

Local tourism governance: A comparison of three network approaches¹

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Abstract: There is an absence of knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of different local tourism governance approaches. Consequently, experimenting with different modes of local tourism governance is increasingly common. This paper addresses this knowledge gap by investigating the ways in which three different local tourism governance networks operate, and the effects of this governance on local tourism policy. The three local tourism networks examined are a council-led network governance structure, a participant-led community network governance structure, and a local tourism organisation (LTO)-led industry network governance structure. The study found that these governance arrangements were underpinned by four key trade-offs and that these tended to shape the effectiveness of local tourism governance. The significance of this paper is that it opens up discussion about local tourism governance, highlights the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches, and reflects on their relevance to sustainable tourism management. The findings can inform local councils interested in improving their local organisation of tourism, and spur further research.

Keywords: governance; network; council; local government; local tourism; tourism officers

Introduction

Local government reform and restructuring is now a common feature of many western economies influenced by the social and economic developments stemming from globalisation and neoliberalism (e.g. see Fuller & Geddes, 2008; Worthington & Dollery, 2002). Changing management practices have included shifts from administration to managerialism, fiscal austerity, increased uptake of market-based policy tools and the adoption of cooperative alliances and partnerships between private, public and voluntary sectors (Dredge, 2001; Thomas & Thomas, 1998; Vernon, Essex, Pinder, & Curry, 2005). At an international level, adoption of these changes has been uneven. Even within national local government systems, local authorities have adopted new structures and practices with varying degrees of enthusiasm (Fuller & Geddes, 2008). Some local governments have embraced the neoliberal agenda, while others have trod a more cautious path, conscious of not moving too far from their traditional roles in “roads, rates and rubbish” servicing of local communities (Stoker, 2004; Worthington & Dollery, 2002). Nevertheless, the governance literature amply demonstrates that since the 1970s there has been a focus on market forms of

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organisation that have had a range of implications for the capacity of local government to govern (e.g. Evans, 1995; Fuller & Geddes, 2008). Most notably, these market forms of organisation have emphasised economic growth, increased competitiveness and have favoured forms of governance such as networks, public-private partnerships (PPPs), outsourcing and the creation of statutory corporations that are thought to unlock these potentials (Fuller & Geddes, 2008; Geddes, 2005; Jenkins & Dredge, 2007).

Against this background, it has become increasingly common for local governments to support a pro-economic development approach to local tourism policy, focusing on the marketing and promotion of tourism, and often on the creation of PPPs. This approach has promoted parochialism in some quarters where governance arrangements and resultant policy directions are perceived to benefit some interests more than others (Dredge & Pforr, 2008; Hall, 2008). More recently, whilst continuing this pro-economic development thrust, tourism policy debates have variously reflected issues of sustainability, community well-being, social cohesion and poverty alleviation (Murphy & Murphy, 2004; Beeton, 2006). How these additional issues have moved forward and have been incorporated into policy is a result of how actors and groups work together, and how different interests, ideas, values and knowledge are contested, negotiated and grafted together (or not). This paper asserts that local tourism policy making is characterised by structures and discursive practices that are embedded with values and meanings that over time become regimes of power and knowledge that operate to filter, prioritise and promote particular local tourism policy actions and initiatives (see Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hall, 2008). Therefore, an appreciation of the way local policy governance networks operate is crucial to the design of more targeted and effective tourism management structures and practices (for broad support of this institutional approach see Amin, 1999; Bell, 2004; Evans, 1995). In the tourism context, effective local governance arrangements empower local participation and ownership of policy actions and initiatives and provide a forum for information sharing, discussion, negotiation and learning. (Bramwell, 2004; Bramwell & Lane, 2008). Effective local governance is therefore a central element of an holistic and balanced approach to sustainable tourism (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003).

