Tourism Governance

Critical Perspectives on Governance and Sustainability

Edited by
Bill Bramwell and Bernard Lane

Journal of Sustainable Tourism

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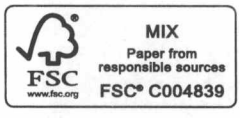

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Tourism Governance

The role of governance has only recently begun to be researched and discussed in order to better understand tourism policy making and planning, and tourism development. Governance encompasses the many ways in which societies and industries are governed, given permission or assistance, or steered by government and numerous other actors, including the private sector, NGOs and communities.

This book explains and evaluates critical perspectives on the governance of tourism, examining these in the context of tourism and sustainable development. Governance processes fundamentally affect whether – and how – progress is made toward securing the economic, socio-cultural and environmental goals of sustainable development. The critical perspectives on tourism governance, examined here, challenge and re-conceptualise established ideas in tourism policy and planning, as well as engage with theoretical frameworks from other social science fields. The contributors assess theoretical frameworks that help explain the governance of tourism and sustainability. They also explore tourism governance at national, regional and local scales, and the relations between them. They assess issues of power and politics in policy making and planning, and they consider changing governance relationships over time and the associated potential for social learning. The collection brings insights from leading researchers, and examines important new theoretical frameworks for tourism research.

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INTRODUCTION

Critical research on the governance of tourism and sustainability

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Tailored and effective governance is a key requirement for implementing sustainable tourism: it can enhance democratic processes, provide direction and offer the means to make practical progress. This introduction explains how the papers in this collection provide critical assessments of the theory and practice of tourism governance and sustainability. It argues that theoretical frameworks are crucial to research on the subject as they affect the issues examined and the policy recommendations made. Several papers in the collection focus on relevant theoretical frameworks and concepts, while others consider governance at different geographical scales and the interconnections between those scales. The temporal dimensions of governance are also explored because sustainable development relates to long time horizons. Governance is also considered in relation to trade-offs, policy failures, learning processes, adaptive management, the public sphere and the principle of subsidiarity.

Introduction

This collection of papers examines the governance of tourism and sustainability. In the tourism literature, the term governance is used less frequently than the related terms of tourism politics, policy, policy-making and planning, and destination management (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hall, 1994, 2008; Hall & Jenkins, 1995). While there seem to be differences between each of these terms and their tourism-related activities, they also overlap to varying degrees. For example, both planning and policy in tourism involve political debate about what the agenda is, what the issues are, who is involved or affected and the alternative courses of action that are available. The idea of governance includes within its compass all of these more established terms and activities. An understanding of these tourism activities can be enhanced by drawing on ideas from the rapidly expanding social science literature on governance (Kooiman, 2003; Rhodes, 1997). This literature often emphasises how governance cannot be understood in isolation from its relationships with society, including the societal groups that seek to influence the governance processes.

There are many potential uses of the concept of governance, and this diversity of uses exceeds any attempt to offer a short yet comprehensive account (Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie, & Tkaczynski, 2010). Governance implies a focus on "systems of governing" and on the ways that societies are governed, ruled or "steered" (Bulkeley, 2005; Stoker, 1998). Governing systems provide means for "allocating resources and exercising control and

co-ordination" (Rhodes, 1996, p. 653). Governance involves the processes for the regulation and mobilization of social action and for producing social order. According to Atkinson (2003, p. 103), governance involves processes "whereby some degree of societal order is achieved, goals decided on, policies elaborated and services delivered". The concept of governance is seen as broader than that of government, in recognition that often it is not just the formal agencies of government that are involved in governance tasks (Goodwin & Painter, 1996). Non-state actors that can be involved in governance include actors in the business, community and voluntary sectors.

The processes of tourism governance are likely to involve various mechanisms for governing, "steering", regulating and mobilizing action, such as institutions, decision-making rules and established practices. The forms of tourism governance can include hierarchical tiers of formal government, networks of actors beyond government, communities and also markets (Hall, 2011a). There are important power relations around tourism governance, with some groups in society, for example, having relatively more influence than others on the governance processes affecting tourism (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hill, 1997). There can be significant conflicts around tourism governance as groups seek to secure their favoured policy decisions.

