All stakeholders should be involved in the decision making process when new tourism developments are proposed and these developments should then have a long-term focus. Optimally, this leads to considering all the three pillars to make sure that they reinforce each other. For an industry that is highly dependent upon natural, cultural and human resources, it might be obvious why taking care of the environment has become a global struggle towards sustainable development (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). Ruhanen (2008) recognises that sustainability has not always been part of tourism developments. Tourism has been actively promoted in the past, although the negative consequences were not appropriately considered. When people started to become more aware of the negative impacts tourism (on environmental, socio-cultural and economic). Solutions were thought of and slowly the sustainability concept developed, though it was often too late to reverse or redirect damaging developments. According to Ruhanen (2008), the industry failed to plan proactively, which has led to unwanted tourism developments. These past two decades, there has been an extraordinary growth in research on tourism-related issues, including sustainability, even though the acceptance and utilisation of this newfound knowledge has been questioned because of a lack of applicability in the tourism sector (Ruhanen, 2008).

### 2.2.2 Using Sustainability in the Development of Tourism

Integrating the concept of sustainability with the tourism industry is a difficult process, Smith *et al.* (2010) argue. The concept is interpreted differently across the different stakeholders involved in the tourism industry, which leads to different outcomes when developing tourism plans (*ibid*). These different interpretations occur on the demand and supply side of tourism; governmental officials, entrepreneurs and tourist all have different interests and priorities, which leads to conflict in new tourism developments, Byrd *et al.* (2009) shows. These differing interests make it difficult to put all these ideas and principles into practice (*ibid*). Gunn and Var (2002) state that sustainability in tourism aims for a better spatial, environmental and economic balance in tourism developments and their laid-out plans. They argue that this requires new public-private approaches. One example of this is that public transportation should be decentralised so that companies would be able to play a larger

part in the whole. This would lead to preservation of resources for future generations. The public sector can help achieve this by policy regulation and legislation aimed at the long-term while businesses will benefit from a stronger base for future developments as resources are preserved for future generations of tourists (Gunn & Var, 2002).

### 2.2.3 New Forms of Tourism

Different forms of tourism exist and some are said to be more sustainable than others. Often they are described under the heading of 'alternative', 'new' or 'green' tourism, as not being part of 'mass' or 'conventional' tourism, although alternative tourism is not necessarily more sustainable then mass tourism (Butler, 2007; Mowforth & Munt, 2008). According to Mowforth and Munt (2008), the following forms of 'new' tourism are:

**Table 2.2: Forms of 'new' tourism.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Ecotourism | Fair trade tourism |
| Sustainable tourism | Ethical tourism |
| Community-based tourism | Pro-poor tourism |

Based on: Mowforth & Munt, 2008: 99.

Gunn and Var (2002) state that the most well-known form of 'new' tourism is listed on top: ecotourism. It is seen as broad and vague as sustainability and it tends to overlap with it as well. It is all about ´green´, ´conservation´ and ´sustainable´. It is often nature-oriented and it aims to pay more attention to ecology, i.e. the relation between organisms and the environment. Ecotourists are assumed to be more aware of environmental problems and therefore consciously try to be careful not to harm the environment too much during their holiday (*ibid*). The number of tourists in ecotourism tends to be smaller than the number that visit traditional (mass) tourist destinations. Local ownership is important, Mowforth and Munt (2009) say; it leads to low impact and reduction of economic leakages; leakages are normally very high since almost all revenue goes to a wide variety of companies which are not based in the destination country (*ibid*). Nevertheless, as it is argued by Gunn and Var (2002) it is not necessarily better for the host destination when the revenues are taken into consideration, although ecotourists often spend more on their holiday than others. Generally a large share of the revenue goes to tour-operators or the country's government. Thus it is not used for socio-cultural or environmental causes (*ibid*); claims regarding the environmental friendliness are difficult to underpin, which results in sceptics from the public, as Holden (2008) shows.

When planning developments leading to ecotourism, community participation is often considered of high relevance, according to Holden (2005). However, community participation will not necessarily lead to environmental protection, as the local community might give priority to the economic development of the destination (*ibid*). According to Holden (*ibid*), ecotourism can be used in two ways:

1) to meet economic objectives as it promotes the quality of the environment which leads to increasing numbers of international tourists. This is often developed by foreign investors and social and environmental interests are of minor importance (Holden, 2005);

2) to place emphasis on resource conservation that is financed by revenues from international tourists. In this way, locals are often more involved in the decision-making process and foreign involvement is hereby limited (Holden, 2005).

According to Mowforth and Munt (2008), the latter deals more with the three pillars of sustainability

then the former. It should therefore be given priority when decisions have to be made. The latter is also seen as a form of community-based tourism, with high ownership levels among the local population (*ibid*).

## 2.3 Sustainability, Tourism and Transport

Transport infrastructure has become crucial for new tourism developments, as Prideaux (2004) points out. For traveling internationally or within large countries, airports are of-key importance for a tourist who wants travel to her or his destination. Additional services such as taxis, railways, coaches and rental cars bring people from the airport to the accommodation facilities (Schiller et al., 2010). Yeoman (2008) argues that new transport developments formed the basis for several tourism developments. Transport is needed for a tourist to travel to and from her or his destination, and it is also needed for other outings, or trips the tourist makes. The type of transportation can also be what attracts the tourists in first place, for example, when the tourist goes on a cruise or a historic railway (Page, 2009). Travel services such as airlines, railways, passenger ships and coach companies, together with individualised forms of transport such as the car and to a lesser extent the bike, are vital in facilitating travel, Holden (2005) states.

### 2.3.1 Cars, Coaches and Airplanes

Research by Peeters (2005) shows that the car and air transport dominate in tourism-related travel. In 2000 about 60% of the 26,000 billion passenger kilometres were travelled by car, another 13% by aircraft (*ibid*). The car causes emission of large quantities of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; it also causes congestion and road safety problems in tourism destinations, especially during the year's peak season. All this is the result of what Schiller *et al.* (2010) call the 'car culture'. Basically, this means that it is very normal that a household has one car (or more) and society is completely adapted to the car, as the main mode of transport. Car ownership and a high level of (auto)mobility in general are considered as a right of the public (*ibid*). Another main contributor to the emission of GHG is air transport. Especially since airfares were lowered and low-budget airlines became popular, the number of people travelling by plane has increased rapidly. Short flight trips to destinations within Europe or North America have become affordable for many people and this, inevitably, has led to an increase of the negative impacts of tourism on the environment (Holden, 2005).

However, as more and more people want to limit their negative impact on the environment, both at home and during their travels, there have been more conscious efforts to make transport more sustainable, Schiller *et al.* (2010) argue. Moreover, people increasingly recognise the advantages of walking, cycling, and public transportation, and increased awareness of sustainability (*ibid*). Coaches are often used for trips with multiple nodes or destinations using prescribed flows and networks resulting in highly structured itineraries. Coaches are used for long distances, the length of the trip varies from a couple of hours to several days; coaches stop at popular attractions and destinations and the length of the trip varies from a couple of hours to several days (Duval, 2007). According to Guiver *et al.* (2007), coaches contribute to a reduction in car usage; it enables people who do not have the possibility to travel by car to reach certain destinations, and it contributes to local economies. Competitive prices, a high level of reliability, proper information, knowledgeable staff, and proper vehicles are seen as crucial to attract new tourists to traveling by coach. Often there are different ways the coach services are open to improvement e.g. higher

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frequencies, a longer season of operation etc. In fact, many leaflets are available, for example, for trips that combine a bus trip with a walking tour, according to Guiver *et al.* (2007).

According to Hall (2004) despite the advantages of sustainable transport, the car has some advantages above e.g. public transport that are hard to beat. He says that especially in destinations where tourists explore larger areas (such as in Iceland) the car is much more flexible and it gives the tourists the opportunity to establish individual itineraries. Besides, the car is also relatively cheap, especially when the number of people traveling in one car is high (*ibid*). According to Duval (2007) it is not clear which mode of ground transport is  most sustainable. Reasons for this are that the environment (in the broadest sense) differs largely from place to place, the efficiency of the car and the coach, and the number of people who travel sitting in the transport mode. According to Travis (2011), different modes of transport can be divided in three groups, low impact, medium impact and high impact modes of transport. This is shown in table 2.3:

**Table 2.3: The impact of different modes of transport in terms of their carbon footprint.**

| Low impact modes | Medium impact modes | High impact modes |
|---|---|---|
| Electric car | Ferry ship | Petrol car |
| Train | | Aircraft |
| Coach or bus | | Large cruise ship |
| Cycle | | |
| Sail | | |
| Canoe | | |
| On foot | | |
| Source: Travis, 2011: 77. | | |

Other scholars state that cars have a much higher negative impact then coaches because the GHG emission of cars is much higher (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Gössling et al., 2005; Kahn Ribeiro et al., 2007; Peeters et al., 2004). Coaches are seen as relatively environmental friendly because of the, in general, high occupancy rates, especially the chartered coaches. European legislation and technological developments reduce the emission of fine particles; this will contribute to this image in the near future, according to Peeters *et al.* (2004).

Domestic flights are used between destinations where distances are longer and/or the area between two destinations is not interesting enough for tourists (Page, 2009). According to Page (*ibid*) it is a fast mode of transport compared to coaches and cars, and with the rise of low-budget flights it is in competition in price with other modes of transport as well. A clear disadvantage of domestic flights is, according to Kahn Ribeiro *et al.* (2007) its negative environmental impact, especially its GHG emissions are high. Research shows that per passenger kilometre, emissions of GHG is much higher compared to coaches, as well as railways. It depends on the number of people in the car as well as on the kind of car, whether its GHG emissions are lower or not (*ibid*).

### 2.3.2 Managing Tourism Transport

There is renewed interest in encouraging tourists to shift their transport mode from the car to more sustainable modes of travel, however, little research on this is done so far (Lumsdon & Page, 2004). Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010) state that governments are paying increasing attention to the negative environmental impacts of transport, and tourism transport. They say that three policy approaches are used to address GHG emissions; regulatory, market-based and voluntary initiatives.

The first approach uses laws to force people to use more sustainable transport modes; it also forces transport suppliers to make their products with lower the GHG emissions. The second approach includes environmental taxes, emission charges, subsidies and tradable permits. An example of the third approach is carbon offsetting. Often a combination of these approaches is used to limit GHG emissions (*ibid*). It is noted that some of the policies developed to lower GHG emissions oppose other governmental aims, such as tourism growth, which in many countries in Europe is highly car dependent. Several strategies are proposed to lower the carbon offset of tourism, such as reducing the use of energy, improving energy efficiency, increasing use of renewable energy and the eco-labelling of tourism products. All these together can help reach the ambitious aims of various European countries to reduce the negative environmental impacts of tourism, according to Dickinson and Lumsdon (*ibid*).

Attitudinal and behavioural change has shown to be difficult. To reduce environmental problems by restricting people to travel is seen as politically complicated to enact since freedom to travel is seen as equal to democracy and human rights. Other forms of behavioural change are difficult because tourism is an industry where the site where damage is done to the environment is often also place where the main attraction is in a destination (Hall, 2004). Other barriers to engage in lower-carbon tourism travel behaviour are the lack of alternative transport modes to air travel, reluctance to adapt holidays to mitigate negative environmental impacts and the unwillingness to accept personal responsibility for negative impacts of holidays on the environment, according to Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010). It is argued that despite governmental support, the tourism industry is often also not willing to support the shift from car-borne tourists to public transport because it would have negative effects on the total tourism revenue. Therefore, when the government wants to increase the use of sustainable transport modes, it is said by Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010) that it is important that all stakeholders at the destination (including residents and tourism providers) are well-informed in an early stage. Following Lumdson and Owen (2004) this leads to a stronger support for new developments, as well as it provides information. However, according to them, governmental involvement is especially needed where the costs of infrastructure or basic transport provision is high. It is also considered as of major interest because negative externalities (such as pollution) are under control and mandate of the government, while in a deregulated environment these externalities might be ignored (*ibid*).

Page (2009: 59) sees the following needs as crucially important for the government to support, since tourists may then change their mode of transport and reduce car dependency:

- the need for promotional activities to raise awareness of alternatives
- the need to make alternative access easier than using the car (substitutability of transport mode)
- meeting the needs of users of alternative sustainable transport modes
- a review of car parking provision to limit spaces

This would lead to increased use of public transport (*ibid)*, but this also depends on other issues, such as the economy, which is the topic of the next section.


## 2.4 Tourism, Economy and Sustainability

Along with the expanding service sector in all post-industrial economies, tourism is a growing

economic sector worldwide and it is expected that this will continue to be so in the coming years, Smith *et al.* (2010) argue. Tourism is seen as the world's largest industry and also one of the world's fastest growing industries. The tourism industry is responsible for 9.1% (2011) of the world's GDP and it is expected that this will rise to 9.6% in 2021. 8.8% of the total employment work in the tourism industry and related sectors; this will rise to almost 10% in 2021 (WTTC, 2012). For 2012 the UN World Tourism Organization expects an increase of 3-4% in tourist arrivals, breaking the barrier of 1 billion for the first time. If growth continues, there might be 1.8 billion tourist arrivals in 2030 (UNWTO, 2012). In Europe, 7.7% of its GDP is earned in the tourism industry and 7.7% of its working force has a job in this sector. In Iceland, these figures are 14.9% and 15.6% respectively. The World Travel & Tourism Council expects that these countries will also see steady growth rates in the next decade (WTTC, 2012). This makes the sector, also for the countries participating in TransTourism (Iceland, Sweden, Ireland, United Kingdom), a sector of significant importance, especially for that country that was most severely hit by the economic crisis and which  geographical area this research focusses on: Iceland. The role of tourism in the Icelandic economy grew during the past years, as chapter 1.2 showed. But in light of the sustainability debate,  the relation between economy and sustainability should also be considered. Measurements which are meant to enhance the sustainability of the economy often lead to an increase in costs of  businesses in the short term, Wilkinson *et al.* (2001) state, which has influences competitiveness with other businesses. However it can also trigger innovations which leads to lower costs in the long run, they argue. This might lead to increased resource productivity, which makes companies more competitive (*ibid*).

According to Mills and Waite (2009), when countries reach a certain level of economic wealth, governments and the public start to become more aware of environmental problems that might have risen due to the economic growth that led to wealth and prosperity. At this stage, countries are presumably rich enough to start investing in the environment. When there is a period of economic decline, it might be expected that less emphasis is given to the conservation of the environment (Mills & Waite, 2009). However, as the same authors argue, differences exist between countries because of country-specific conditions. For example, when a country is a so-called 'pioneer country' the negative influences of economic decline on environmental policy is likely to small (Jänicke, 2005) – although a certain slow-down can be expected (Feindt & Cowell, 2011) – because it wants to continue to be a pioneer, and they understand the development of new environmental conservation policies as an economic asset (Jänicke, 2005). *"[T]he existing capacity of a country – together with certain incentives of the international system – will prevent an excessive roll-back and provide chances for a 'comeback'"* (Jänicke, 2005: 140). Other scholars argue that economic growth facilitates environmental protection (Feindt & Cowell, 2010). The economic crisis of the last few years might be understood as a what Mahoney (2000) calls a 'critical juncture', especially because the recovery of the economy went together with massive stimulus packages. This could change the direction the economy takes towards a more sustainable future. According to Feindt and Cowell (2010), the first global recession of the 21st century is closely related to environmental issues such as the global food crisis. This crisis, they say, might trigger investments in sustainability-related sectors as it will address both the economic and the environmental crisis. Yet, these investments alone might not be sufficient and bring only relative improvements to the environment, according to the same authors. On top of that, they think that outcomes are likely to differ between countries as they all implement environmental-friendly policies differently. These new policies also require changes for those who are in authority positions with regard to environmental policy, as non-state actors will

have to play a larger role. Technological, political, and institutional lock-in might limit the greening of society, Feindt and Cowell (*ibid*) conclude.

Alier (2009) argues that economic growth and environmental sustainability do not go hand in hand. There cannot be economic growth without there being developments that harm the environment. At the same time, when there is environmental sustainability an economic slowdown will occur. It is also argued that a steady state economy is needed to conserve the environment (Mills & Waite, 2009). As Mills and Waite (2009) argue, once a country has reached its environmental limits and a high level of economic welfare, it is likely to expropriate resources from poorer countries. They may spend a share of their prosperity to conserve biodiversity but this is not necessarily the case. Because structures and institutions are difficult to change, Alier (2009) states that sustainable economic de-growth in the Western countries is the only possible solution for the world to have a sustainable future; besides, then also countries in the South are given more possibilities to develop. A radical change in economic thinking is needed, he states.

This is opposite to what Jänicke (2005) argues. According to him, 'trend-setters' in environmental policy can acquire economic gain from being a pioneer in the development of new environmental policy. Necessary conditions for being a pioneer country in the field of environmental policy are: 1) certain capacity to *"identify and solve environmental problems"* (OECD, 1994: 8; in Jänicke, 2005: 130) – including a strong 'green' advocacy coalition and an existing institutional, economic or informational opportunity structure –, 2) issue specific activities, 3) conditional factors that fully use or limit a given capacity, and 4) the ability and motivation to use the available capacities in the given context. Globalisation processes can limit countries in becoming a pioneer country as it inevitably reduces the sovereignty of the nation state. Also there is an increase on influence the international market has on a country's economy. According to Jänicke *(ibid)* this asks state and non-state actors to cooperate in developing a high capacity for environmental policymaking; technology-based solutions seem to offer the most realistic opportunities for the development to become a pioneer country. This is exactly what might give Iceland more opportunities since the country has assets in the production of energy by using renewable resources, the Ministry for the Environment (2006) states. Together with the economic crisis, this might function as a starting point in the development of environmental friendly policy in the country.