Tailored and effective governance is a key requirement for furthering the objectives of sustainable tourism in at least two senses. First, participation by a diverse range of actors in tourism decision-making potentially can enhance the democratic processes and ownership widely associated with sustainable development. At the local scale, for example, Mowforth and Munt (2009, p. 114) argue that "In the field of tourism, those who speak of sustainable development almost always include participation of the destination communities as one essential element or principle of that sustainability". Sustainable tourism also usually requires effective governance processes, adjusted to specific purposes and contexts, if it is to make progress towards securing the economic, socio-cultural and environmental goals of sustainable development. Such effective governance usually entails a need for appropriate institutions, decision-making rules and established practices. Subsequently, there is also a need to develop and apply suitable instruments to implement sustainable tourism. But governance guided by sustainable tourism objectives is likely to face major obstacles. These obstacles can arise, for example, because the concerns of sustainable tourism span numerous policy domains, many relevant policies are made in other policy domains and the relevant actors are diverse and have varied interests and priorities (Bramwell, 2011).

The papers in this collection assess aspects of the governance of tourism and sustainability. They show that a focus on governance can provide helpful insights into the issues related to tourism and sustainability. The contributions explore, first, some theoretical and conceptual frameworks that can assist in understanding the governance of tourism and sustainability. Second, some papers consider tourism governance at national, regional and local scales; one explores an example of how governance at the global scale can interact with local tourism practices. The third group of papers focuses on explaining temporal change in the governance of tourism and sustainability, and on social learning within such governance processes.

Two approaches to governance

It is helpful to recognise two distinctive approaches to conducting research on governance. The first approach considers the processes for governing, "steering", regulating and mobilizing social action that apply for the cases being studied (Bevir, 2009; Healey, 2006). The pattern of governing that arises may be led by government, but equally the state may play little or no role. In this approach, governance processes are likely to vary from case to

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case, but governance processes of some form will always be found. This general use of the governance concept enables researchers to explore the construction of social order, social coordination or social practices irrespective of their specific content and context.

The second approach considers that governance relates to specific trends in the roles and activities of the state in some countries following neo-liberal public sector reforms begun in the 1980s and 1990s (Bevir, 2009; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Shone & Memon, 2008). Typically, these reforms are said to have led to a shift from a hierarchical bureaucracy based on the state towards a greater use of networks beyond the state, as well as markets and quasi-markets. This use of the governance concept is firmly related to specific trends in the state's activities that are said to have occurred since the late twentieth century and particularly in certain countries.

Sustainable tourism

The papers here focus on the governance of sustainable tourism. The ideas behind sustainable tourism emerged earlier, but the term became popular following the release of the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). In that context, it is often defined as tourism that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable tourism may be regarded most basically as the application of the sustainable development idea to the tourism sector. The paper by Hall (2011b) outlines key organising ideas behind the sustainable tourism policies of the United Nations' Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Their policies focus on three dimensions or "pillars" of sustainable development, namely economic, social-cultural and environmental sustainability, and sustainable tourism is considered to involve striking a balance between these three dimensions. For Hall, the cornerstone of their sustainable tourism policy paradigm is the notion of so-called "balance".

There are varying views about sustainable tourism, however, as it is a socially constructed and contested concept that reflects economic interests, the ethical beliefs of different actors and the strength and effectiveness of various lobbies. Differing sustainable tourism concepts can be used by actors to achieve their socio-economic and political objectives. Weaver and Oppermann (2000, p. 353) suggest that "sustainable tourism is ... susceptible to appropriation by those wishing to pursue a particular political agenda". The varied viewpoints and continuing debates mean that it is becoming more widely accepted that the quest for a universally applicable definition of sustainable tourism will not be successful. There are critics, for example, of the UNEP and UNWTO view of sustainable tourism based on the notion of "balance" between economic, social and environmental issues. Cater (1995) argues that the language of "balance" can be misleading as economic growth through tourism will often conflict with environmental protection, with difficult "trade-offs" needing to be made between economic, social and environmental dimensions. Hunter (2002, pp. 10–11) also asserts that the idea of "balance" may be "used to mask the reality that economic growth is generally the primary concern". Hall (2011b) contends that in practice the so-called "balanced" approach results in continued economic growth. This may reflect a widespread pro-growth presumption within the present political–economic system. Thus, Harvey (2010, p. 27) indicates that "The current consensus among economists and within the financial press is that a 'healthy' capitalist economy, in which most capitalists make a reasonable profit, expands at 3 per cent per annum".

The sustainable tourism concept has become a key discourse through which tourism industry owners and managers, environmentalists, host communities, developers, politicians and academics frame certain tourism issues (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). In liberal

democracies, debates around disputed ideas such as sustainable tourism form an essential component of the political struggle over the direction of political and socio-economic development. Sustainable tourism has been useful in encouraging dialogue between individuals with different perspectives about tourism and its economic, social and environmental dimensions (Wall, 1997). The growing societal awareness of sustainable development issues has also helped to give prominence to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural problems connected with the tourism industry, although the evidence of continued growth in tourism's environmental impacts suggests that at best the practical achievements of sustainable tourism policies have been limited (Hall, 2011b). The burgeoning issues surrounding tourism's role in global warming and climate change have given new urgency to the sustainable tourism dialogue (Scott, 2011).

Critical perspectives

There is no single way to undertake "critical" research on tourism. The papers assembled here offer critical perspectives on the governance of tourism and sustainability, as suggested by the title of this collection. They challenge and re-conceptualise established ideas in the field, and thus they seek to advance conceptual thinking. In a discussion about innovation in sustainable tourism research, Liburd and Edwards (2010, p. 226) assert that "Critical thinking calls for an unrelenting examination of any form of knowledge . . . and underlying dogmas". Second, the contributions engage with theoretical frameworks from other social science fields, and this "permeability" across research domains provides new insights into tourism governance (Tribe, 2007).

Third, the papers provide assessments of the importance of interests, economic forces, power, institutional arrangements and governance processes; these are key aspects of society which interest researchers in many disciplines (Bianchi, 2009; Wilson, Harris, & Small, 2008). Finally, the authors present policy-relevant research, especially in relation to sustainable tourism policies, which potentially can help to improve society and reduce adverse environmental impacts. This policy relevance can also help to inform calls for social and political change and related action (Bramwell & Lane, 2006). Here, it should be noted that the collection provides numerous assessments of the practice of tourism governance. While there is discussion of prescriptive or normative approaches, these are grounded in assessments of what has actually happened and what has been more or less valuable in practice.

The organisation of the papers

Theoretical frameworks

The first four papers in the collection focus on identifying and assessing theoretical frameworks that explore and explain the governance of tourism and sustainability. Theoretical frameworks are crucial to research on tourism governance because they influence what is studied, how it is studied, the conclusions reached, the recommendations proposed as well as the political implications of the research.

Moscardo's (2011) paper examines the theoretical underpinnings behind the tourism policy and planning models found in the academic literature and in government and NGO guidelines. The diagrams used in these sources that visually summarise tourism policy and planning processes were subject to content analysis in order to assess their construction of knowledge. The diagrams are potentially important as they may indicate the social representations held by researchers and practitioners about how tourism should be managed and about whether and how destination residents should be involved in governance. Moscardo

finds that the diagrams convey a hegemonic social representation that has altered little over the past two decades or more. She suggests that this social representation is rooted in business theory, that it encourages a reactive rather than proactive concern for sustainability and that it suggests that the core actors in tourism development processes are tourists, followed by external agents, tourism businesses and government actors. It also indicates that residents have at best a limited role in destination tourism policy and planning processes. It is argued that it is necessary to recognise this dominant social representation of tourism governance, to critically assess it in relation to potential alternative frameworks and to change it.

The importance of understanding the conceptual frameworks behind approaches to tourism governance is emphasised in the first of two papers by Hall (2011a). By creating a tourism governance typology, he shows how the tourism literature has not focused sufficiently on understanding how governance is conceptualised. He advocates a broad view of tourism governance that embraces a diversity of types of governance. A typology of frameworks of governance in western liberal democratic countries is presented. These models are based on the extent to which governance uses hierarchical forms of regulation and on the relative balance of power between the state and other policy actors. The paper discusses the resulting four modes of coordination: hierarchies, markets, networks and communities. Hall asserts that this typology can help researchers to understand key aspects of tourism governance in different contexts and can provide them with consistency in the concepts they use. The typology can also facilitate comparisons between policy choices and governance systems that affect tourism, as well as comparisons between governance in tourism and in non-tourism fields.

The potential benefits of using social theory in research on tourism governance are discussed by Bramwell (2011). The use of social theory from other fields of study can enrich research on tourism governance, and in turn the resulting research can contribute to debates about governance across the social sciences. Bramwell examines how one social theory, a strategic-relational political economy approach, offers insights into governance by the state that affects tourism and sustainability in destinations. This approach is examined through a literature review and through case studies taken from Germany, China, Malta, Turkey and the UK. There is discussion of how this political economy approach offers distinctive research perspectives on the governance of tourism and sustainability. These perspectives include the approach's holistic, relational and dialectical perspective, its focus on the state's roles in regulating the economic and political system and its concern to understand interactions between agency and structures in specific conjunctures. Other distinctive perspectives relate to the importance of spatial and temporal variations, the adaptation of state activities at different spatial scales and at different times, and the interpretation of path dependence and path creation.