## 2.5 Iceland, Sustainability, Tourism, Transport and the Economy

*"Settled by Norwegian and Celtic (Scottish and Irish) immigrants during the late 9th and 10th centuries A.D., Iceland boasts the world's oldest functioning legislative assembly, the Althing, established in 930. Independent for over 300 years, Iceland was subsequently ruled by Norway and Denmark. Limited home rule from Denmark was granted in 1874 and complete independence attained in 1944. The second half of the 20th century saw substantial economic growth driven primarily by the fishing industry. The economy diversified greatly after the country joined the European Economic Area in 1994, but Iceland was especially hard hit by the global financial crisis in the years following 2008. Literacy, longevity, and social cohesion are first rate by world standards." (CIA World Factbook, 2012: Iceland - Introduction)*

Iceland is now the leading country in the 2010 Environmental Performance Index, which is due to its environmental public health and the use of renewable energy sources (geothermal energy and hydropower). Because of the latter, its greenhouse gas emissions are also relatively low (Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, 2010). Nonetheless, the country aims to reduce its

emissions further, the government states. Based on the Kyoto Protocol, the Agenda 21, and the Rio Declaration, in 2002, Iceland adopted a national strategy to, as a society, work towards a more sustainable future. The strategy was named 'Welfare for the Future', meaning that *"maintaining a high standard of living for the long term must be based on a healthy environment and robust ecosystems that can guarantee food production and other things that are necessary and desirable"* (Ministry for the Environment, 2006: 2). Welfare should be understood in its broadest sense; not only economic growth is important but also social and environmental qualities (Ministry for the Environment, 2006), even though some authors argue sustainability cannot be appropriately combined with economic growth (Alier, 2009). Often, the market uses sustainability for marketing-term purposes while products are not developed differently, more environmentally friendly (as also public policies do) (Hoyer, 2000; Ruhanen, 2008; Wilkinson et al., 2001).

### 2.5.1 Influence of Transport on the Environment

Research showed that between 1990 and 2004, GHG emissions rose by 11%. Iceland wants to reduce its emissions by 50-75% until 2050, compared to its emissions in 1990. According to the government, this will increase the quality of life of the Icelandic people (Ministry for the Environment, 2006). This is coordinated by the Ministry for the Environment. Iceland wants to reduce these emissions by using the most economical means, such as through new technology and also by taking financing measures. The government believes that these measures will help to reduce the worst effects of human-induced climate change, including global warming (*ibid*).

Developing new technologies to limit the negative impact of climate change can become an economic asset of the Icelandic economy in the future, according to the Ministry for the Environment (2007). Because Iceland's energy production is, at this time, almost completely considered renewable reducing the use of fossil fuels in transport (accountable for 20% of total emissions), and using other environmental friendly energy sources like hydrogen, methane and biodiesel instead, is of great importance to reach the Kyoto goals, the Ministry for the Environment states (*ibid*). The government sees great possibilities for this because several climate-friendly technologies already exist and they just need to be implemented. The government also wants to promote the use of public transport as a feasible mode of transport for many people. Already taken measures encompass the use of taxation in order to stimulate the use of less-polluting cars (e.g. small diesel cars) as well as the construction of new roads in order to shorten the driving routes. It is expected by the government that the former will lead to an increase in the number of small-sized diesel cars and thus together with the latter, decrease the emission of greenhouse gases from motor vehicle traffic (Ministry for the Environment, 2007). Coaches (here including tour buses), personal cars and domestic air transport are the main modes of transport used in Iceland when travelling around the country. Road vehicles are responsible for about a quarter of total $CO_2$ emissions in Iceland and it rose by 64% between 1990 and 2009 (Environmental Agency of Iceland, 2011). Though rental cars do not form a huge part of the transport-related emissions, it does form a large share of the total tourist emissions, according to Jóhannesson *et al.* (2010). Figures for coaches and domestic air transport were unfortunately not found.

### 2.5.2 Assessing Public Transport and Reducing Car Dependency

Research on combating the negative effects of climate change in both Iceland as well as abroad is supported by the government (Ministry for the Environment, 2006). The remoteness of Iceland is considered to be the main challenge for the country. Outside the Golden Circle distances are

perceived as long and few roads exist. Especially roads suitable for cars and buses are less common, except for the ring road circling the island. Seasonality, accessibility and a relatively poor public transport service are other challenges to consider. These have also caused much great car dependency among tourists travelling around Iceland (Jóhannesson et al., 2010; Jóhannesson & Huijbens, 2010). It should also be noted that car use can become part of a country's culture (Schiller et al., 2010). In Iceland, car use has been on the rise for a long time (IceNews, 2010), and a large share of the tourists who visit Iceland come from countries with high car-ownership rates (ITB, 2011; The Economist, 2011). Besides, in peripheral areas such as Iceland, individualised motorised transport (e.g. cars) has an even higher importance since many tourists do not see many alternativesfor travelling around in their tourist destination, besides renting a car. Also for the inhabitants of the peripheral regions, motorised transport is crucial to be able to deal with the disadvantages of living far from the centre. Public transport and other forms of transport (e.g. cycling) in these areas are thought to be underdeveloped or non-existent. According to Norheim (2008) this lowers the likeliness of people changing their mode of transport.

As can be seen in table 2.4 (top of next page), during summer almost half of the tourists uses a rental car to explore the country and 15% uses a scheduled coach. In wintertime, these figures are different, also caused by the worse road conditions in these months, as well as by the concentration of tourists in the Golden Circle, which is in these months even more apparent than during summer (ITB, 2010; ITB, 2011).

**Table 2.4: Means of transport among international tourists in Iceland in 2011 (%).**

|  | Summer (June-August) | Winter (September-May) |
|---|---|---|
| Tour bus | 33 | 56 |
| Rental car | 46 | 28 |
| Scheduled coach | 15 | 22 |
| Borrowed car | 8 | 10 |
| Own car | 8 | 0 |
| Other | 8 | 0 |

Source: ITB, 2011

Some tourists that arrive in Iceland by ferry use their own vehicle for transportation. Smiryl Line, a ferry service, offers the possibility to take cars and motorcycles with you on the ferry from Denmark to Iceland. It should also be noted that Iceland has one of the highest car ownership rates in the world, which is also why there is a low demand for public transportation among Icelanders themselves (Ministry for the Environment, 2006; Statistics Iceland, 2011).

### 2.5.3 Examples from Abroad

In The Burren area, part of Clare County in Western Ireland, a research was carried out to find out what the current public transport offer is, what other transport possibilities are available and how the use of public transport can be stimulated. The main tourist information centres showed that more visitors travelled by public transportation, than less well-known attractions (TransTourism, 2011). Destinations like Mývatn and Dettifoss are more likely to be visited by tourists using public transport than areas like Lónsöraefi and Hornbjarg since the former are closer to the ring road and easy to reach from a major town (i.e. Akureyri). The latter cannot be reached without four-wheeled vehicle, whether it is a coach or a car (Saethórsdóttir, 2010; Promote Iceland, 2011). The research in The Burren showed what the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are for the

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geographical area the transport services travel by. If the recommendations related to information provision, booking and ticketing systems, tourist numbers using the service and planned services for the future are implemented, it is assumed that public transport services will increase in popularity among tourists (TransTourism, 2011). When the same research is done for Iceland, focussing on the areas outside the Golden Circle, improvements can be made in public transport services, which eventually will lower the dependency on cars among tourists and decrease the environmental impact of their visit to Iceland.

Another example comes from Spain. On the island of Mallorca, it is said that high season leads to increased congestion, emissions of greenhouse gases and accidents caused by rental cars. Following the criteria set up by the European Conference of Ministers of Transport and the 'Polluter Pays Principle', taxes or charges are possible mechanisms to reduce the negative effects of Mallorca's high season in tourism (Palmer-Tous et al., 2007). Palmer-Tous *et al.* (2007) in their article describe different taxing instruments and consider their pros and cons. Also the taxes per kilometre driven by the driver are taken into account, as well as tax discounts for low-emission vehicles. These instruments might be implemented in the Icelandic tourist industry as well, in order to support rental companies to offer low-emission cars.

### 2.5.4 The Icelandic Economy, Tourism and the Environment

The tourism industry makes up of about 16% of Iceland's total GDP and this rate has been around this level for several years (ITB, 2012). Between 2000 and 2011, there was an average growth of 6.1% in how many visitors visited Iceland. It has varied between 16% (2010-2011) and -6% (2001-2002) and reached the highest peak with 565,600 international visitors in 2011 (*ibid*). In 2008-2009 the growth rate was -2% (ITB, 2010). These figures correspond with international trends. When the (world) economy flourishes, tourism grows, and in times of economic slowdown or recession, tourism decreases (Smeral, 2009). However, some argue that Iceland needs to be careful to not become to dependent on the tourism industry, since it is increasing in numbers. It is now one of the fastest growing economic sectors in Iceland. However, the country might face severe problems when tourism slows down. Economic dependence on the financial sector was the main reason for the past crisis (Rose & Spiegel, 2011). Due to the country's climate and remote geographical position, economic leakages might also be high, however no figures about this were found. However, it is typical for many island countries to use a great amount of money to import supplies from elsewhere (Mowforth & Munt, 2008). The Icelandic government considers to be a frontrunner in developing environmental friendly policies because it recognises the country's informed state in the field of renewable energy sources, like geothermal and hydropower. It wants to develop this asset further in order to sell these products abroad and diversify its own economy (Ministry of the Environment, 2006). Crucial for this is the funding for 'green' research and development by the government, Feindt and Cowell (2011) show. They also state that without this incentive, it is likely that the market will focus on other innovations that are not necessarily green. In other literature it was not clear whether there has been a change in environmental policy in Iceland in the years before the crisis and in the years of economic recovery (since 2009). As was mentioned in the introduction, in the Western world, Iceland was one of the most severely hit countries by the economic crisis that started in 2007. Iceland faced the most serious problems during autumn 2008 when the most important banks collapsed and the country became virtually bankrupt. The question now is whether this has affected Iceland's environmental policy, and the discourses used by the involved stakeholders.

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# 3. Critical Discourse Analysis

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for this research will be explained more elaborately; the Critical Discourse Analysis approach which forms the main basis of this study. However, first of all, it is important to consider the theoretic paradigm which is used, and also the position the observer takes on the topic.

## 3.1 Social Constructivism and the Second Level Order Perspective

For this research, social constructivism is the chosen paradigm. In social constructivism, people construct their own understanding of the world they live in. There is no objective reality and everyone constructs his/her own reality (van den Belt, 2003). According to Van den Belt (*ibid*), there are two currents in constructivism; moderate and strong. Moderate constructivists deal with social phenomena which exist only because people agree to act as if they exist. Social phenomena and mutual agreements do not exist in nature but are based on agreements between people. Radical constructivists oppose the existence of 'brute facts' based on agreements between people (Van den Belt, 2003). In this research a moderate constructivist view will be used. Even though, the different social phenomena present should be appropriately considered, these phenomena do not interfere with the 'brute' facts, though it can be debated what facts are brute. This is important to note when concepts such as 'sustainability', 'tourism transport' and 'policy making process' are used. How these terms are understood and defined depends on the discourse the stakeholders use. When the stakeholders have to collaborate, they have to negotiate and decide on a useful definition in order to arrange policies. Thus, different discourses can be used. For this research, it is important to realise that these different discourses have been determined by the people using them.

Moreover, the researcher uses what Fuchs (2001) calls a 'second level observer perspective' in this research. Stakeholders observe the policies related to sustainable tourism transport from a 'first level perspective'. 'First level observers' observe the content of the policies and the second level observer shows 'how' these policies are developed. They consider the whole process, which includes the policy makers and the subject of policy making. The first level observation proceeds in a 'realist' way: it takes more or less for granted what is observed. The second level observation is 'constructivist'. From this perspective, the ideologies, which first level observes simply observe, are constructed and defined. It observes the first level observer, and it considers what and how she or he is observing. Ideologies are 'modes of observing', i.e. a set of thoughts belonging to the observer which he uses to observe the organisation. *"The second-order observer observes what cannot be observed at the first level, that is, that the outcomes of a* [discourse] *are its own outcomes"* (Fuchs, 2001: 87-88). The second-order observer observes not the organisation itself but looks from a greater distance at how the stakeholders observe the organisation and process (Fuchs, 2001). How this works in practice is shown in the figure 3.1 on the top of the next page. Because of the distance the second-order observer takes from the subject matter, it is possible to analyse the discourses the different actors use and understand why certain decisions are taken.
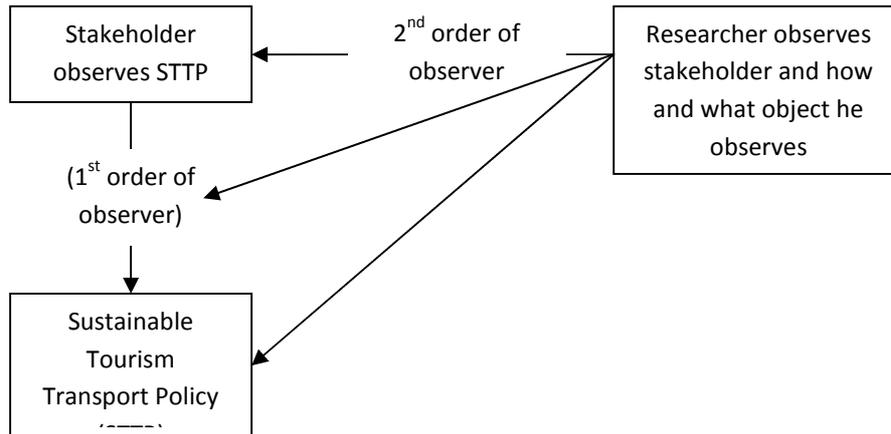
**Figure 3.1: Order of observing.** Based on Fuchs, 2001: 25-27

## 3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

The development of policy can be looked at from a wide variety of perspectives. This study makes use of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because it shows what different 'stories' are told regarding a concept, such as, in this case, sustainability. It also explains how this approach is used to lower the negative effects of tourism transport on the environment. It shows what the effects of the use of certain discourses are on sustainable tourism transport policies and practices in Iceland. Sometimes different stakeholders have different interests and intentions, which are different from what they express in interviews, newspaper articles and websites. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis will help to unravel the discourses used, and also show what the effects of these discourses are on sustainable tourism transport related practices. However, these considerations are relative since  factual reality does not exist in social constructivism.

Sustainability is a much debated and contested concept which has had its effects on what, today, is called sustainable tourism and sustainable transport, as was shown in the previous chapter. Following Van den Brink and Metze (2006), discourses shape politics and discourses are shaped by the stakeholders developing policies, which shows that Discourse Analysis (DA) perfectly fits into a moderate constructivist view as explained above. Discourse Analysis focuses on meaning and arguments, and context (e.g. risen environmental awareness), actors (e.g. stakeholders in the tourism industry) and institutions (e.g. a policy making process) (*ibid*). Different interpretations combined with different interests have led to a wide variety of sustainable policies that are implemented, both in the public and private sphere. Analysing a discourse means getting to the core of a text (written or spoken), looking for what stakeholders mean and ultimately how the concept of sustainability is used in practice and the effects on these practices. Doing this, patterns and statements will be explored and show how the stakeholders use the concept of sustainability to put their interests to the foreground.

### 3.2.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis (DA) is based on the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (Maingueneau & Angermüller, 2007) and is a clear example of research done from a constructivist approach (Hajer, 2005). Foucault emphasised that the meaning of language used is actually a result

of certain rules and practices Moreover, different periods in time give different meanings to concepts, Hall (2001) argues. This is clearly the case for sustainability. Blewitt (2008) states that what was meant with sustainability in the 1950s is not the same as to what it means now. Meaning to a word or concept is according to Hajer (2005) expressed by language and practices. These changing meanings are the result of historical and cultural processes. When one period ends, and another starts, there is a process of change from one discursive formation to another, Hajer (*ibid*) adds. According to Foucault a discourse is *"a group of statements which provide a language for talking about […] a particular topic at a particular historical moment […]. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But […] since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect"* (Hall, 1992: 291, in Hall, 2001: 72). In environmental discourse analysis, the following definition of discourses is often used: *"an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices"* (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005: 175). As to this definition, there is, as Hajer (2005) states, much less consideration for the historic background of a discourse, however, on the other hand, there is a stronger focus on the continuous reproduction of discourses. A discourse is the dominant language which shapes a policy; it is, however, continuously challenged by other, competing discourses. Following Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) discourses stand for an interpretative scheme which gives meaning to (environmental) problems, leading to the design of environmental policy programmes.

According to Hall (2001) a discourse connects what someone says to what he does, i.e. the actual meaning he gives to what he says, or knowledge, i.e. that what is expressed by language, is more important than the language itself, Feindt and Oels (2005) argue. What something means is the result of accepted rules and norms, creating social practices (Hajer, 2005). Following Maingueneau and Angermüller (2007) language is used when communication takes place between the messenger and a recipient; it is a social practice in which meaning is attributed to what is said. However, there are always limitations and restrictions to what is communicated about a certain topic, they furthermore state. A discourse is, according to Hall (2001), never a single statement, text, action or source; it is a distinguishing way of thinking about the knowledge of a certain a topic, creating institutional sites. According to Foucault, *"nothing has a meaning outside of discourse"* (Foucault, 1972, in Hall, 2001: 73). Discourse is about where things come from and how they have gotten meaning as a result of social interaction (Hall, 2001).

Besides, Hajer and Versteeg (2005) argue that language, power and knowledge play a key role in Foucault's thinking about discourses. The discourse in power has a big effect on what others do and say concerning a specific issue. A stakeholder that has power creates, as it were, the knowledge and defines what the truth is. Coalitions between actors are formed and they determine the discourse used, which then create new realities, i.e. what is socially accepted, in this case, regarding tourism transport practices. Actors organise coalitions to strengthen their discourse, and at the same time, thereby limit the power of discourses used by others. Those who are part of a coalition share resources and/or often have the same interpretations of a policy discourse. These coalitions often have similar goals and they use the policy-formation process to advance their own interests (*ibid*). Hajer (2005) adds that, also in environmental politics coalitions are often formed and then seek to find opportunities in which they can exercise power and have a leading position. Often these coalitions then prevail and their discourse is adapted and becomes the new standard. Coalitions use similar storylines in a particular period of time to achieve this. Practices and contexts

are used to employ these storylines and discourses. Storylines are the simple reproduction of complex narratives and form the main message of a discourse. They are used to communicate the actor's view of reality as well as to counter alternative discourses (*ibid*). According to Hajer (*ibid*), discourse structuration and discourse institutionalisation are critical to understand how power and dominance are a result of the formation of discourse coalitions. Discourse structuration helps identify when and how a certain discourse starts to control how the world is conceptualised,  by all involved actors in society. Discourse institutionalisation is about the transformation of a discourse into institutional arrangements, such as laws and regulations.