Governance involves matters of collective concern and associated actions in the public sphere. Dredge and Whitford (2011) explore the multiple spaces in the public sphere where individuals and organisations discuss and debate public matters. They contend that assessments of tourism governance should consider how these spaces in the public sphere are constituted, by whom and for what purposes and interests. They use the case of the 2009 Australian World Rally Championship, held in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, to assess whether or not the different public spaces associated with this event facilitated discussions about sustainable tourism and whether or not these discussions informed the event's governance. They found that the instant creation of the institutional public sphere associated with this event, and the practices of the event organiser and state government, restricted both how and by whom key issues could be raised, and how they could be dealt with. The rapid speed of the process also inhibited actors from developing an

awareness of the event's environmental and social impacts. While alternative public spheres emerged in opposition to the event that were characterised by activism and political protest, the actors involved in these alternative spheres generally lacked the resources to share their views.

National and regional governance

According to Williams (2009, p. 164), "The use of geographical scale is a particularly valuable device for drawing out key differences in emphasis and application within tourism planning", and this also applies for tourism governance. Governance occurs at different geographical scales, which may be transnational, national, regional or local. Because of widely differing situations in different places, the functions and activities of governance often vary within and also between the spatial scales. Although various geographic scales of tourism governance can be distinguished, these scales are interconnected rather than separate spheres (Hall, 2008). Geographical scale also has complex connections with sustainable tourism. Hall (2011b) notes, for example, how sustainability and environmental problems often cross geographical boundaries, with problems like climate change being global in scale. The issues around mobilising interest and action in response to sustainability problems may also vary between global and local scales. Included in this collection are papers that focus on tourism governance at national, regional and local scales, and one paper explores an example of how governance at the global scale can interact with local tourism practices.

The paper by Sofield and Li (2011) explores an evolving regime of governance and planning for tourism and sustainable development at a national scale. Their study of China adopts a holistic and multidisciplinary political economy perspective. They believe that this macro-level perspective enables them to appreciate how the governance of tourism and sustainability in China reflects the complex interactions between the nation's socio-political environment, economic structures, political institutions and cultural and philosophical heritage. Using this approach, Sofield and Li examine government interventions since the beginning of the "Open Door" policies of 1978 that allowed tourism development in China. Tourism has grown to become a major and multi-purpose "pillar industry" that includes economic, social, political and environmental contributions to national development. They consider how tourism policies have been affected in the last decade by government grappling with sustainability and structural issues. This has been influenced by the anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism inherent in the Chinese value systems derived from Confucian philosophy and Daoism. There have also been notable tensions between national policies encouraging sustainability and the problems that occur because economic development priorities are still dominant, particularly at the local scale.

Zahra (2011) examines regional-scale tourism governance in relation to subsidiarity as a normative principle of authority allocation. The principle of subsidiarity indicates that tasks should be accomplished by the lowest and most subordinate organisations that can do them, and that only in the case of failure is a larger or higher organisation justified in taking over these tasks. This principle is assessed in relation to Tourism Waikato, a regional tourism organisation (RTO) in New Zealand that before 2006 was supported by several local authorities. In 2006, a higher organisation, Hamilton City Council, withdrew its funding for this subordinate RTO because the RTO's branding conflicted with its own new image. Hamilton City Council took over tasks previously conducted by the subordinate RTO, and the RTO was disbanded. Zahra argues that the Council's actions contradict the principles of subsidiarity. She asserts that among RTO participants there should be a shift

from interest based on self to an ethos of service to others, including to the wider community. Of course, the subsidiarity concept is contestable and affected by interests. Lafferty and Coenen (2001, p. 296), for example, suggest that in the case of subsidiarity in the European Union "What at first appears to be a clear-cut norm in favour of decentralisation emerges on closer investigation as a very elastic norm in favour of integrated, multi-level pragmatic governance".

Local and global–local governance

Higgins-Desbiolles (2011) evaluates government decisions concerning a development application to construct a tourist lodge at a pristine coastal site on Kangaroo Island in South Australia. The scheme was promoted as an "ecolodge" and as an ecotourism facility. She contends that, while ecotourism is credited with being a win–win option as it can create both development and conservation benefits, in practice trade-offs between development and the environment are often involved. It is argued that for the Kangaroo Island site government agencies allowed environmental protection to be traded-off in the pursuit of tourism development, income and employment. The agencies that focused on environmental protection at the site had much less influence on policymaking and policy outcomes than the government's more development-oriented organisations. Higgins-Desbiolles highlights the important point that decision makers in governance systems are likely often to focus on individual development proposals, potentially neglecting the bigger picture where impacts accrue incrementally and cumulatively. She urges a research agenda and also governance practices that fully recognise the cumulative macro-effects of numerous micro-level decisions; micro-level decisions can entail "death by a thousand cuts".