Dominant discourse coalitions are the result of the acceptance of a new discourse (structuration), and this leads to new or changed institutional practices (institutionalisation) (Hajer, 2005). This affects how a society is regulated and controlled regarding a certain topic and this is a result of power. A clear understanding of a concept such as sustainability determines, what actions are taken regarding to that issue, which over time, leads to a conception of that issue, translated into e.g. norms and laws, Hall (2001) states. If something is accepted as truth in a society, it will also become true in reality, which affects practices in daily life. This is what Foucault calls a 'regime of truth' or 'general politics of truth', produced by a variety of constraints (*ibid*). Power, therefore, is present in all social interactions, according to Foucault: *"Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere"* (Foucault, 1998: 93, in: Feindt & Oels, 2005: 164). These are, in fact,  discourses that determine and function as truths, while what others think about the concepts that are talked about is neglected, Hall (2001) argues. The truth is not state-centred. There are connections between the public and the private spheres, which are all of  equal relevance. But the meaning given to certain discourses is what dominates society (Feindt & Oels, 2005; Hall, 2001). According to Feindt and Oels (2005) shifting power relations leads to new discourses that prevail in society, and then also to the acceptance of new realities.  How society deals with the phenomenon 'environmental policy' is of main importance, not the phenomenon itself, Hajer (2005) argues. Based on this, it can be argued that discourses influence the meaning people give to certain concepts, which leads to various outcomes in practices related to these concepts. The actor in power creates a discursive reality, which affects practices of other actors who possibly use different discourses.

Discourse Analysis (DA) identifies the discourses apparent in social practices, as it is a combination  of linguistics and social sciences. It is the study of *"language-in-use"* (Hajer, 2005: 176). According to Maingueneau and Angermüller (2007), it shows where key policy principles emerged and how these principles were adopted into society. DA is used in a wide variety of scientific disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, history and human geography. DA analyses texts (in whatever form this might be), but not the plain text. It rather analyses the meaning that is given to the text practices by the institution that sends the message. Close reading of these texts is essential to do a proper analysis (*ibid*). DA aims to increase the understanding of discourses and events related to it, not necessarily to find the ultimate truth, since this does not exist from a constructivist perspective, Sharp and Richardson (2001) make clear. When the environment, sustainability, tourism and transport is considered from a discursive perspective this will lead to a better understanding of how these concepts are 'produced' through policy making, planning, research and development, and everyday practices. DA enables the researcher to study the power effects in the environmental discourse, showing why policies are formed in the way  they are formed, while being alert   to other discourses used, those that are less emphasised because of power relations (Feindt & Oels, 2005). DA

sees environmental politics as a process that seeks answers to real problems, as to where struggles between discourses might get worsened, bypassed or solved. According to Hajer and Versteeg (2005), Foucaultian discourse analysis' ability to trace power struggles is the most important contribution to the practice of analysing environmental policymaking processes. Often there is a clear struggle because of the distinction made between 'us' and 'them', which is a result of different interests and a different understanding of the world (Wodak et al., 2009). 'Us' is represented positively in storylines while 'them' is negatively represented. Different strategies are used to argue why a particular storyline is best for society, while at the same time other storylines are blamed for their deficiencies. All this leads to a mixed and complicated society in which a critical view is needed to understand it.

### 3.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Environmental Politics

As discussed earlier, a critical view on society is necessary. This can be guided by an approach called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is based on a Foucaultian perspective and focuses on the following questions:

*"- What is valid knowledge at a certain place and a certain time?*
*- How does this knowledge arise and how is it passed on?*
*- What functions does it have for constituting subjects?*
*- What consequences does it have for the overall shaping and development of society?"* (Jäger & Maier, 2009: 34)

CDA can give voice to groups that do not have enough power to progress forward. CDA has also been helpful when to look from a greater distance to the different discourses used in, for example, political debates, Jäger and Maier (2009) argue, which also underlines what Fuchs (2001) did when he advocated for the role of a $2^{nd}$ order observer. This means that not a single discourse is taken for granted in this research. It also means that all discourses evident in the debate regarding sustainable tourism transport in Iceland are further explored and critically weighed. To take a critical perspective basically means that you do not take things for granted, but rather have a willingness to understand the whole story thoroughly, perhaps complexity behind an issue, while you try to avoid dogmatism and dichotomies, Feindt and Oels (2005) state. Taking a critical perspective may also be necessary to evaluate a scientists' functioning appropriately. Basically, it is more about being sceptical than being negative as Maingueneau and Angermüller (2007) make clear.

CDA is also closely related to power structures, Jäger and Maier (2009) argue. Power over discourse and power of discourse are essential in this discussion. Power over discourse means that different actors have different power relations towards the prevailing discourses, as a result of different power relations between actors, who are all trying to put their discourse to the foreground. Power of discourse forms both individual and public awareness of certain issues, which hereby influences the practices of actors at all scales, since awareness determines action (*ibid*). This is especially the case for policy making, since it influences laws and regulations, which, all the more, shape reality. In fact, the legal basis of a discourse enhances the power of a discourse. Having an influence on the discourse that is in charge can have long-term effects and give certain actors more power than others, which then influences society towards a certain direction for the future. This means that analysing discourses visible in the policymaking process on an environmental issue, gives insight in how discourses are produced and turned into policies (Feindt & Oels, 2005). *"A discourse analysis of policy making shows how environmental problems and a related set of subjects and objects are discursively produced and rendered governable"* (Feindt & Oels, 2005: 163). Hajer (2005)

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states that this means that discourses are used in the policy-making process in order emphasise certain interests, which then leads to different developments in society than when another discursive view would have been in power. However, also when a certain discourse prevails, others still try to influence those with the leading discourse. This is done by actors who are continuously and actively positioning themselves on the market.

The discussion about environmental policies is more about how society interprets the environmental phenomenon, rather than about the relevance of this discussion. Nevertheless, the language that is used in this discussion is of major importance to appropriately understand the struggles between different discourses, which have led to different interpretations and meanings in the environmental debate. Herein, the role of language in politics, how language is used by actors and embedded in practice as a result of storylines and interpretation of meanings, and also why and how some discourses are accepted and others are not is explained by discourse analysis (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005; Sharp & Richardson, 2001).

In policymaking processes, different discourses are used in order to satisfy the needs of different stakeholder groups (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). This is partly due to a transformation in the relationship between the government and the public. Also shifting environmental discourses have contributed to this changing relationship, which is also the result of a change in the sort of environmental problems that prevail these days (Oels, 2005). New or other problems are interpreted differently compared to how this was done in the past, which leads to changes in the environmental debate and policies made (Hajer, 2005). According to Feindt & Oels (2005), narratives about certain issues construct a certain problem, which then leads to a political debate. However, this depends on the discourse political actors use and how they deal with the problem (*ibid*). However, these processes are not always straightforward; they are dynamic and unstable. This means that the specific (temporal) context is of major importance in the analysis, as was shown earlier (Sharp & Richardson, 2001).

According to Feindt and Oels (2005) environmental problems (and hereby, hindrances towards a more sustainable society) are socially constructed as conceptual frameworks. Analytical capacities are needed to understand precisely what the problems are. As these authors point out, these constructs are based on available technology, research practices and expert language. In the past it was seen that it took time before scientists could fully explain the troubles to a wider public, since much research had to be conducted in order to fully understand the prevailing problems. However, from a constructive perspective, there is no single truth and therefore, the outcomes of these investigations on environmental problems are much debated, which leads to multiple contested interpretations and practices, Feindt and Oels state (*ibid*). It differs hugely whether the research findings are interpreted as being induced by humans, as elements of dynamic and systemic developments or as opposing management problems. Together with the articulation of environmental problems, i.e. how is dealt with the problem – is climate change seen as a security issue or rather as an environmental threat? This questions shows that the environmental discourse and the environmental policy-making process is part of a broader discursive landscape. It is both interwoven and in competition with other discourses. This leads to a different understanding, communication and treatment of environmental problems (Feindt & Oels, 2005).

In the environmental policy-making process, a distinctive language is used in campaigns that intend to raise the awareness of environmental problems, Hajer (2005) argues. This influences the conceptualisation of the policy problem since particular discourses prevail. As already told before,

language has the capacity to shape politics and influence power relations. Analysing how this works and showing differences between how the different actors use language in light of their interests, helps understand how the debate is affected and controlled by different actor coalitions and the power they exert (*ibid*). Changing power relations between public and private parties has led to a change in how the environmental discourse is seen. According to Oels (2005, in: Feindt & Oels, 2005), there has been a change from green governmentality to ecological modernisation. More and more it is believed that society can overcome environmental problems by being more informed and by developing  new technologies, rather than through a radical change in people's behavior (Feindt & Oels, 2005; Hajer, 2005).

Also other concepts which are relevant to the environmental discourse, such as 'nature' and 'sustainability' are contested (Hajer, 2005). It is therefore important to be aware of this heterogeneousness in  the environmental discourse. The meanings of these concepts are  not only contested in science, but it is also in part a political struggle, since politicians have different sources of power and interests of their own. Besides, these concepts are interwoven with practices, institutional capacities and technologies, created by historic, cultural and political processes, as Maingueneau and Angermüller (2007) already made clear. This leads to different outcomes in political debates across countries and other political entities, which further biases  people since  not everything that is known reaches those who have interests in the environmental discourse. To finalise, environmental issues are not only shaped by and competing with other issues within environmental discourses, but they also compete with issues and prevailing knowledge from other discourses (e.g. economics and development). Together they shape the rhetoric of the policy. This means that it is a continuous struggle for actors who support certain environmental agendas to keep their interests on the agendas of all the different actors in the policy-making process, Feindt and Oels (2005) make clear. These struggles might affect institutional structures, policy processes and the outcomes. Sharp and Richardson (2001) argue that a changed rhetoric means that power relations between different discourses have changed as well. This leads to changes in laws and regulations, which then develop into other, new realities. Hajer and Versteeg (2005) add that discourses set the limits as to what is possible regarding policy options and they form the basis for new policy outcomes. What CDA does, is study the effects of power relations when these changes occur. This is of importance since the developing of new environmental discourses goes hand in hand with the defining of concepts such as  sustainability and sustainable transport. Shedding light on this process for a wider public, democratises the policy-making processes since marginalised discourses which embrace alternative policy options are also taken into account (Feindt & Oels, 2005). However, following Pal (1995), certain discourses in environmental policies are dominant because of power; this creates biases in understanding the problems as well as the solutions that are invented. Thus, analysing these structures and how they affect daily reality will eventually lead to a better understanding of the present struggles, Hajer and Versteeg (2005) conclude.

# 4. Methodology and Methods

As was stated in Chapter 1, this research is an explorative research. Therefore it is important to elaborate on the methodology and methods used in this research. This chapter discusses different aspects of what choices the researcher had to make in order to carry out this research.

## 4.1 Operationalisation

In order to be able to use the Critical Discourse Analysis as analytical tool for this research, it is very important to define concepts more concretely. This will be done by giving operational definitions to the most important concepts.

The key concepts of this research are:
- Discourse
- Stakeholder
- Sustainable Tourism Transport Policy

As discussed in Chapter 3, discourse in this research may be defined as *"an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices"* (Hajer, 2005: 300). In this research the ideas, concepts and categories are all related to sustainable tourism transport in Iceland. *The discourses are defined by the stakeholders involved in the policy-making process. These are analysed in order to understand the policymaking process in Iceland, as well as the different discourses used in this process. The discourses are the result of social and physical processes based on and fed by social and physical phenomena.* It should be noticed that different stakeholders can work in different discourses leading to contradicting interests. However, actors can also work in the same discourse without agreeing with each other.

According to Freeman and McVea (2001: 189), a stakeholder is *"any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organisation's objectives."* In this research the stakeholder is *any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of sustainable tourism transport.* This encompasses the four stakeholder groups Byrd *et al.* (2009) distinguish: governmental officials, tourism entrepreneurs, residents and tourists. This research focuses on the supply side of the tourists' choice of transport mode. This is inevitably connected to the discourse of the first three stakeholder groups. Less attention will be given to the discourse of the residents. In this research they will only be represented by non-governmental organisations.

The final concept is Sustainable Tourism Transport Policy (STTP). It actually encompasses four concepts at the same time but it can be summarised as follows: *rules and strategies developed by stakeholders at the supply side of the tourism industry that guides and influences the movement of people for recreational purposes (which last more than 24 hours) in a manner that tries to minimise the negative environmental impact.* Sustainable transport in the current context is not a final aim, in fact, transport can become more sustainable in the future in comparison of how it is now. At this

point, the degree of sustainability is affected by technological and economical limits (Lumsdon & Owen, 2004; Schiller et al., 2010).

## 4.2 Conceptual Model

The Critical Discourse Analysis is taken into consideration, as well as the problem statement, research questions, context description and the operationalisation of the main concepts to design the following conceptual model (figure 4.1). It shows the relations between the different issues at stake. This model influences how the research was conducted and how the discourse analysis has been carried out. As stated earlier, the discourses used by the different stakeholders of sustainable tourism transport policy and the relations between these stakeholders are of main importance in this research. In all this, the discourses actors use are crucial. Several issues related to this were earlier explained when considering the theoretical framework. Here it will be considered how these concepts can be linked more extensively; how they influence each other and of course, what methods were used to collect and analyse the data.
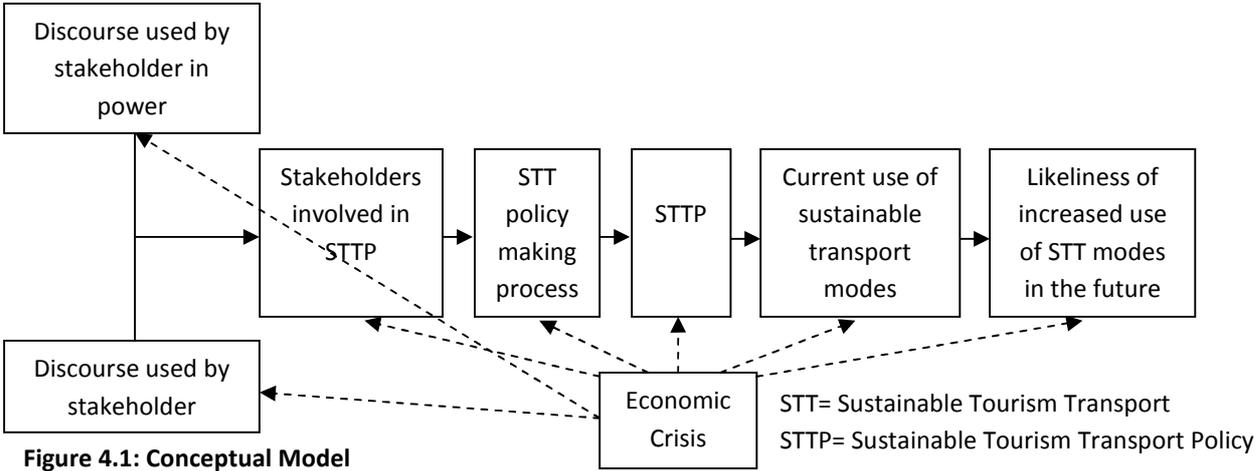


**Figure 4.1: Conceptual Model**

The model shows that both the discourse used by the individual stakeholder as well as the discourse used by the stakeholder in power have an influence on stakeholders who are involved in the debate on sustainable tourism transport policy. These stakeholders develop policies regarding sustainable tourism transport. They therefore influence the current use of sustainable (i.e. low emission) transport modes, now and in the future. How these groups and concepts relate was shown in the previous chapters and will not be further discussed in this chapter. The question is to how and to what extent the economic crisis influences these developments, influenced by the discourses used, the stakeholders themselves, and the policies and policy-making process. Also, it will be discussed how the economic crisis influences current and future developments regarding sustainable tourism transport.

In short, Critical Discourse Analysis will show how and to what extent the discourses influence environmental policies and sustainable tourism transport in Iceland as a result of the economic crisis. This will make clear how discourses influence daily practices as well as how policies are affected by the different discourses as a result of different power relations.

After considering and briefly explaining the conceptual model in the previous section, it is now time

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to operationalise the concepts used in the conceptual model which play a key role in the remainder of this research. Furthermore, the methods used in this research are explained, and also the issues related to data analysis, research area, time frame, validity, reliability and research constraints.

This model used served to form  guidelines when the data of this research was collected. How these data were collected is the topic of the next section.

## 4.3 Methods

In this research, qualitative-interpretative research methods were used since the main objective was to understand what is going on in the development of sustainable (tourism) transport policies. A wide variety of topics had to therefore be considered, such as the theoretical perspectives, which describes and understands social  phenomena, such as the discourses actors use and how these change over time and in context. For this research, using qualitative methods meant that an inductive approach was applied as *"a social phenomenon is explored in order to find empirical patterns that can function as the beginning of a theory"* (Boeije, 2010: 5). It can be assumed that social reality is constructed by individuals and they have an active role herein (van den Belt, 2003). However, existing theories were also tested, as the theoretical background and conceptual model already showed. However, this is not considered as an obstacle to employ qualitative research, Boeije (2010) argues. It will be shown whether this particular case of policy development and implementation regarding the mode of transport tourists chosen in Iceland, can be compared with other comparable processes in different contexts. This research is an explorative research as Iceland has some very specific attributes which makes it hard to compare it with other countries. These attributes are the following:

1. The geographical position of Iceland. The country lies a significant distance from other countries; to give an idea, from Reykjavik the shortest distance for a flight by Icelandair to Europe is over 1300 km (Glasgow, UK) and to North America it is even 3300 km (Halifax, Canada) (Icelandair, 2012);
2. A low population density. More than 60% of the Icelandic population of only 320,000 lives in or around Reykjavik and the largest city outside the capital area is Akureyri with about 18,000 inhabitants. This means that the population density in the remainder of the country is below 1/km². Large areas in the highlands are completely uninhabited (Iceland.is, 2012);
3. Iceland was severely hit by the global crisis. The global crisis that started in 2007 hit Iceland severely. It was the first Western democracy in more than 30 years that asked for IMF support after the banking sector, which had grown to more than 8 times the country's GDP, collapsed (Danielsson, 2008);
4. Iceland's climate and limited natural resources should be taken in consideration. Iceland is the only island country at more than 60° North and together with its geologic circumstances gives it limited natural resources and a harsh climate for flora and fauna, including humans (Baldacchino, 2006).

Nevertheless, comparisons can still be made with other areas based on separate factors, such as distances and climate. Comparable areas can be found in for example island countries and countries in the Arctic. The following methods were selected to carry out this research.