The potential roles of destination managers in taking educational and practical actions to engage residents and tourists in the management of sustainability within destinations are examined by Jamal and Watt (2011). They argue that destination organisations, including local government, national park authorities and destination marketing organisations, are often slow to inform citizens and tourists about conservation, managing resource use and climate change. There is an assessment of two NGO-facilitated initiatives to address sustainability and climate change through community-based social marketing and participatory local action in the mountain resort of Canmore in Canada. These initiatives directly involved local residents, short- and long-term visitors and also taxi drivers as key tourism-related actors. Jamal and Watt assess these initiatives in relation to Hannah Arendt's political theory of action. This theory indicates that the governance of tourism and sustainability in destinations should involve multiple participants and not just lie in the hands of a few. It should be a "performative" endeavour based on a flourishing public sphere of informed actors that are active creators of knowledge, understanding and action. Arendt also regards both contestation and consensus as potentially positive features of local democratic politics.

The paper by Duffy and Moore (2011) explores an example of how governance at the global scale can interact with local tourism practices. This is evaluated from a political economy perspective which asks who governs and who is governed, how are they governed and in whose interests and what are the implications for power and other relationships between the global and local scales? These questions are considered for the case of global NGOs concerned about the welfare of elephants used for trekking and safaris in tourist destinations within Thailand and Botswana. The NGOs have produced "expert" knowledge on good practices in elephant welfare and they seek to apply global standards across diverse locations. Duffy and Moore argue that attempts to establish global standards and regulation need to engage closely with local contexts and practices if the standards are to be acceptable

and workable for actors in specific destinations. The NGOs often see elephants as "wild" animals, while local practices, especially in Thailand, value elephants as working animals. The NGOs can also fail to appreciate the genuine barriers to moving elephants out of tourism and into the wild, which are especially significant in Thailand. There are potential implications here for the governance of various environmental issues where global NGOs seek to have global standards applied in different localities.

Evolving and adaptive governance

Tourism governance often alters over time due to changing political contexts and other circumstances and as lessons are learnt from previous approaches and policies. Temporal trends in governance are especially important for sustainable development because its objectives relate to long time horizons. A significant trend in tourism governance is its growing emphasis on social learning, where actors share their knowledge, ideas and aspirations, and co-construct new visions and plans for action (Koutsouris, 2009). Social learning in governance has a temporal dimension when it is a continuing process that allows participants to react to changing circumstances and to learn lessons from evolving experience. Temporal changes in social and natural systems are often complex and unpredictable, and thus sustainable tourism planning is likely to be improved if it is flexible and adaptive (Bramwell & Pomfret, 2007; Liburd & Edwards, 2010). Miller and Twining-Ward (2005, p. 285) note that "adaptive management has been found to be a valuable technique allowing managers progressively to learn more about the systems they manage through trial and error, close stakeholder involvement and continuous monitoring". The last three papers in the collection focus on change in sustainable tourism governance and learning within governance processes.

Wray (2011) assesses whether the application of a planning approach based on interactions and shared learning among actors was successful in two destinations within New South Wales and Victoria in Australia. The approach involved a research team with expertise in sustainable tourism and participative planning working for a period of 2 years with local actors from government, business and the community. The research team sought to build a "transactive relationship" with the other participants, which brought together information, knowledge and skills from various actor perspectives, and developed mutual learning, a sense of ownership of the resulting policies and support for implementing those policies. Wray shows that the outcomes of the planning approach were different in the two destinations. The transactive planning process was largely successful where it had been assisted by a key state tourism organisation, and where local government had worked hard on relationship building. In the other destination, however, local government had been much less helpful, the actors were distrustful of local government and the final adopted plan did not fully represent the actors' views. Wray's findings suggest that efforts to foster learning and dialogue may be ineffectual if the main destination agencies are not committed to this approach.

The evolution of governance in the Canadian ski resort of Whistler is examined by Gill and Williams (2011). They use political economy and path dependence ideas to assess changes in the resort's development goals and governance system. Whistler's early pro-growth goals and management benefitted most actors because "development bonuses" from real estate projects provided residents with social and environmental benefits, creating a positive feedback that reinforced the established development path. Continued growth was allowed up to an agreed limit linked to an ambiguously defined environmental quality standard. Gill and Williams conclude that the resort's early regulatory system

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