### 4.3.1 Scientific Literature

For this particular research, different qualitative methods will be used. The first method is the use of scientific literature. This was already done in chapter 2 and 3, in which the context of this research and the Critical Discourse Analysis is explained. Information from the interviews is used to show how the current literature, with its empirical data, can be contradicted. Initially, the aim of this research was to review Icelandic policy documents as well. However, due to the language barrier, this was barely possible and for as far they were available, they were integrated in chapter 2, which gives an overview of the (Icelandic) context.

### 4.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The researcher visited Iceland in January 2012 for four weeks to acquire information at first hand, and also to experience the Icelandic context himself. This was of great value for the researcher, in order to get a better understanding of Iceland, the economic crisis, tourism, transport and the role of sustainability. This helped the researcher to perform the second method: semi-structured interviews. These were held in order to understand what is currently happening in Iceland or what might developments might occur, and the reasons why (Boeije, 2010). According to Hart *et al.* (2006) this method helps to find out how people interpret and create reality. These interviews were carried out by phone and Skype because of the limited time and money limitations of this research. Interviewees were asked permission to audio record the interviews. They were also told that their contributions to this research would be kept anonymous. Due to technological problems two interviews were not recorded. The interviewer, however, took notes during these interviews and asked the interviewees to fill in a list of the main questions. One interviewee replied positively to this request. Another participant told that he/she preferred to have a written interview and this was done so. However, this did influence the outcomes negatively due to more comprised answers. Direct quotations from the latter two participants will not be used in this report. The outcomes are however valuable enough to contribute to the general picture that can be drawn for this research. A list of topics and open-ending questions were used to guide the interview (appendix C). To further explore the specific knowledge of the interviewee about the policy making process, during the interview other questions were formulated on the spot, as it were. In overall, the focus of the interview was on the role of the interviewee or the organisation he/she represents in the policy-making process. In specific, the question was how these actors consider sustainability, sustainable transport and sustainable tourism transport.

The strategy to recruit interviewees was the following: key person Edward H. Huijbens, director of the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre, was asked to recommend people of organisations the research had suggested that would be helpful for this study. On this list were governmental organisations, car rentals, bus companies, airlines and non-governmental organisations. These organisations (Appendix A) and persons were sent an invitation letter (appendix B) by email wherein the aim, main question and organisation of this research was explained. This letter was written in English and translated to Icelandic by a native speaker of Iceland. An English and Icelandic letter was sent to 18 organisations by email. In total 11 participants initially showed the willingness to participate. With 8 of these, interviews were actually held; one of these was a written interview. Participants worked for governmental organisations, bus companies, airlines and non-governmental organisations. Unfortunately, there were no car rentals services that were able and willing to participate. This has had its effects on the research. Through this, it was difficult to give a wholesome

picture of the sustainable tourism transport debate. Although only 9 interviews were held, the researcher is convinced that it shows to a large extent how the main stakeholder groups think and act in the sustainable tourism transport debate in Iceland. In fact, after a while, the researcher felt that enough interviews had been held, since new interviewees would hardly give considerably new insights on  the subject matter. What lacks, however, are the contributions one or more car rentals could have made to this research.

In Table 4.1, an overview is given of the distribution of the participants among the three stakeholder groups. No names of organisations, or participants representing these organisations are given for confidentiality reasons. Those organisations that were approached, however,  can be found in Appendix A.

**Table 4.1: Distribution of participants among stakeholder groups**

| Stakeholder group | Code |
|---|---|
| Governmental Organisations | GO1, GO2, GO3 |
| Private Companies | PC4, PC5, PC6, PC7 |
| Non-governmental Organisations | NGO8, NGO9 |

### 4.3.3 Website Analysis

Despite its drawbacks, such as the potential influence of the researcher, a content analysis was carried out on the websites and newspaper articles, the two final sources of information. It identified different understandings of various concepts, not from oral interviews as was done in the previous paragraph, but from written sources. Hall and Valentin (2005) argue that these written resources influence the public's opinion and are therefore of main importance for the tourism industry. All in all 23 websites were analysed (appendix D), which are all available for tourists that want to travel around Iceland on an individual basis (i.e. not in an organised tour). A focus was put on information about travelling in a sustainable manner, or in a manner that harms the environment the least. The following websites were analysed:  the websites of the seven regional tourist boards, as well as the website of the national tourist board, the websites of the four largest car rentals, bus companies and airlines, and three other transport-related websites, based on the information provided by the interviewees as well as the previous mentioned websites. The analysed websites include both organisations that were interviewed and organisations that were sent an invitation to participate in the research but who did not reply. After the researcher had held all the interviews, there was no question whether this selection was  a proper overview of the websites used by international visitors prior to their visit to Iceland. The analysis helped understand  how and where tourists can find information which is helpful to limit the impact they have on the environment, when they want to travel around Iceland.

### 4.3.4 Newspaper Articles Analysis

Newspaper articles were analysed on their content in order to give insight in what it exactly is this source of information tells about the different transport modes people can choose. It also helps to understand how the choice of transport related to the activities people do during their stay. Newspaper articles were chosen, among different media, such as magazines and television programmes, because they can be accessed easily. As websites are a representative of so-called 'new-media', newspaper articles are a representative of 'old-media', and although how much is

published is declining, still many people read them as a source of information for news, background information and so on. The LexisNexis Academic newspaper database was used to find the necessary articles. National newspapers from the United States of America, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were used, as these countries are number 1, 2 and 8 on the list of countries from which tourists to Iceland come from. Those countries that occupied place 3-7 on this were not taken into consideration due to the foreign language used, which formed a barrier. Respectively 11 articles from the U.S, 10 from the U.K and 18 from The Netherlands were found, in which traveling to Iceland was the main topic. These articles were all published after 1 July 2008. This date was chosen because, also in the second half of 2008, the economic crisis in Iceland started, which decreased the value of the Icelandic Krona, and which also lead to an increase in the number of tourists. Articles which mainly discussed the crisis or the ash cloud that interrupted European air traffic in 2010 were left out of this analysis.

## 4.4 Data Analysis

The review of scientific literature was meant to increase the understanding of the researcher on the research topic and context. This is the case for both existing theories and current practices. Nevertheless, the researcher tried to be considerate of the current field of research since it enhances the data-collection during the empirical research (Boeije, 2010). In the analytical phase, this learned knowledge was used to better identify the differences between the existing knowledge and what is found in this research. It became clear what is in line with the available literature and what new scientific insights are.

After the interviews were held, they were all transcribed in order to be able to use the data appropriately, and hereby limiting the chance of loss of data; still though information on non-verbal behaviour such as tone, rhythm and intonation is lost when using such research methods (Boeije, 2010). However, this was already difficult to grasp since for both the interviewer and the participants English is not the native language. This affected non-verbal expressions to a large extent, and it also added a lot of short breaks (i.e. uhm, ehh etc.) because the interviewer or the participant could not immediately get hold of a certain word. Also a limited vocabulary affected the interviews, which had an influence of the content, and which would have been avoided when the native languages would have been used. Interviews were analysed according to three steps:

1) Open coding. This breaks down the transcriptions in a limited set of codes, in this case in 18 codes. These codes were defined based on Chapter 1 and 2 of this report. Hereby the researcher got a better grip on the content of the data. It broke down the transcriptions in smaller parts. Fragments that were not relevant to this research were deleted.

2) Axial coding. This broke down the transcriptions in much smaller pieces. It focused the data around an average of 80 codes, giving a detailed overview of the contents. It started to show what codes and thereby outcomes, are more important in the research. It gave a clear idea which direction this research would take, how the research questions would be answered. Codes were based on the research question and on the literature used earlier in this research.

3) Selective coding further narrowed the data into the final goal, i.e. answers on the research questions. All the data that was not relevant (anymore) were removed. This made it easier to make linkages between the different codes, both within a single interview and between the different interviews. This final phase gave an overview to the most important concepts in the empirical

research, leading to a coherent story wherein relationships between the different concepts are evident (Boeije, 2010).

In the analyses of the websites the researcher took on the role as future tourist to Iceland, who is also interested in the environment. During this imaginary trip, as it were, the tourists wanted to reduce his negative impact on the environment as much as possible. He or she wanted to look for the most environmental way of travelling around Iceland by car, bus or airline. Other transport modes such as going by foot or bike were not taken into consideration since these are not realistic options to visit all of the country. i.e. at least going around the main spots on the ring road. The researcher looked for information on climate off-set programs, ease to find the mode with the lowest carbon emission, other possibilities to lower the impact, what the companies' policies related to the environment are, how easy this can be found on their website and what the offer is. This helped understand which companies are evidently encouraging their tourists t use the least harming mode of transport and/or the negative impact they have on the environment.

A content analysis was conducted on newspaper articles. Hereby, the researcher looked for words related to the transport of tourists around Iceland. Also other concepts that point to the impact of the environment of tourist visits were taken note of. This led to an overview of 39 newspaper articles from three countries. There were clear differences in how tourism in Iceland is presented in the three different countries. This also revealed how tourists are differently informed about transport possibilities, which influences how tourists decide on what mode of transport should be used.

All the above, except the scientific literature, is analysed from a CDA perspective. This means all stories people, websites and newspapers tell are critically observed in order to find patterns and understand what is exactly being said. The told stories were closely looked at, and also how actors and actor coalitions try to use their powers in order to make their discourse central in society. This will show how sustainable tourism transport policy in Iceland actually works and what the influence of the various discourses on these are.

## 4.5 Research Area and Time Frame

This research focuses exclusively on Iceland. In some cases making connections with other countries is important, such as those connections through flight connections between Iceland and Europe and North America, but also the relationship between Iceland and the European Union. Nevertheless, the main focus is on Iceland itself. The time frame taken into consideration in this research for the articles is from summer 2008 till spring 2012. Shortly after the summer of 2008, the economic crisis started and since this plays a significant role in this research, this date will be used as the starting point. In spring 2012, and end was made to the process of data collection. A short explorative research showed that before the crisis, there was little attention for the topic of Icelandic tourism in newspapers. This made comparisons with the present difficult to substantiate. Newspaper articles from 2008 to 2012 were used because of this reason selected using these about 4 years (from 2008-2012), the literature review started in Summer 2011 and ended about a year after. The researcher visited Iceland in January 2012 and interviews were carried out in February and March 2012. Websites were analysed in April 2012.

## 4.6 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the quality of this research it is important to make sure that the outcomes would not have been different when another researcher would have done this research, i.e. the outcomes need to be reliable (Boeije, 2010). In order to achieve this, a list with example questions was used to make sure that all the participants would more or less be asked comparable questions. Besides, the participants were told in the invitation letter what the aim of the interview would be; they were asked repeatedly who the main stakeholders in the debate according to the participant. They interviews required extensive preparation in order to be able to ask the most appropriate questions to each participant. They participants were sometimes asked for a clarification if a given answer was not fully clear. In the literature review, reliability was ensured by continuing the research until no new information was found, i.e. a sufficient level of saturation was reached. For the website analysis, the most important Iceland-based websites were analysed. Also those websites that were mentioned during the interviews were taken into consideration. A Google search was done to make sure no other websites were missing from this research. In the newspaper article analysis, all the articles wherein 'Iceland' and 'Travel' were mentioned at least three times were chosen. They articles also had to be at least 300-words long, and had been published in the national newspapers in the USA, UK and the Netherlands. The main topic of the article had to be traveling to Iceland.

According to Boeije (2010), validity means that a researcher needs to have a good view on what he is looking for. In this research, this was ensured by looking for literature based on the context this research can be placed in. Questions were asked in the interview that correspond with the concepts found in the literature. Also, these key topics, the concepts here considered, were also looked for on in the analyses of the websites and newspaper articles. To strengthen the validity of the interviews further, the interview questions were pre-tested as well. This lead to an alteration in the set of questions.

## 4.7 Constraints

As in every research, different constraints influenced the research and thereby the outcomes of the research.

- Language; language is probably the most important constraint in this research. The researcher is only able to read, speak and understand Dutch and English. Icelandic policy documents were especially hard to find in English. If the researcher would have had sufficient knowledge of the Icelandic language, more policy documents could have been analysed. Also more insights could have been gained during the interviews. Now however, for the interviewees English was not their native language which sometimes limited communication.
- Time; the interview participants did not have much time, which shortened the time span available for the interviews. The researcher was limited to the period the interviews had to be held in. With more time, the researcher might have interviewed more participants, and there also might have been more depth in the interviews themselves. Time constraints also influenced the period the researcher visited Iceland. It was a four week-visit and it was in the middle of the winter. A longer stay as well as a different season might have given, though

limited, a different view on Iceland.

- Money; without money constraints, it would have been easier to travel conduct more face-to-face interviews.
- Technology; due to the previous reason mentioned, interviews had to be held by the use of Skype and the telephone. This limits the verbal expressions in an interview since the interviewer and participant could not see each other. Technological troubles hindered the recording of an interview twice.
- Number of participants; not all of the potential participants were able and/or willing to speak with the interviewer. This led to a limited overview the researcher had on  sustainable tourism transport, especially since no  car rental company participated.
- Secondary resources; the search engine of the newspaper database selected relevant articles. However, it is possible it could have neglected some useful resources.

# 5. STTP in Iceland: the Question and the Analysis

In Chapter 2 and 3, it became clear that concepts such as transport, tourism and sustainability are not concept which in definition are agreed upon by all stakeholders. They are fluid concepts and even though some think that everyone interpret and understand these concepts in the same way, how stakeholders give meaning to these concepts in interviews and practices (e.g. on websites) differs. The concepts are shaped in the discourses used by the stakeholders, who try to get their message across. These discourses also influence the policies the stakeholders develop. In the first section a description of the analysis of interviews, websites and newspaper articles is provided, based on the research question. It shows the contents of the various discourses, which are compressed in three typologies in the next chapter. In Chapter 5.2, the actual discourses are analysed. It is clearly evident wherein the discourses of the stakeholders differ. The findings and results are presented in light of the research objective, which was stated in chapter 1.5: *The objective of this research is to find out what the discourses used by the various stakeholders are and how they influence the policies that are developed to reduce the emission tourists cause by travelling across the country. Also the influence of the economic crisis on the discourses will be taken into account.* The analysis will done, on the basis of the stated research question from Chapter 1.6.

## 5.1 Differences between Stakeholders Evaluation of STTP in Iceland and the Economic crisis

The research question stated in Chapter 1.6 is: *Are there differences between governmental organisations, private companies and non-governmental organisations in how they evaluate sustainable tourism transport policy implementation, how they talk about sustainability issues in the interviews on websites and in newspaper articles and has there been an effect of the economic crisis on this?* This is the guideline for this section of the report, the final answer will be given in the concluding chapter, Chapter 7.

### 5.1.1 Public and Private Evaluations of Tourism Policy Implementation

To start with the first part of this question, there are clearly differences between how governmental organisations, private companies and non-governmental organisations evaluate sustainable tourism transport policy. This is logical understandable since they all have different interests, which leads to different discourses which are used.

Some private companies feel that they are really negatively affected by governmental policies. The clearest example came from the interview with an airline. When discussing the effects of governmental policies for the airlines, an interviewee stated the following:

"*there is a tax that only has to be paid by domestic airlines on the fuel going into the engine and we have the emission trading scheme tax for the fuel when it has gone through the engine. So it*

*is taxed on both sides of the engine. So that's maybe quite unique for our situation and we are actually complaining about that because we don't think that's fair. We don't think that is fair." (PC4)* [1]

Also bus companies have their doubts about the policies that are implemented in order to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases in Iceland. They stated that they need to buy coaches that have a motor which meets the emission criteria of euro V [2]. Otherwise they do not get VAT paid back, partially. With buses rated as euro IV, it is not possible to obtain this reduction. However, as the bus company said, the difference between euro IV and euro V is limited. It would not justify investments in new buses. However, they have to follow the rules, so they accepted the new legislation. In general though, they agree that compliance to the rules of the European Union is an effective method to lower the coaches' emission rates. Several stakeholders, including companies, have high expectations for new laws that focus on decentralising public transport in Iceland from the state to local governments. It is expected that this will lead to a better alignment of tourists and bus companies, which will lead to higher frequencies and better packages for tourists. Supporting the use of small diesel cars by lowering customs and reducing taxes is considered as a good policy to limit the emission of cars rented by tourists, as well as cars in general, according to the transport sector. However, the fiscal advantage was lowered as a result of the financial crisis. It should also be noted that there were no car rentals interviewed and these might have been negative on this policy since the purchase of bigger cars have become relatively more expensive. And these are the cars that many tourists still ask for in Iceland, especially when they want to go into the highlands.

Governmental organisations on the other hand are obviously more positive about the policies that have been developed over the past. According to them, their policies lead to a reduction of GHG emissions by the transport sector. Fiscal advantages for companies that buy vehicles (buses and cars) has reduced the negative environmental impact as well as higher taxes on fuel (for cars and airplanes). They will have a positive effect on the country's environment, they state. However, it is noted that it will take some time before the effects will be visible since these changes happen gradually. Governmental organisations also agree with plans for the decentralisation of public transport. However, according to them, an increased pressure on local governments (as well as other stakeholders) is needed for it to be a success. Investing in infrastructure that guides tourists through vulnerable areas also has great potential. This will lead to a larger awareness among tourists while the negative environmental impacts are reduced at the same time. They plead for stricter rules regarding access to these areas:

*"Some of the areas are really vulnerable and we would like to control the access to those areas in a better way. But there are other areas that are less vulnerable and you don't need that much of an infrastructure, just to be able to control where the people are walking and in the same way protect the landscape and vegetation. It depends on the area but we also need to step a little bit out and watch the big picture and see how we can actually divert people to the areas that are more sustainable; areas where you have staff, where you have people that can, you know, actually steer the people a little bit around." (GO1)*

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[1] Codes in brackets refer to the table with the distribution of the participants in three stakeholder groups in table 4.1

[2] More information about the European emission standards can be found on http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/transport/road.htm

However this means a bigger expenditure and increased effort from the government is needed. But that is exactly what non-governmental organisations have their doubts about. NGOs do see efforts from the government to make tourism transport more sustainable, which for example is written in Iceland's National Strategy for Sustainable Development (Chapter 2.5). They agree with the companies that the decentralisation of public transport is a good initiative. They disagree with them on the tax policy regarding the purchase of new cars and buses. They also disagree on the tax on kerosene for airplanes. NGOs also state that policies have been changing slowly over the past decades. They say that it is only since recent times that the government is really putting an effort in reducing the emission of GHG through their new-formed policies. Only since the new coalition came into office after elections in 2009, Iceland has the first left-wing government ever. Since then, the government is really trying to reduce the negative environmental effects Icelanders cause. But the NGOs state that the government is hindered by old structures which have a big influence on the country. Key persons from industries possibly negatively affected by the government can have much influence on the policy that is actually implemented. However, they also say that words about the willingness of the Icelandic government to increase the country's level of sustainability, not only regarding transport, but also in general, are often not brought into practice. One of the NGOs told:

*"Iceland has been talking about these hocus-pocus solutions* [e.g. new emission-reducing technologies for cars] *but then in the report they had to admit that on a European scale, Iceland is far behind in comparison to all other European countries. Iceland has not really promoted these solutions until perhaps the last couple of years and there hasn't been much debate on how to do it."* (NGO8)

Nevertheless, the NGOs use the small scale of Iceland's society to their own advantage, which is demonstrated in the following quote:

*"Iceland is a small society wherein it is easy to make your voice heard if you have something to say and we, I would say, we have used other methods, we are a sort of participating in the debate on the pages of newspapers and in other media."* (NGO8)

NGOs also state that this is lack of real action and attention is not solely a governmental issue but more a societal issue. In Iceland awareness about sustainability grew slowly because for a long time the negative effects of their 'extravagant' life was not visible for an individual person, according to interviewees. The whole Icelandic society has recently, during the past decade, gained more interest and awareness on the negative environmental impacts (tourism) transport has. A solution the NGOs proposes is to enlarge the role of the government by using taxes, emission charges and subsidies. In addition, some argue that public transport  needs to be subsidised in order to increase the frequencies and lower the ticket fares for tourists (and residents). This will lead to a higher demand of the public, which leads to a lowering in car usage and planes.  Now, on routes where also domestic planes fly, it is often economically more beneficial to go by plane than going by bus. However, this bigger role the government will have is opposed by another NGO that proposes voluntary initiatives by the transport sector itself is more desirable. Because in the long run environmental solutions are also economic solutions and therefore, companies will choose for these options for economic reasons. However, this will lead to environmental improvements as well. One NGO representative complained that there are a lack of policies which focus on tourism in general and the sustainability of tourism in particular. He gave the following reason for this:

*"it becomes very difficult to look at something as a serious enterprise if it* [the tourism industry] *is non-existent for the most of the year, it has a very short history and is associated with leisure and off-time. People have difficulty in taking it seriously."* (NGO9)

Because of this, participants state, other governmental departments, such as the Ministries of Energy and Fisheries, receive much more attention from governmental officials. Moreover, tourism policy has been of minor importance for the government for many years because a higher preference was given to other industries, according to the non-governmental organisations. Tourism transport in particular and especially sustainable tourism transport, has been technically virtually ignored. There are policies that affect tourism transport but these, in fact, are very general. Other policies, such as laws about emission criteria for coaches, are not solely directed at tourism but also serve the Icelandic inhabitants. Also other policies have been made which affect tourism but are initially directed at the fishery industry, for example. At the same time the development of clear policies for the tourism industry is neglected.

### 5.1.2 Representation of Discourses in Media and Interviews

The second part of the research question deals with the representation of the stakeholders' discourses in media and how they talked about sustainability in the interviews. What is said and what is not said is important, as well as the possibilities that are given to tourists on websites and in newspaper articles. It says a lot about how the stakeholders want to be seen by the public as well as in how they bring their words into practice, which is of key interest for this discourse analysis.

**Tourism Information Websites[3]**

The eight tourism information websites (one national and seven regional) that were investigated for this research do not make a clear difference between more sustainable and less sustainable tourism transport modes. The car is often presented as the most used and convenient mode of transport to travel Iceland on your own, so that tourists are most independent during their trip. Travelling by bus, ferry or plane is mentioned as well, though the emphasis given to these modes varies across different websites. On the general, nation-wide website (visiticeland.com) most extensive information can be found; however, there is little difference between the eight websites. Special attention on visiticeland.com is paid to Iceland's specific road conditions, the distances, on safe driving and similar subjects. Information about environmental issues is minimal. Some regional websites pay more attention to coaches, ferries or domestic flights. Searching for terms as 'environment', 'sustainable', 'sustainability' and 'green' does not give many relevant results, on neither the regional or national website. None of the websites mention differences in impact the various modes of transport have.

Several of the websites link to www.nat.is. This website focuses on (tourism) transport to and in Iceland in particular. This includes linkages to airlines flying to Keflavík Airport as well as domestic airlines, car rentals, bus companies, and ferries. Also information regarding bus schedules and bus passports can be found. The website does not offer products to be sold, it only gives basic (apparently neutral) information as well as links to organisations that sell products that can be bought in order to plan a journey to and in Iceland.

**Tourism Transport Companies' Websites[3]**

Car rentals offer a wide variety of cars, differing in emissions a lot but low emission cars are not presented as the best or most preferred way to travel around Iceland neither do they make special advertisements for them (nor the other way around). One car rental (Europcar) has a special program

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[3] A list with analysed websites can be found in Appendix D.

to mitigate the negative impact of their business on the environment but on the company's website for Iceland, no clear attention is given to it. Airlines do not state anywhere on their website how they deal with the negative effects. Only Icelandair states something about it but as it is with car rentals as well, this information is hard to find. Bus companies neither use their relatively low emission rates to promote their business nor do they publish their sustainability policy. They even do not state that they use fuel-efficient buses to travel their passengers around Iceland. As with all companies, almost any attention is given to sustainability issues. Some companies (Reykjavik Excursions, Europcar and Icelandair) tell about a program that funds climate off-set programs. On the website of this Kolvidur-program, information about the contents of it can be found quite easily, however it is hard to find the link to the website on the websites of the companies. The website that aims to connect hitch hikers with car drivers (www.samferda.net), carpooling is presented as something that is fun, cheaper and better for the environment. These aspects are treated equally. On the general tourism information websites told about above, no link to samferda.net can be found.

**Newspaper Articles[4]**

For this research, newspaper articles from the main newspapers in the USA, UK and the Netherlands were investigated to explore differences between how they write about tourism transport modes in Iceland from the summer of 2008, just before the crisis hit Iceland, till April 2012. There are clearly differences between how the different transport modes are presented in newspaper articles; it differs per country. In all the newspaper articles, scheduled coach services as they are offered by Reykjavik Excursions, Sterna or SBA-Nordurleid are hardly presented, except for the Flybus which is mentioned several times as a convenient way (if not in a car) to travel from Reykjavik to Keflavík Airport and vice versa. The Icelandic landscape is presented as the primary reason to visit Iceland. Most emphasis is given to the tourist attraction the Blue Lagoon[5] and other attractions in the Golden Circle. Reykjavik is the city that is talked about many times, other cities such as Akureyri are almost not mentioned at all. A couple of times they refer to the *"environmentally-friendly geothermal power"* (Chicago Sun-Times, 6 October 2011). The economic crisis is referred to frequently, sometimes as an advantage for tourists because of the fall of the Krona, sometimes just in the introductory text or in relation to the volcanic eruption under the Eyjafjallajökull glacier. Often the articles mention that Iceland is now even more happy to welcome tourists since it is *"at least a source of income"* (Trouw, 26 June 2010, own translation).

In USA newspapers, the writers take for granted that tourists come to Iceland for a relatively short trip with Reykjavik as their main destination. From Reykjavik bus tours around the Golden Circle are taken, or if you want to be adventurous, you can go with a tour guide and go on a journey that lasts several days. An example comes from the Star Tribune (27 June 2010):

*"From downtown Reykjavik, you can jump on various tours, including whale-watching and puffin excursions, the Golden Circle tour through central Iceland, a soak in the Blue Lagoon and volcano tours."*

The Daily News (20 July 2008) tells a more adventurous and rough story:

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[4] A list with analysed newspaper articles can be found in Appendix E.

[5] The Blue Lagoon is a geothermal spa close to Keflavík Airport and Reykjavik and one of the most popular tourist attractions in Iceland (BlueLagoon.com, 2012).

*"Once you reach the base of the glacier, park your car or leave your tour bus behind. It's all ice and snow from here. But Snjofell Travel Service rents out vehicles to zip you up the slope. First, you'll gear up with snowsuits, gloves and helmets. If you're brave, try a snow scooter: It holds one or two people and reaches the summit fast. Snowcrawlers are slower, but these jumbo snowmobiles on caterpillar treads are a fun way to sit back and enjoy the view and the company of the dozen or so others you ride with."*

In Dutch newspaper articles, more focus is on the independent, active traveller who wants to see all the major highlights of Iceland, and who preferably travels around Iceland by car, whether it be the tourists' own car (the option of going by ferry from Denmark is given) or a rental car:

*"Daily flights go from Schiphol to Iceland, but it is also possible to get there by ferry. There are tourists who go to Iceland from the Shetland Islands or Scandinavia by their own car or campervan. For those who stay on the asphalt roads, travelling by your own car is a good option. For those who want to cross the lava desert from North to South (or the other way around) has to cross riverbeds. Here, a 4x4 is crucial. And even with such a car you need to stay alert."* (De Telegraaf, 3 April 2010, own translation).

In Iceland you can pass by all the major highlights by car (for free!) and if you want, you can go on  hikes as well, on a fishing safari, or go on  tours, like a whale tour. As such, travelling in Iceland can be a real adventure:

*On foot we walk down the dam, to get as close as possible to the raging giant* [the volcano Eyjafjallajökull glacier]*. It is sunny and very cold. The wind whistles around the mountain walls, in the caverns of the Thórólfsfell still hang long icicles from mountain streams.* (de Volkskrant, 1 May 2010, own translation).

The UK newspapers are somewhere in between. The focus is more on traveling to Iceland with a cheap flight, travelling around by organised bus tours or rental car, though domestic flights from Reykjavik to Akureyri are mentioned as well. A typical example is:

*"Revealing an alien landscape, fabulous ice formations, spectacular waterfalls and a museum devoted to mammalian parts others dare not show, a drive around Iceland's 830-mile 'ring-road' in winter proved an eye-opener."* (The Daily Telegraph, 6 February 2010)

After exploring the presentation of transport modes on websites and in newspaper articles, now it is time to turn back to the stakeholders, to see how they talk about tourism transport and sustainability in Iceland.


**Stakeholders[6]**

Differences between the stakeholders are clearer. While most private companies and governmental organisations say that they really work on becoming more sustainable and why their preferred mode of transport is also the most sustainable,  non-governmental organisations state that this is only done for marketing reasons, i.e. economic means, as was already told earlier in this chapter. What in real life is done is rather limited according to the NGOs. Also the preferred route to increase the sustainability of tourism transport, transport and tourism differs per stakeholder, depending on their interests.

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[6] Codes in brackets refer to the table with the distribution of the participants in three stakeholder groups in section 4.1.

One of the clearest examples of how different stakeholders explain the road to a sustainable society becomes clear with the following quotes. One company states in comparing the different transport modes on the level of sustainability that:

*"if we compare flight to the private car it is a more environmental friendly alternative then driving a private car." (PC4)*

According to this company, airplanes are more environmental friendly than cars because load factors in the airline industry are much higher than the average number of people who travel in one car in Iceland. Especially when driving a route which cannot be done in a relatively straight line because of mountains or glaciers, an airplane's negative environmental impact is rather low, compared to a car. Nevertheless, the environmental impact of a coach is lower than an airplane, they state, especially in summer when load factors for coaches are rather high. But then, from an economical point of view, an airplane is more sustainable because it is much faster. Also in price, a plane competes with other transport modes. In fact, driving by car from for example Reykjavik to Akureyri takes 4-5 hours and a scheduled coach takes about 6 hours. A flight is only 45 minutes. A single coach ticket costs about €75, a plane fare is available from €42, while traveling by car costs €60-70 (Air Iceland, 2012; Sterna, 2012; IceNews, 2012)

Another company, however, states that coaches are by far the most sustainable mode of transport to travel around Iceland. According to them, this is the result of the rather strict laws on GHG emissions, as explained earlier in this chapter. On top of that, a coach stops at several places in between which helps in making it possible to live in very sparsely populated areas. Passengers spend money on these stops, which all adds more economic value to their trip than only expenses by taking the bus fare. But this is equal to people who use a rental car. Also they do spend money during their breaks and are much more flexible when and where they take a break. When tourists drive a small diesel car and the maximum amount of people are in the car, a car's negative environmental impact is relatively low. Unfortunately, figures about the GHG emissions, the economic added value of tourists during breaks and the social (dis)advantages of this were not told nor found in other sources. A governmental organisation argues that an advanced public transport system with clear and easy connections and transfers from one bus to another will turn out to be very important in making tourism transport more sustainable. NGOs agree on this, though they notice that extensive information for tourists is very important as well. According to them, more attention for public transport is only a temporary solution, not one that is sustainable in the long run:

*"There is nothing sustainable about transport if you use carbon and burn oil or gasoline to drive cars." (NGO8)*

It is much better than going by car, however:

*"Generally a car is a black hole in the environment. A car sucks in so many resources and energies. It is an amazing disaster in environmental terms actually, the car, the private car. It is important to move away from the notion of private transport, private car ownership, moving into terms of public transport." (NGO9)*

These stakeholders argue that technology in the long run will find a solution for transport that is really sustainable. It is not known yet what this solution will be but they hope it can use the renewable resources Iceland produces by itself, like geothermal and hydropower. These resources produce already most of Iceland's electricity, and therefore a governmental organisations states:

*"it would be great opportunities if we could, let's say, make it public that you can travel around Iceland in electric buses." (GO2)*

Several stakeholders argue that from both an environmental, economic and social perspective, this would be the best solution for Iceland and electric cars, then, would be second best. Tourism figures are increasing so fast that an increase in number of passengers going by coach is always surpassed by the increase in total. And this surplus will continue to use rental cars of various sizes. Making these cars more sustainable is therefore also part of the temporary solution, as long as fully sustainable transport modes are not available. Especially because fuel prices are rising, tourists will increasingly choose fuel-efficient cars, such as the small diesel cars that are increasingly popular among Icelanders themselves as well. From an economic point of view, using electric cars would be a great opportunity for marketing purposes as well, which also all stakeholders agree on. In fact, if Iceland would be advertised as a country where transport is fully sustainable, it would only add value to the message that Iceland is a country where nature is everywhere around you. Both companies and others think this will attract more tourists who want to reduce their environmental impact. Although nowadays companies, governmental organisations and individuals behave not only because of economic motives but also seek to be environmental friendly:

*"first it is economical and then you know, the environmental aspect of it is to some extent a by-product. That's the reality." (GO2)*

According to several stakeholders, it is not that bad that environmental behaviour was initially caused by the economic crisis. When the Icelanders discover that economic behaviour is often environmentally friendly and vice versa, this might lead to an increase of environmental awareness in general, which adds to the image Iceland wants to show to others. Also from a social point of view, using electric cars and coaches is beneficial. Amongst tourists, an increased interests in this will lead to other environmental beneficial expenditures as well. This will bring more added-value to the villages, which makes it attractive for residents to continue their lives in rural areas. At the same time, the population density in places such as Reykjavik might be lowered. These all enhance the image of Iceland further.

As was shown earlier in this chapter, most stakeholders simply do not address sustainability on their websites. This further supports the idea of stakeholders who critically comment on the sustainability policies of other stakeholders. In fact in general, it can be said that if an organisation really wants to let others know how environmental friendly their business is, they will clearly tell this to the public. Only Reykjavik Excursions, Icelandair and Europcar tell people about their engagement in the Kolvidur-program, even though this information is hard to find. Other stakeholders say very little on how they deal with their negative environmental impacts. Non-governmental organisations who are not responsible for transporting tourists or making policy, of course are in favour of the environmentally friendly policies. They clearly tell this on their websites as well as in the interviews that were held.

### 5.1.3 Discourses and the Economic Crisis

The third and final part of the research question can be answered quite shortly; according to the interviewees the influence of the economic crisis on sustainable tourism transport in Iceland has been rather limited. This confirmed by a private company:

*"the influence of the economic crisis on environmental policy is small, I cannot recall any special effect except that is has probably taken a little bit longer before a bill passed the government, about which areas to protect and which areas to use." (PC7)*

However, there were also interviewees who saw a change in policy, which had been partially

dictated by those with a financial perspective. When the economy boomed during the early 2000s there was money to stimulate the use of sustainable transport modes among tourists. Therefore financial incentives were implemented in order to become more sustainable.  An example of this is the reduced import taxes on small diesel cars. Most participants say this incentive worked relatively well for a particular part of the Icelandic population. However, when the economic crisis started in 2008, severe governmental budget cuts were needed and these affected also this financial incentive. However someone said:

*"I think the economic crisis changes the way many people think." (PC5)*

This is because people themselves realised that their own lifestyles contributed to  the crisis. The rise of expenditures in Iceland was much higher than the rise of incomes, as a result of cheap loans in foreign currencies, which was caused by a very strong Icelandic Krona. There was awareness for environmental issues in Iceland before the crisis, but mostly tourists come to the country because of the environment.  And even then, because activities which harm the environment, bring a lot of money to Iceland, laws and regulations were not so strict in many areas, according to the research participants. Now, people are slowly increasing awareness of the negative influence of the exuberant lifestyle, which had become normal in Iceland. However, this differs within the population. Still the large majority of the Icelanders do not really care about their negative environmental impact, participants said. If these people seem to behave more sustainable, this is motived by financial reasons. Since the crisis started, fuel prices have raised sharply, mainly because the Krona dropped drastically, compared to for example the Euro and the US Dollar. While before the crisis, four-wheel-drives and other (super) jeep-like cars were very popular in Iceland, now small diesel cars have become more popular because they spend less fuel and are therefore cheaper to drive. This popularity is thus largely caused by an economic interest:

*"I think we're going to see more interest in efficient cars simply due to the higher cost of the energy." (GO2)*

And:

*"The economic crisis has had positive effects on the environment, not by regulations or laws, but by people having less money to spend on transport." (PC5)*

And this is the general idea in Iceland on the topic of the crisis, stakeholders say: as long as sustainable behaviour results in economic benefits, Iceland likes to be sustainable. But if it costs money, whether it is on the long run or for a short term, people are much more reluctant to behave sustainable. Also companies in Iceland state that they are afraid of the negative financial effects on the business' competitiveness when they invest in sustainability measurements.

Because of the aforementioned argument, the economic crisis is also not seen as a key moment to shift to a more sustainable society. However, the economic crisis led to a shift from a right-wing to a left-wing government, as was mentioned earlier. The former did not invest much time or money in order to make Iceland more sustainable. It largely focused  on making the country less dependent on external resources. It also focused on making more use of Iceland's natural resources which led to investments in hydro- and geothermal power. However, these also had negative effects on Iceland's environment, such as a disrupted view of the landscape because of new man-made structures. The new government, however, aims to increase the level of sustainability but according to some participants until now, these are more words than practices observed. Besides, the government is also limited because of powerful non-governmental organisations and companies, as was reported on earlier.

## 5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

The Critical Discourse Analysis sums up the differences between the groups and gives typologies to the stakeholders' discourses. It also shows how words affect practices (though these practices are told by themselves, other stakeholders and in the media) in the sustainable tourism transport debate in Iceland. Reading this, it should be kept in mind that this is done from a social constructivist perspective, i.e. this is the meaning the researcher discovers but not the factual meaning because this does not exist. The focus lies on the interviews because in the interviews the researcher could ask for more clarification; when the initial answers given were considered too concise or too vague.

### 5.2.1 Power Relations

Reading this section, the power differences between the stakeholders and the stakeholder groups should be kept in mind. Formal coalitions, such as The Icelandic Travel Industry Association and the Iceland Nature Conservation Association, as well as informal coalitions also try to put their interest at the foreground in order to influence policies. Stakeholders use different methods, such as lobbying, which influence the public and laws and regulations. This has its effect on how the Icelandic population sees sustainability as well. Power relations within the government are also not very clear. According to the participants in this research, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture have more power than the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism and the Ministry for the Environment. Especially the latter plays a minor role and the balance within the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism clearly leans to Industry and Energy rather than to Tourism. Also, it can be questioned whether the formal power is not influenced by informal structures to such a large extent that the stakeholders behind these structures have actually the most power. All the stakeholders and their formed coalitions try to put their truth about sustainability and sustainable tourism transport at the foreground.

Every actor officially wants to make tourism transport in Iceland more sustainable, but because of the various reasons explained above, this has led to a complex mixture of interests and meanings. At the end, the government in fact has the most formal power, though influenced by informal structures as well as by a continuous changing context. And of course, the researcher has his own opinion regarding this debate. Although the researcher is not Icelandic or part of the Icelandic society, the researcher's ideas shaped how he encountered this debate, which were influenced by discourses present in his own country, the Netherlands.

### 5.2.2 The Analysis

All the stakeholders often use the concept of sustainability in their answers on questions about tourism transport in Iceland. The meaning they give to the concept of environment is explained by all the participants in a highly similar way. But how they use it in practice is different. And that is where this Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) comes in. CDA looks at the core meaning behind the language used. It better identifies how what a person says relates to what she or he does.

**Governmental Organisations**

The current Icelandic government uses the concept of sustainability differently compared to previous Icelandic administrations. As was already told in previous sections, the current government is the first left-wing government in Iceland's history. This government pays more attention to the negative environmental impact the Icelandic society has compared to previous governments, stakeholders

argue. There has been an increase in awareness to make Icelandic life more sustainable in various manners. Part of this is the bill that decentralises public transport. Other new policies deal, for example, with the protection of the country's wilderness areas. Also in the past, there was governmental attention for environmental issues, but they were more often related to direct economic benefits. However, the economic crisis, that actually brought the current government into office, resulted into severe budget cuts for the government. The research showed that this led to the reduction of various financial incentives implemented to make Iceland more sustainable, not only regarding sustainable transport. The crisis also means that new policies also need to focus on economic growth. Nowadays, the tourism industry is one of the most important economic sectors. A large amount of foreign currency is earned by the sector. According to the non-governmental stakeholders, this makes the country susceptible for new tourism developments with relatively high negative environmental impacts. This occurs despite the fact that everyone realises that the beauty of Icelandic nature itself is a main reason for tourists to visit. Nevertheless, the Icelandic government sees the need to make Iceland more sustainable, however, it is constrained by various factors, including how Iceland's society works in practice. These factors are the result of the small scale of Iceland's society. Interests of various stakeholders, varying from individuals to large companies, can conflict with what the government wants. Lobbying is considered of high relevance by private companies and the non-governmental organisations in order to have your interests represented in the policy making process. This image was drawn by the various stakeholders, from all stakeholder groups. This results in policies that are not as environmentally friendly as they might have been with other groups in power, NGOs state (NGO8 & NGO9)[7]. According to them, this is because of the rather big power private companies have combined with the small scale of the Icelandic society. NGOs as well as private companies argue that also the lack of attention for tourism (transport) policy in Iceland has a negative influence on the development of new policies which aim to make tourism transport more sustainable. The Icelandic governmental discourse can in general be characterised by its environmental friendly nature. However, due to several reasons it is not as environmentally friendly as non-governmental organisations would want. This  influences how they support the development of sustainable (tourist) transport modes. This research shows that the environmental friendliness tends to be much depended on the hand of companies, because of the economic interests and power relations. The governmental discourse can be characterised by '**sustainable but restricted by the context**'. Herein, the context consists of various economic and societal processes.

**Private companies**
The second stakeholder group, private companies, strongly focuses on the economic benefits of being sustainable, and presenting themselves as being sustainable. This is central in the discourse they emphasise in the sustainable tourism transport debate. They all acknowledge that sustainability is very important for their business. This has several reasons:
     - marketing: presenting your business as environmental friendly attracts tourists;
     - financial: environmental friendly behaviour is very often also economical;
     - environment (nationally): Iceland's nature is unique and therefore important to protect;

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[7]  Codes in brackets refer to the table with the distribution of the participants in three stakeholder groups in table 4.1.

- climate change (globally): awareness has raised that climate change will inevitably affect Iceland.

Nevertheless, the first two reasons are most important in the discourse of the companies. This became evident from the interviews which underlined that the business policy would not change if they would not receive the financial advantages of behaving more sustainable. Economical behaviour leads to environmental behaviour and not the other way around. They also notice a growing awareness on sustainability related issues at the European and American tourism market, which are the most important regions of origin for tourists visiting Iceland. The latter two reasons are mentioned as well but play a much smaller role in the practices business carry out.  This also influences transport in general and tourism transport in particular since it influences the way how company policies are developed as well as what the aims of the companies are during the governmental policy making process. Tourism transport can be sustainable, according to these companies, but it should not negatively affect their own businesses. What they consider as sustainable also highly depends on the transport mode they represent, which also influences what other policies they support or reject. All together, the discourse of the companies can be labelled as **'sustainable because it is also economical'**.

**Non-governmental Organisations**

The final stakeholder group is the non-governmental organisations. Non-governmental organisations have a rather different view on sustainability. They see it as crucial for the Icelandic society. As was shown in the literature review, Iceland is vulnerable to global processes, such as globalisation and climate change (Baldacchino, 2006; Danielsson, 2008). Therefore, Iceland needs to work on making the society more sustainable, which is what all stakeholder groups argue. The government states that Iceland  already is a frontrunner in the development of methods in order to use renewable resources for the production of electricity. However, it has the potential to become a frontrunner in other areas related to sustainability as well. According to the NGOs, for that reason, Iceland needs to invest in sustainability and support initiatives that make society more sustainable, including awareness raising programs. Due to Iceland's scale, awareness among the population has been low for a long time, which is partly a result of the economic crisis, but things are changing, stakeholders argue. According to the NGOs, the Icelandic government has to support this change to get out of the crisis acting in way that stimulates sustainability. Nevertheless, they realise that Iceland is still more American, as it were, than European in this, especially regarding transport. Car ownership rates are high as well as the use of them, among residents as well as tourists (The Economist, 2011; ITB, 2012). This can be changed but it will take a long time. Nevertheless, the NGOs also realises that stimulating the economy is very important in this time. Therefore, some other stakeholders are not willing to support the change to a sustainable society. But economical is often environmental, which is what non-governmental organisations as well as some private companies argue. The discourse the NGOs support is therefore one that can be seen as **'sustainable because it is needed although we know it will take a long time'**.

Thus, it has become clear how the stakeholders' discourses can be typified. Differences in discourses clearly exist and are largely based on the interests the stakeholders have. Sustainability is interpreted differently, leading to different actions and opinions. The stakeholders propose various directions for future developments regarding sustainable tourism transport policy. However, this  depends on the

formal and informal power relations of which discourse will prevail in the future. It also depends on how new policies regarding this issue are formulated and implemented.

# 6. Discussion

In this chapter, the literature is linked to the empirical research. To start with, the conceptual model presented in chapter 4.2 is explained, which uses the outcomes of the research. Then, research findings are opposed to the literature used in chapter 2, as well as other additional sources.

## 6.1 The Conceptual Model and the Empirical Research

In Chapter 4.2 a conceptual model was presented based on the literature presented in Chapter 2 and 3. After carrying out the empirical research, it is time to consider whether the conceptual model has explanatory value for how sustainable tourism transport policy is developed in Iceland. To say it concisely: it has.

The dashed lines between the economic crisis-box and the other boxes (figure 4.1) are a proper reproduction of the outcomes of the empirical research. The crisis has had its effects on discourse, the stakeholders, the policy making process, STTP and current and future use of sustainable tourism transport modes, but to what extent, remains unclear. It depends on the stakeholder as well as the source that is investigated. Nevertheless, it is clear that due to the crisis, people are more willing to look at ways to save money. In fact, it has turned out that these money-saving methods often are (relatively) environmentally friendly. The effects shown by the uninterrupted lines, however, are properly displayed. Discourses of both the stakeholder itself and the stakeholder in power influence the stakeholders, the policy making process, STTP and the current and future use of sustainable tourism transport modes.

The research shows that the conceptual model to a large extent reflects the empirical reality though it is, of course, much more complicated than the model shows. Relations between stakeholders are not always clear and formal and informal coalitions have clear effects on the policies that are developed. Discourses are also influenced by this lobbying of especially private companies questioning where the real power is. The formal power is at the governmental organisations, but in practice, it can be argued that these are highly influenced by private companies, giving the latter informal power. As the literature showed, discourses influences how stakeholders think about sustainable tourism transport, affecting the policy making process as well as the outcome, i.e. the policies. This leads to a certain use of (sustainable) transport modes as well as the future use of them. A main contextual role plays the economic crisis, setting the financial limits of possible measures as well as influencing the priority given to economic and environmental measures.

## 6.2 The Literature Review and the Research Outcomes

It is also interesting to see how the research outcomes can be seen in light of the literature review as it was presented in chapter 2. Are there differences between how sustainability, tourism, transport and economy are seen in Iceland compared to what the literature has shown? Discussing these differences and similarities will be done using the structure of Chapter 2.

**6.2.1 Sustainability**

Based on the literature, it was said that the concept of sustainability is based on three pillars: an economic, an environmental and a social-cultural pillar. The stakeholders involved in this research all agree on this. All the three pillars should be addressed if the country wants to aim at a sustainable development of the tourism sector. However, how this is addressed in the discourses by different stakeholders differs, as the previous chapters showed. Most say that sustainability can go hand in hand with economic growth while others doubt it. Also the way wherein the concept should be applied: private companies are clearly approaching it from an economic perspective while the non-governmental organisations start from an environmental and preservative perspective. As was told earlier, this has led to different discourses and practices. Wall and Mathieson (2006) argue that embracing the concept of sustainability and accepting it is a crucial tool for environmental friendly developments. They defined several issues sustainable tourism development should address (Wall & Mathieson, 2006: 289):

1. Maintain ecological integrity and diversity
2. Meet basic human needs
3. Keep options open for future generations
4. Reduce injustice
5. Increase self-determination

In order to make this happen, it would be necessary to (Wall & Mathieson, 2006: 289):

1. Revive economic growth
2. Change the quality of growth
3. Meet essential needs such as for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation
4. Conserve and enhance the resource base
5. Reorient technology and manage risk
6. Merge environment and economics in decision making

Based on the interviews it can be argued that in Iceland number 1 and 2 of the first list seem to be by far the most important, the other three get less attention. For the second list, the lower the ranking the less priority it is given, according to participants.

Nevertheless, things are (slowly) changing as interest in sustainability is growing, according to them. This is probably caused by Iceland's characteristics. Iceland is considered as a rather remote country between North America and Europe at the northern end of the Atlantic Ocean. According to Baldacchino, (2006) the climate has influenced the economic development of Iceland, the island is sparsely populated (except for the capital area) and it is said that all this has influenced the country's culture. All this is also affected by how the concept of sustainability is interpreted. Differences exist among them and there is no difference noted in the literature wherein confusion about the concept prevails. This confusion is seen as a problem in developing policies to limit the country's negative environmental impact, several stakeholders state. As long as there are differences between the stakeholders in how they interpret the concept itself, it is hard to make new policies aiming at increased sustainable tourism transport, stakeholders argue.

Besides, non-governmental organisations state that, as mentioned in literature by Ruhanen (2008), governmental organisations 'hijack and abuse' the concept of sustainability, leading to a low effectiveness of new policies that are developed. 'Hijack and abuse' are maybe too strong words for the Icelandic case, however, though the concept of sustainability is clearly used for purposes at least to a certain extent opposing what is seen as sustainability by the literature. Priority is often given to

the economy whereas it is said to be environmentally friendly as well. Also in relevant literature (e.g. Jänicke, 2008), this problem is identified. Governmental organisations tend to focus on economic growth while in words they are 'sustainable' as well. Differences between words and practices exist, such as how people bring the discourse in practice and what the effects of the discourse are on daily-life differ. Using the same concept and even giving the same meaning to it, does not mean that the practices are the same as well. In Iceland, this further complicates the short ties and informal coalitions between governmental organisations and other groups in the society. This makes it harder to discover what the government really wants, also because of the sensitiveness of the sustainability issue in relation with economic development. According to literature from Gunn and Var (2002), Korten (2011) and Wilkinson *et al.* (2001) transparency, however, is important if society wants to focus on sustainable development and a sustainable future. The lack of transparency is likely to hinder a sustainable development in Iceland, which can be said based on the literature and the research.

### 6.2.2 Sustainable Tourism

The literature review showed that sustainable tourism is derived from sustainability and the two concepts are therefore closely linked. The previous section showed that differences exist in how the concept of sustainability is interpreted and how it is put in practice. Herein is no difference with sustainable tourism. More and more organisations are paying attention to sustainable tourism, coming from the public and private sector as well as the academia. The same counts for Iceland, stakeholders argued. Awareness about this has risen leading to, for example, the focus of the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre on the development of sustainable tourism in Iceland and how this can be seen from an academic perspective.

Also the government has an increased interest in sustainable tourism development though there are only a few policies focussing on it and the coordination of new developments is weak, non-governmental organisations and private companies made clear. Like with the general concept of sustainability, priority is given to the economic aspect of sustainability as it provides socio-economic benefits to the stakeholders if it is used properly, the stakeholders and the literature (UNEP & WTO, 2005) made clear. For example, it gives people the possibility to develop new or adapted sources of income in times of economic crisis. The environmental and socio-cultural aspects of sustainable tourism development receive less attention in Iceland, however, the environment is an important aspect for many stakeholders. All the different stakeholder groups agree that a sufficient protection of Iceland's nature is important because the nature is the most important attraction in attracting tourists to Iceland and it is therefore also from an economic perspective of high relevance to take care of the environment. The way in which this is done differs from a strict protective regime to a more developmental regime, this research showed. Several management tools are therefore applied, tools that were meant in the literature review (e.g. Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). But as the literature review (Smith et al., 2010; Wall & Mathieson, 2006) and the interviews also showed, like in other countries, disagreement exist on how these tools can be applied most properly. These tools should also be applied from the start of new developments and as the literature suggests (Smith et al., 2010), in Iceland this is not a routine yet.

Like with sustainability as with sustainable tourism disagreement exists as to which role the government should take. Some stakeholders agree with a strong governmental involvement while others argue that sustainable tourism initiatives should come from public as well as private companies. The Ministry for the Environment (2007) argues that a central role for the government is

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important but the involvement of companies and citizens is crucial. Also literature suggested the involvement of public and private parties (Korten, 2011), as this makes it more likely that the taken measures are the most effective (Gunn & Var, 2002). According to the literature (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005) this also leads to the most convincing story for tourists. Most stakeholders agree on this, as they see the development of sustainable tourism (and sustainable tourism transport) as a future economic asset for the Icelandic tourism industry. It is important that all the involved stakeholders tell the same coherent story (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005) wherein Iceland is presented as a country where sustainability is considered to be important. This will attract more tourists with interest in the environment willing to deploy activities not harming Iceland's nature, stakeholders state. Mowforth & Munt (2008) suggested that the development of tourism focussing on attracting eco-tourists (e.g. to Iceland) is a good initiative. Stakeholders did not mention the concept of eco-tourism as such, but based on the interviews it can be said that at least some of them see possibilities to develop this kind of tourism, especially because a growing share of the tourists themselves are also willing to limit the negative environmental effects of their travels, Holden (2005) argues, and this was confirmed by the stakeholders.

**6.2.3 Sustainability, Tourism and Transport**

Both the literature (Page, 2009; Prideaux, 2004) and the interviewees acknowledge the importance of transport for the tourism sector. Without the increased availability of flights connecting North America with Europe via Iceland during the late 1990s and the decade thereafter, tourism numbers in Iceland would not have increased so rapidly (Jóhannesson et al., 2010). Keflavík Airport plays a key role in this, as almost all tourists visit Iceland using the Keflavík as entrance point. The car is by far the most important mode of transport after arrival in Iceland (ITB, 2011) and also in many other countries the car is of high relevance, as Duval (2007) showed. Coaches and tour buses are also used but it differs what someone wants to do when travelling around the country whether this are suitable transport modes, stakeholders argued. This was also made clear by the analysis of newspapers: a transport mode is selected based on the activities a tourists wants to do, not the other way around. Besides, buses are often not practical (infrequent time schedules) and higher costs according to several stakeholders. More competitive prices and higher frequencies are by both the literature (Becken, 2002) and several stakeholders seen as crucial for an increased use of public transport. On top of that, as was explained in the previous section, tourists are increasingly aware of their negative environmental impact. Therefore, making public transport more attractive for tourists is seen as an attractive additional selling point for Iceland. Some stakeholders believe that when Iceland can be sold as a country where even public transportation is relatively sustainable, this adds to the message of Iceland's extraordinary nature.

In the literature different approaches are used to explain the increase of sustainability of transport (Hall, 2004; Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). In Iceland, what Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010) call the regulatory approach is the most visible, as the interviews made clear. It is one of the main pillars under Iceland's transport policy. Bus companies are required by law that the newer buses have a certain emission limit, corresponding with rules from the European Union. Some stakeholders (especially NGOs) see this as a proper method to make transport on Iceland more sustainable, private companies complain that this law is too strict. A second approach focuses on market-based solutions (*ibid*). This approach is also important in Iceland, some stakeholders claim. There are fiscal benefits for small-diesel cars (Environmental Agency of Iceland, 2011), though because of the economic crisis the incentive was reduced over the past few years, stakeholders told. Voluntary

initiatives, the third approach, (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010) is not used widely yet but might increase in importance as the awareness of the negative environmental impact of transport is rising, stakeholders argue. However, this is also caused by the crisis which led to increased interest in more economical transport and which often turned out to be environmentally friendly as well, they said.

To conclude, it should be noted that the tourism industry is now of such importance for the economy (the economy is still more or less in the recovery phase after the crisis of 2008) that the ultimate form of tourism transport management, restrictions on travel, as literature (Hall, 2005) suggests, is very unlikely. Though one stakeholder (NGO8)[8] would at least like to discuss this issue more openly, it is unlikely that the other stakeholders would agree. The remainder of the stakeholders see more in managing it in such a way that tourism growth is not hindered while the negative impact of transporting them around the country are reduced. Support for public transport is needed, although literature showed that a behavioural change will show to be very difficult and complicated. Only a true dedication towards alternative transport modes as the car, might have the effect of an absolute and relative growth in tourists using public transport (Hall, 2004).

### 6.2.4 Tourism, Economy and Sustainability

The stakeholders clearly agree on the importance of tourism for the economy and some of them see this importance as a threat. It might lead to economic overdependence, especially because the government supports initiatives by the tourism industry to further enlarge the sector and support a further growth in tourist arrivals. Other stakeholders do not consider it as a threat but see it as a proper method to turn back the economic growth.

Mills and Waite (2009) argued in the literature review that economic growth and environmental protection can go together. A sufficient level of economic wealth is even crucial before a society starts to get aware of negative environmental impacts. Other scholars such as Alier (2009) do not agree with this; economic growth always leads to harming the environment and protecting the environment leads to an economic slow-down. Based on this research it can be said that the discourse used by non-governmental organisations follows Mills and Waite's way of thought while private companies tend to follow Alier. Although everyone also agrees on the positive effects for the Icelandic tourism sector if more attention is paid to the environment, private companies are quick to point out the inherent costs of shifting towards an increasing importance given to sustainable tourism transport modes in particular and sustainable development in general. Nevertheless, there are also private companies who acknowledge that a shift towards sustainable development also has economic advantages as many of the sustainable measures that can be taken also save money, something that is of relevance to them, especially now.

Besides, non-governmental organisations believe that Iceland can become what Jänicke (2005) calls a 'trend-setter' regarding environmental policies. If Iceland aims for this it can get economic advantage from being a pioneer country in the development of environmental policy. Iceland has already a rather positive environmental image in terms of energy production as the literature review showed (Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, 2010), and this can be further used to present the country as environmental friendly, attracting an economic attractive group of tourists and possibly also investors (Jänicke, 2005). However, governmental organisations do not see

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[8]  Codes in brackets refer to the table with the distribution of the participants in three stakeholder groups in section 4.2.2.

all the advantages the non-governmental organisations see, also caused by the concerns about budget cuts, triggered by the economic crisis. The governmental organisations are, like the Critical Discourse Analysis already showed, somewhere between the non-governmental organisations and the private companies, though tending more to the latter.

In this section, the research outcomes were linked to the literature review in this report, the following links it to other research done in relevant fields of study but not used in the initial phase of this research.

## 6.3 The Research Outcomes and Other Research

There were no other studies found which use Critical Discourse Analysis to explain the discourse of stakeholders in the tourism industry related to sustainable transport. However, there were studies found that touch upon one or more aspects of this research. These studies will be used to discuss this research. But it should be kept in mind that the Icelandic situation is very specific due to the various conditions it has, such as its remoteness, climate, the economic crisis, and so on (chapter 2). This makes proper comparisons with other cases rather difficult.

### 6.3.1 Theory and Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis was chosen as the theoretical basis for this research. Although it worked well to perform this research, other choices also could have been made. To give the first example, in an early phase of this research, the Policy Arrangement Approach was considered as the main theory to explore the Icelandic development of policies aiming at tourism transport. However, this theory was rejected due to a lack of policy documents as well as a full overview of the four aspects of the Policy Arrangement Approach; Actors and coalitions, Resources, Rules of the and Discourses. This will give a more encompassing overview on *how* policy is developed instead of how discourses affect policies (Arts et al., 2006).

A theory that would have suited if attention was paid to the demand instead of the supply side of the tourism industry is the Social Practices Approach, as explained by Verbeek and Mommaas (2008). This approach is more context-specific regarding tourism practices and how tourists could be mobilised as change agents towards more sustainable tourism transport. This theory emphasises the role of the tourist and how they can influence societal changes. Tourists are consumers and if they are taken seriously, they can be tempted to behave more sustainably. Also processes such as sub-politics, social movements and political consumerism can lead to more sustainable behaviour. This will lead to changed social practices, enhancing this movement further. The behaviour of tourists is an important driver in the unsustainable development of tourism transport. Therefore, *"changes in travelling behaviour are indispensable to reach a state of sustainable tourism mobility"* (Verbeek & Mommaas, 2008: 636). However, they note that these new modes should fit in the holiday practices of tourists, otherwise tourists will not change their behaviour. But, Urry (2008) states that it will be hard to change the transport mode from a car to something else as it is not only the car but the whole modern day culture that is centred around (auto)mobility. Therefore, technological innovations improving the efficiency of cars or using renewable resources, such as some of the research participants would like, are more likely to happen in Iceland as well.

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### 6.3.2 Concept of Sustainability and Discourse Analysis

In Iceland different meanings about the use of the concept of sustainability exist, leading to different interpretations of new policies. This is according to the stakeholders fuelled by the difficulty to measure the level of sustainability. Various stakeholders in the sustainability debate have developed their own sustainability indicators but doubts about their relevance and success in policy making have existed from the beginning. According to Ortega-Cerdà (2005), the use of certain indicators explain existing power relations if it is accepted that these indicators are not fully 'objective' or 'true' but are related to continuous shifting power in sustainability discourses. Ortega-Cerdà (*ibid*) argues that, contrary to this research, there are no different discourses about the concept of sustainability among the different stakeholders but there is one sustainability discourse and different understandings of this discourse exist. According to him, it is not strange that different understandings of what a discourse analysis is also exist. He says that, on the one hand, DA is seen as an analytical method based on regularities and variations in what is said while on the other hand DA aims to understand why a certain understanding gains power and others are rejected (*ibid*). The former is used in this research while the latter is ignored, however, the latter might have brought a different understanding of the outcomes of this research.

Holleran (2008) states that it is crucial that tourism truly becomes part of the development towards a more sustainable planet because of its rapid growth as well as the impact it has on the environment. 'Green marketing' and communications need to help the sector from not only working on it in words but also in action, to demonstrate the industry's intentions (Holleran, 2008). This is similar to the opinion of the non-governmental organisations involved in this study. It is necessary to put the words about sustainability into practice, they say. Adding to this, Gössling and Peeters (2007) emphasise the role of the prevailing ideas about transport among tourists. In a study about airline industry discourses and practices and how their stories are received by tourists they state that this plays a vital role in their willingness to choose a transport mode with a lower negative environmental impact. According to them, the stories told about the environment and the efforts the airline industry does to minimise the impact, are often taken for granted by tourists while in fact the environmental performance is limited. This is caused by the general attitude of the tourists towards transport wherein the environment only plays a minor role, they argue (Gössling & Peeters, 2007). This should be kept in mind when doing research on the supply side of the tourism sector in Iceland.

### 6.3.3 Stakeholder Relations

This research explained that in Iceland several formal and informal actor coalitions exist. Both from the literature (Gunn & Var, 2002; Korten, 2011; Norheim, 2008) and the interviews it became clear that cooperation between the involved stakeholders is very important to develop new partnerships. It is suggested by the Icelandic Ministry for the Environment that engaging public and private parties is even necessary to develop policies accepted by the general public (Ministry for the Environment, 2006). Dredge (2006) argues that therefore an innovative business environment is needed. Otherwise innovative public-private partnerships cannot be successful, he states. Furthermore he argues that a careful management between governmental organisations, companies, non-governmental organisations and individuals is also needed. This is seen as part of the shift from government to governance wherein the development of networks between actors is crucial (Dredge, 2006). These networks exist in Iceland as a result of its scale, the research showed. However, the necessity for these networks was hardly mentioned. They are seen as a given, as something that has

always been in Iceland due to its small population, according to the interviewees. However, Dredge (2006) states that attention should be given to the balance in formal and informal networks as this is needed for a fruitful development of new public-private partnerships, especially when it comes to the management of tourism. Also Vellecco and Mancino (2010) argue that cooperation is crucial in the development of public-private partnership aiming at a reduced negative environmental impact of tourism.

### 6.3.4 Tourism and Transport

According to Speakman (2005), air travel and the private car are the dominant modes of tourism travel in this century. He argues that especially the car has been sold as a mode of transport that gives someone personal freedom, power, status and even the environment, although the latter is effectively destroyed by the car (see also White, 2007). Speakman (2005) states that this is primarily caused by the relatively low costs of travelling by car compared to other modes of transport, including public transport. This importance given to the price of transport was shown in the research only to a minor extent, probably because the main focus was on stakeholders at the demand side and not the supply side. Interviews with tourists in Iceland might have given a different view especially because it was shown that also in Iceland costs of travelling by public transport are relatively high compared to other transport modes (Air Iceland, 2012, Sterna, 2012; IceNews, 2012).

The 'Polluter Pays Principle' as implemented on the Spanish island of Mallorca (Palmer-Tous et al., 2007) might be a proper method for Iceland as well. Especially now, when governmental finances are lacking, enforcing new taxes will bring benefits to the government though other stakeholders might reject them, some stakeholders agreed. Also Dickinson *et al.* (2009) agree that higher financial barriers for the use of environmental polluting transport modes could be part of the solution. However, this should be done with care because the public is likely to reject this, they state. According to them, higher taxes for high-emission vehicles such as airplanes are already implemented but this could be used more extensively.

Alternative technologies used to limit GHG emissions by cars, which tourists primarily use, is a possibility  by, for example, cars are seen as a possibility to limit GHG emissions from tourists, according to Becken (2002) and Speakman (2005). In this, there is no difference with the opinion of most of the research participants. Speakman's (2005) study shows furthermore that the environment plays a minor role in people's motivation to shift from private car to public transport. This corresponds with this research which show that economic reasons influence environmentally friendly behaviour more than only for environmental reasons. In chapter 2, The Burren Area in Ireland was mentioned as a region where similar problems related to car dependency and the lack of public transport was used (TransTourism, 2011). The advice given for this area can to a large extent be used for Iceland and are similar to the issues found by Becken (2002). Information provision, booking and ticketing systems, tourist numbers using the service, planned services for the future and so on need to be improved or developed in Iceland as well, according to several stakeholders. Also Speakman (2005) argues costs, information and convenience are important, together with security and shared values. The latter is related to someone's lifestyle at home, Speakman states, and the modes of transport during a holiday reflect this.

### 6.3.5 Tourism Nature Destinations

According to Vellecco and Mancino (2010), especially in regions where nature is one of the key attractions, priority should be given to environmental issues. They argue that these often unique

destinations have their own sustainable tourism development issues and therefore need their own specified action plans. These plans should stimulate public and private parties to embrace sustainable practices (Vellecco & Mancino, 2010). Other research shows that ecological footprint analysis is a useful method to compare the environmental impact of different aspects of the tourism product, including transport. Martin-Cejas and Sánchez (2010) argue that this helps to make all involved stakeholders aware of the negative and positive impacts of tourism. Ultimately, this could lead to a greater modal choice, combined with information about the tourists' impact (Martín-Cejas & Sánchez, 2010). According to Vellecco and Mancino (2010), the higher the environmental awareness among local communities, the more credible the promotion of sustainable tourism destinations. This is an issue for Iceland as awareness among the Icelandic society is rather low, interviewed participants declared. It seems that awareness first needs to rise before a convincing story about sustainability and the environment in Iceland can be told. Otherwise, in the future tourism to such destinations could stagnate or decline, previous research showed (*ibid*).

# 7. Conclusion and Future Research

In this final chapter, the answer to the research question will be given. This answer also summarises the main outcomes of this research. The final section of this chapter contains recommendations for future research.

## 7.1 Conclusion

The main research question in this research, based on the research objective (chapter 1.5), was:

*Are there differences between governmental organisations, private companies and non-governmental organisations in how they evaluate sustainable tourism transport policy, how they talk about sustainability issues in the interviews on websites and in newspaper articles and has there been an effect of the economic crisis on this?*

Differences between how governments, companies and NGOs evaluate sustainable transport policy do exist but their opinion is clearly based on their own interests. In fact, they have a different vision on whether and how tourism transport needs to be changed in order to make Iceland more sustainable and/or to be of benefit for the Icelandic economy. These differences are caused by the different discourses on sustainability the three stakeholder groups have. The different discourses are mainly based on the interests they have in the tourism sector in Iceland as well as other interests. The power stakeholders can exert because of formal and informal rules and regulations to a large extent determine what policies are developed and implemented. It is a complex mixture of interests and meanings.

There are therefore clearly differences between how stakeholders, websites and newspapers talk about sustainable tourism transport in Iceland. Websites give basic information without making differences on the level of sustainability. They do not, for example, discuss the most convenient mode of transport when travelling around Iceland. The websites of airlines, bus companies and car rentals focus solely on their respective transport mode. Newspaper articles present several transport modes. In general which mode of transport they recommend depends on what a tourists wants to do in Iceland. It also differs per country (USA, UK, the Netherlands) what transport mode is mentioned more often, but again, this is based on what tourists coming from that specific country are likely to do than other reasons. To finalise, stakeholders differed in how they discussed sustainable tourism transport. This largely depended on the transport mode they represented. Of course, their own transport mode is considered as having many advantages. However, most stakeholders also agree that a lot still needs to be done before sustainable tourism transport is considered as 'normal' when a tourist visits Iceland.

NGOs see great possibilities to make the Icelandic society more sustainable by using the tourism transport industry as a frontrunner in this process. Tourists come to Iceland because of its nature. Disrupting this nature might have serious negative effects on the number of tourists who would visit Iceland. The tourism industry is a major industry in Iceland as it brings a lot of (strong) foreign currencies into the country. Also this industry creates a lot of jobs. Since the crisis hit the

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country in 2008, this is especially important. This is also why the companies are not very enthusiastic about policies aiming to make Iceland more sustainable. The companies believe that supporting the economy is now of everybody's interest and these policies should therefore only be implemented when they are also economical. Nevertheless, several companies acknowledge that economic policies are often also environmental and they are therefore willing to implement some policies. These policies are often already highly influenced by them, as a result of the formal and informal coalitions in Iceland. Some policies are however also seen as too strict, unfair or too expensive.

Governmental organisations are happier with the implemented policies though opinions differ. Some say that a stronger focus on making tourism transport more sustainable will attract more tourists, if it is emphasised in the marketing of tourism in Iceland. It can attract tourists who want to make their holiday as sustainable as possible. Other organisations, those that have more power in the government, want a more economical view on sustainability-related policies. In Iceland after the crisis, preference should be given to the economy and policies related to the environment, whether it is protecting nature or limiting the emission of GHGs by cars, should be at the service of enhancing the country's economy. This has resulted in tourism transport policies that do take the environment into account but are not as strict as non-governmental organisations might want them to be, but where businesses are relatively positive about. Though of course, doubts about specific policies and laws remain to exist.

Non-governmental organisations tend to use a discourse which gives different meaning to sustainability than other stakeholders but they do realise that protecting nature through tourism means that environmental policies have to be economical as well. According to them, governmental policies related to sustainability in general and focussing on (tourism) transport in particular are too weak. It does not make a real difference for the Icelandic nature, though the new government tends to be more active in thinking about the environment than previous administrations. However, stakeholders from NGOs are afraid that because of the small-scale Icelandic population wherein a small group of people dominate often with close ties to the large companies, a real change in governmental policies is unlikely to be seen in the near future.

The mixed feelings about the environment in relation to the economy can be found across the Icelandic society, according to several stakeholders. Everyone now sees the need of focussing on economic development. Also in the past, the focus was on the economy instead of on the environment. In general, Iceland likes to be sustainable if it also has economic benefits, preferably on the short term. The financial offerings for protecting the environment or enhancing the image of Iceland as a country where nature plays a key role and is well-protected should not be high. But Icelanders are increasingly aware, as are companies, that economical measurements are often also environmental advantageous. This might lead to a future wherein also tourism transport is gradually becomes more sustainable. Awareness and interest is rising but it is gradually doing so, and it is dependent on the economy.

To sum up, the policies regarding sustainable tourism transport are considered differently, since stakeholders have different interests they want to put at the foreground. On the basis of these interests are the various discourses stakeholders use. The government is the key player and holds the formal power in the debate about sustainability, tourism and transport. However, the government is influenced by various other stakeholders, especially private companies. The blurry relation between formal and informal powers has made the debate and the development of sustainable tourism measures complicated, which is partially caused by the specific Icelandic conditions, such as the scale

of its society and the economic crisis. The above has led to a situation wherein tourists can chose for sustainable tourism transport modes. However, it is rather hard to find specific information about the environmental advantages and disadvantages of the transport modes available in Iceland. The economic crisis definitely has had its effects on the discourses used by the stakeholders, as well as the policies that have been developed. The crisis led to financial troubles, which caused budget cuts on financial incentives to support sustainable (tourism) transport. It also led to an increased interest in more economic sustainable transport modes, which often turned out to be environmentally sustainable as well. In short, it can be said that the different sustainability discourses used by the involved stakeholders clearly have its effects on the stakeholders, the policies that are formed and the current and future use of tourism transport modes, whether they are sustainable or not. However, they are also affected by the context the stakeholders act in. In this particular case, the context of the economic crisis, as well as Iceland's particular conditions with its unclear formal and informal (power) relations, are crucial to understand the stakeholders' practices.

## 7.2 Future Research

This research of course has several limitations and gaps, primarily caused by the constraints already explained in section 4.7. Time, money, technology, the number of participants and the secondary resources limit the scientific value. But all investigations have limitations and this research is therefore not different. Nevertheless, the researcher has tried to do what is possible to make this research of value for future research as well. As stated in sections 1.4 and 4.3, this research is an explorative study. This research can serve as a starting point for future research related to sustainable tourism transport. A few possible directions for future will be given in this section.

To start with, more in-depth interviews with a larger number of stakeholders from a broader range of organisations could provide a more complete overview of the discourses used in the sustainable tourism transport debate. It then could also be understood how these influences organisational as well as the policies that are developed to make tourism transport more sustainable. Especially when this is done in combination with an extensive policy analysis of governmental organisations, NGOs and companies, it will give a fuller picture of Iceland deals with this. To achieve this, in-depth knowledge of the Icelandic society as well as an understanding of Icelandic are crucial. This is needed because the society is a relatively small one and it has specific attributes such as its remotes, which are different compared to other countries in the Western world. An understanding of Icelandic will make it possible to analyse policies and other necessary documents. Also interviews held in Icelandic could reveal more of the situation compared to interviews held in English.

Besides, research on the demand side of the tourism sector, focussing on Iceland's main markets, will show how tourists actually perceive Iceland, its nature and the role of (sustainable) transport herein. This will show whether the initiatives undertaken in Iceland actually address the demand of the tourists and how this could lead to a more sustainable future for Icelandic tourism. Research into other markets might give ideas how to develop these markets when Iceland presents itself as a country where sustainable (as possible) transport is seen as normal and fully in line with its main attraction: its landscape. Herein focus can also be on the cultural differences between different markets. In fact, the newspaper analyses already showed differences in how transport and tourist activities are discussed.

Another point of entry for future research is the difference between Iceland and other

countries, sharing one or more characteristics with Iceland. Examples could be the other countries in Northern Europe or regions in Canada and the state of Alaska in the USA. These countries have similar climates, large distances, remoteness and wilderness, to a greater or lesser extent. A comparison with one European country, Iceland and one region in North America might show cultural and political similarities and differences between one side of the Atlantic Ocean and the other, explaining sustainability discourses and practices. Other examples can be found in the Pacific or Caribbean. Here many other island-states can be found, and the difficulties these geographical positions bring are similar to those Iceland has to deal with. Lessons could be learned from these countries, which might lead to more help to work towards a further decrease of GHGs by tourism transport.

Other aspects that are of particular interest for further research are the use of concepts such as 'sustainability', 'environment' and 'transport' among stakeholders at the demand and supply side of tourism. This will show what the differences in the use of these concepts are among the stakeholders, whether their message is understood by others and whether the message corresponds with practices. This was partially done in this research but a more extensive research, which also focusses on tourists will draw a more encompassing picture.

Other methods, besides interviews and the analysis of secondary resources, are also useful in future research. A questionnaire when investigating larger groups of stakeholders, whether it is on the demand or the supply side, will make the results more quantitative and generalisable. Doing this, results can be compared with other countries more easily and will then show where there are differences between Iceland and other countries. Ethnographic research among several stakeholders give a different and possibly more in-depth view of considerations of stakeholders when they try to put their interests on the foreground. Ethnographic research among tourists might clarify what people  decide to use for a transport mode that is relatively sustainable or not. This might give insights for developing tourism transport policies, which better fulfil the demands of tourists.

Research on sustainable tourism transport and how policies related to this are developed need to be further discovered in order to make the whole tourism industry more sustainable. Transport is a major and crucial aspect of tourism and therefore needs to receive more attention from the academia as well as the stakeholder at the supply side of the tourism industry. In general sustainability will increasingly become an important factor in the decisions tourists take when planning a new trip, which was much suggested in relevant literature.  This research showed that in Iceland, it is a complex mix of interests and coalitions that lead to policies influencing sustainable tourism transport. Future research can elaborate on this, taking Iceland and going more in-depth, or comparing other countries with Iceland's case. To conclude, hopefully this research will serve as a starting point for others interested in this continuously changing topic, whether it is in an Icelandic context or somewhere else.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A – List of Approached Stakeholders

For the interviews, representatives of the following stakeholders in sustainable tourism transport were approached. For confidentiality reasons, no personal names are given nor is mentioned which stakeholders actual were interviewed. With 8 organisations an oral interview was held, with 1 a written interview.

Ministry for the Environment, Reykjavik

Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, Reykjavik

The Environment Agency of Iceland, Reykjavik

Icelandic Tourist Board, Akureyri

Icelandic Tourism Research Centre, Akureyri

Icelandair, Reykjavik

Air Iceland, Reykjavik

Eagle Air, Reykjavik

Isavia, Reykjavik

Budget, Reykjavik

Hertz, Reykjavik

Avis, Reykjavik

Europcar, Reykjavik

Sterna, Reykjavik

Reykjavik Excursions, Reykjavik

SBA Nordurleid, Akureyri

The Icelandic Travel Industry Association, Reykjavik

Icelandic Nature Conservation Association, Reykjavik

## Appendix B – Invitation Letters

The invitation letters below (both in Icelandic and English) were sent to the potential interviewees by email.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Wageningen og Akureyri, 15. febrúar 2012

Ágæti viðtakandi,

Rannsóknamiðstöð ferðamála (RMF) tekur þátt í verkefni sem heitir TransTourism (sjá: transtourism.eu). Markmið þessa alþjóðlega samstarfsverkefnis er að þróa og koma í notkun lausnum fyrir samgöngumál í dreifðum byggðum á Norðurslóðum Evrópu. Verkefnið miðar að því að þróa nýstárlega og sjálfbæra samgöngumáta og upplýsinga þjónustu um samgöngur með áhersla á umhverfisvernd og efnahagslegan ábata fyrir dreifðar byggðir sem njóta vinsælda ferðafólks. Hluti verkefnisins snýr að því að kanna hug hagsmunaðila til opinberrar samgöngustefnu, með sérstakri áherslu á umhverfismál, hugmyndum um sjálfbærni og bíllausan lífstíl.

> **Við viljum af þessu tilefni biðja þig um eina klukkustund í viðtal sem mundi fara fram á ensku gegnum Skype, eftir að við finnum tíma með tölvupóst, ef þú felst á viðtalið.**

Viðtalið mun ekki aðeins svara spurningum verkefnisins, líkt og nefnt var að ofan, heldur og leggja til lokaritgerðar til meistaragráðu við Wageningen háskóla í Hollandi. Markmið ritgerðarinnar er að skilja hvernig stefna í samgöngumálum nálgast hugmyndir um bíllausan lífstíl í þágu ferðafólks og hvernig þeir sem koma að mótun stefnunnar skilja þær ásamt mati á útblæstri vegna umferðar ferðafólks. Að auki er leitast við að skilja hvort hrunið hafi haft einhver áhrif á hugmyndir fólks. Megin rannsóknarspurning ritgerðarinnar er: *Hvernig er framkvæmd sjálfbærrar samgöngustefnu fyrir ferðafólk í hugum þeirra sem koma að mótun hennar í samhengi hrunsins?*

Við yrðum afar þakklátir fyrir framlag þitt og þátttöku

Virðingarfyllst,

_____
Jaap Sytsma
Meistaranemi við Wageningen

_____
Edward H. Huijbens
Forstöðumaður RMF

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Icelandic Tourism Research Centre (ITRC) is participating in the TransTourism project (see transtourism.eu). The aim of this international partnership is to develop and implement solutions for transport services adapted to rural tourism areas in the Northern periphery of Europe. The project aims to develop innovative, sustainable transport solutions and transport information services that are environmentally beneficial and economically viable for rural areas popular by tourists. Part of the project deals with outlining the state of affairs in terms of how transport policies are perceived, with special focus on environmental and sustainability issues as well policies on limiting private car dependency by supporting other modes of transport.

> **We therefore ask you for 60 minutes of your time for an interview done through Skype after arranging a suitable time and date via email.**

The interview will contribute to the outline of the state of affairs, but is also part of a Master Thesis in Leisure, Tourism and Environment at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. The particular objective of the thesis is to find out how the policies that are developed to reduce car dependency among tourists as well as the emission tourists cause by travelling across the country, are perceived by the stakeholders involved in the policy making process and whether the economic crisis has influenced this perception. The central research question is: *how is the implementation of policies regarding sustainable tourism transport perceived by the involved stakeholders in the context of the Icelandic economic crisis?*
We would be very grateful for your help!

Kind regards,

_____

Jaap Sytsma
M.Sc. student Wageningen


_____

Edward H. Huijbens

Director ITRC

## Appendix C – Sample Questions for the Interviews

The following list was used as a guide line during the interviews

What does the [insert stakeholder group] do? What is your role in the Icelandic society?

How important is environmental (The natural environment encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally on Iceland. It is an environment that encompasses the interaction of all living species.) protection for your organisation? /Is environmental protection an important aim of your organisation/policy?

How important is environmental protection for governmental organisations, according to you? /Is it an important aim of governmental organisations, according to you?

(When) did environmental awareness (acknowledging that the environment should be of major concern for the organisation) arise in your organisation? How? Why?

What is sustainability (the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and there by supporting long-term ecological balance) according to you?

What is sustainable tourism transport (transport modes used by tourists that does not have negative effects on any environmental, social and economic resources, i.e. respects current and future developments) according to you?

Do you consider environmental/sustainability issues as important, concerning tourism transport? Why?

Is there a debate regarding sustainable (tourist) transport policy (policy developed by governmental organisations) on Iceland?

Who (government, private companies, non-governmental organisations, international organisations?) should lead this debate? Who should steer this debate?

What governmental policy does exist regarding sustainable tourism transport/are you familiar with?? What is sustainable tourism transport, according to you?

Is there support for sustainable tourism transport policy (among the Icelanders themselves and among the stakeholders)? Is this anchored in the Icelandic society/policy making process?

What are the main policies influencing the transport mode tourists choose?

What are the problems regarding implementing sustainable tourism transport policy? Who supports it, who is against it? What issues have to be dealt with to get sustainable tourism transport policy implemented?

How do you as a [insert stakeholder group] perceive/see/evaluate sustainable tourism transport policy? Is it in general positive or negative?

Which measurements/implemented policies taken in the past do you see as a success regarding sustainable tourism transport? Why do you see these as a success?

Which measurements taken in the past do you see as a failure regarding sustainable tourism transport? Why do you see these as a failure?

Are there similarities and differences between how you and other stakeholders see sustainable tourism transport and policy that is developed to increase the use of sustainable tourism transport? What are these similarities and differences?

How do you (try to) influence the policies related to tourism transport that are developed by the government? What possibilities are there to influence governmental policy?

In which direction should the transport choice of tourists be steered, according to you? Why in this direction? What do you see as the most preferable future for tourism transport? What would be the best for Iceland regarding tourism transport?

Do you see steering the tourists transport mode as a task of government, or as a task for the tourist sector it selves? Why?

Who determines the tourism transport mode choice according to you? The government, tour operators or others? Are these influenced by international organisations? / what is the influence of international organisations?

What should be changed in the offer of transport modes to let the tourists choose a more sustainable mode in your opinion?  Do you think this is preferable?

Do you think improved public transport options for tourists can function as an asset in attracting more tourists? Why (not)?  How?

What is done to make tourists aware of more sustainable transport modes? Do you consider this as a

success or a failure?  Is there anything done?

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What were the effects of the economic crisis on environmental policy? Have there been any effects?

Did the economic crisis change your perception of the importance of sustainable tourism transport? If yes, how? If no, why?

Do you think the economic crisis influenced environmental friendly policy on Iceland in general? Is the economic crisis still influencing environmental policy?

How do events and decisions from the past influence environmental policy in general and sustainable tourism transport policy in particular influence policy now?


Do you have any documents regarding the environmental policy of [insert stakeholder group] that might be interesting for this research? Can you send me these so I can analyse them?

Do you know other people that might be interesting to interview for this research?


Thank you for your time and cooperation!

## Appendix D – List of Analysed Websites

The following websites were analysed (all in English):

**National tourism information website:**
www.visiticeland.com

**Regional tourism information websites:**
www.visitreykjavik.is
www.westiceland.is
www.westfjords.is
www.northiceland.is
www.east.is
www.south.is
www.visitreykjanes.is

**Car rentals:**
www.budget.is
www.hertz.is
www.europcar.is
www.avis.is

**Bus companies:**
www.sterna.is
www.re.is
www.sba.is
www.icelandonyourown.is

**Airlines:**
www.icelandair.com
www.airiceland.is
www.eagleair.is
www.norlandair.is

**Other tourism transport related websites:**
www.samferda.net
www.nat.is
www.kolvidur.is

## Appendix E – List of Analysed Newspaper Articles

The following newspaper articles were analysed:

**From American newspapers:**

Buffalo News (2012). *Quick trip filled with lots of adventure.* Sunday 11 March 2012.

Chicago Sun Times (2011). *Hiking through Iceland - Volcanoes, glaciers, beaches made of black sand and more.* Thursday October 6, 2011.

Daily News (2008). *Small Wonder. It's an unearthly paradise: In Iceland, a glacier-topped volcano is just the start.* Sunday 20 July 2008.

Newsday (2012). *Holidays on ice; 8 destinations for people who love winter.* Sunday 1 January 2012.

Star Tribune (2010). Ice, fire and smoke*.* Sunday 27 June 2010.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (2009). *Iceland's terrain is a winter wonderland.* Sunday 5 April 2009.

The New York Times (2008). Ailing, Iceland Invites Tourists And Dollars. 25 October 2008.

The New York Times (2011). *The 41 Places to Go in 2011.* Sunday 9 January 2011.

The Washington Post (2008). *Financial Meltdown Dept. Iceland, Hot and Cold.* Sunday 19 October 2008.

The Washington Post (2008). *Financial Bust Is a Boon For Bargain Hunters.* Sunday 7 December 2008.

USA Today (2008). *Price thaw in Iceland; An economic meltdown is making this once pricey island nation a vacation hot spot.* Friday 21 November 2008.


**From British newspapers:**

The Daily Telegraph (2008). *The Perfect Break; A winter wonder that won't break the bank; Reykjavik is fun, stylish and exotic.* Wednesday 24 December 2008.

The Daily Telegraph (2009). *Around the world in thrifty ways; Nick Trend picks his top travel spots for beating the economic blues.* Saturday 3 January 2009.

The Daily Telegraph (2010). *Go with the floe.* Saturday 6 February 2010.

The Daily Telegraph (2011). *Where every day brings a different discovery.* Saturday 26 March 2011.

The Guardian (2008). *37 Gawp at puffins Iceland.* Saturday 13 December 2008.

The Guardian (2009). *Travel: Adventure: Storming the slopes: There's more than one way to reach the*

*ski runs.* Saturday 5 December 2009.

The Guardian (2010). *Travel: Short Break: Iceland's hottest ticket.* Saturday 3 April 2010.

The Guardian (2010). *Travel: Adventure: Wander lust: Camping doesn't have to mean staying put.* Saturday 15 May 2010.

The Guardian (2010). *Travel: MyTravels.* Saturday 30 October 2010.

The Observers (2009). *Iceland's other city.* Saturday 27 September 2009.


**From Dutch Newspapers:**

AD/Algemeen Dagblad (2008). *Reis naar IJsland stuk goedkoper.* [Trip to Iceland much cheaper.] Friday 17 October 2008.

AD/Algemeen Dagblad (2011). *Droomvis uit het noorden.* [Dreamfish from the North.] Saturday 8 January 2011.

BN/DeStem (2012). *De natuur in vanuit Reykjavik.* [Into the nature from Reykjavik.] Saturday 25 February 2012.

De Telegraaf (2010). *Wonderen der IJslandse natuur; Als van een andere planeet.* [Wonders of Icelandic Nature; Like from an other planet.] Saturday 3 April 2010.

De Tekegraaf (2010). *Tijd voor elkaar in IJsland; Vaders en zonen samen op pad.* [Time for each other in Iceland; Fathers and sons on the road together.] Friday 24 December 2010.

De Telegraaf (2011). *Mooi weer en prachtige natuur.* [Nice weather and beautiful nature.] Saturday 20 August 2011.

Het Financieele Dagblad (2011). *Te paard over lava.* [By horse across the lava.] Saturday 19 February 2011.

Het Financieele Dagblad (2011). *Avontuurlijke Chinese tycoon verliefd op IJsland.* [Adventurous Chinese tycoon in love with Iceland.] Monday 5 September 2011.

Het Parool (2011). *De warmte van IJsland. Bak met deeg in de grond, en na een dag is het brood klaar Het vogelleven fluit, piept, kwekt en gakt erop los.* [The warmth of Iceland. Bake with dough in the ground, and after one day the bread is ready, the birds flute, squeaks, and honks like crazy.] Saturday 16 April 2011.

Metro (NL) (2009). *Zo heet als ijs.* [As hot as ice.] Thursday 16 April 2009.

Volkskrant, de (2008). *Hoogtevrees in de diepte.* [Fear of heights in the depth.] Saturday 18 October 2008.

Volkskrant, de (2010). *De razende reus.* [The raging giant.] Saturday 1 May 2010.

Volkskrant, de (2012). *Schouder aan schouder: de Willem Barentszen van nu Verbroederen in IJsland.* [Shoulder to shoulder: the Willem Barentszen today fraternize in Iceland.] Saturday 21 January 2012.

Spits (2008). *IJsland voor de gewone sterveling.* [Iceland for normal people.] Friday 28 November 2008.

Spits (2009). *Eén brok energie.* [A chunk of energy.] Friday 16 January 2009.

Spits (2009). *Gletsjers, geisers.* [Glaciers, geysers.] Friday 1 May 2009.

Spits (2010). *De onvoorspelbare woestenij van IJsland.* [Iceland's impredictable wilderness.] Friday 26 February 2010.

Trouw (2010). *Naar IJsland - het kan weer.* [To Iceland – it's possible again.] Saturday 26 June 2010.