In this context, the aim of this paper is to investigate the way in which different local tourism governance networks operate, and the effects of this governance on local tourism policy. In doing so, a case study of three local tourism governance networks within one local government area, Redland City, Queensland, Australia, is undertaken. These networks include a council-led governance network, a participant-led community governance network, and a local tourism organisation (LTO)-led industry governance network. In addressing the above aim, this paper first identifies and discusses the characteristics of local governance. For the purposes of this paper, governance is an increasingly popular term used to denote “all forms of organisational relationships” (Edwards, 2002). While the term has been around since the 17th century, its current popularity is associated with the new dynamics and interdependencies between politics, public policy and communities of interest (White, 2001; Marsh, 2002). The contention in this paper is that, like the concept of sustainable tourism, good governance is a dialectical concept that cannot be perfectly defined (see Dredge &

Jenkins, 2007; Hardy, Beeton, & Pearson, 2002; Jamal & Getz, 1999). It is a value-full socio-political construction (Macbeth, 2005). “Good” governance depends on the actors and groups involved in the network, their aspirations and values, and the decisions they make about issues such as accountability, transparency, participation, communication, knowledge-sharing, efficiency and equity (Good Governance Advisory Group, 2004). In this paper, the effectiveness of each of these three case study networks is examined by identifying what are seen as the characteristics of good governance in each network, by examining how these constructs are given meaning, and by identifying what are the resultant effects on local tourism policy. However, it is essential to note that this paper does not seek to make judgments about what is good governance and what is not. Its role is to explore local tourism governance in action, and to compare and contrast the challenges of each approach in undertaking network business. From this comparison, observations can be made about the strengths and weaknesses of each governance network and the relative effectiveness of each.

Local tourism governance

Within the tourism literature there is a growing body of case study research that examines local tourism policy-making (e.g. Jamal & Getz, 1999; Pearce, 2001; Reed, 1999; Tyler & Dinan, 2001), networks (e.g. Dredge, 2006; Pavlovich, 2001; Scott, Baggio, & Cooper, 2008), and collaboration and organisational complexity (e.g. Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Bramwell & Pomfret, 2007; Dredge & Thomas, 2009). The focus has largely been exploratory and descriptive with limited consideration of the effectiveness of local tourism governance. One explanation for this gap is that many of the active researchers in this area, including the present authors, tend to adopt an exploratory, social constructionist perspective and prefer to avoid making assumptions about what is good governance. As a dialectical concept, it can only be defined from the “inside” by those involved in the network and based on their value systems. As a result, what little discussion there is about the effectiveness and impacts of governance on policy has been relatively fragmented, and due to differences in local government systems across the world, comparing and contrasting these diverse studies is problematic. In the review of literature that follows, the characteristics of the local organisation of tourism are discussed and the dimensions of governance are identified. These dimensions provide the parameters to examine each of the three networks in the case study.

Effectiveness of institutional arrangements

The effectiveness of local tourism governance in achieving the goals of its stakeholders depends on the effectiveness of institutional structures and processes, and the relational resources and skill sets available (see e.g. Bell, 2004; Healey, 2006; White, 2001).

Institutional structures are the formal and informal frameworks that create the organisation and shape the autonomy, authority, internal coherence and discipline of the organisation. In the increasingly networked world of tourism, this organisation is usually a PPP arrangement in which local government is not a neutral participant, but is actively involved in shaping these structures via decisions about financial support, knowledge generation and transfer, and industry capacity building, amongst other issues. Within organisational studies and governance literature, there is substantial research that illustrates these structures are not static, impermeable or steadfast (e.g. Considine, 2005; Ladeur, 2004; Morgan, 1997; White,

2001). They change slowly, adapting to shifting values and practices, in an interdependent relationship with the agencies that inhabit, interpret and give meaning to those structures (Cyert & March, 1992; Geddes, 2005). As a result, research into the effectiveness of local institutional structures can be likened to the challenge of hitting a moving target. Research tends to be case study specific, focusing on either local government involvement in tourism (e.g. Dredge, 2001; Godfrey, 1998; Long, 1994; McKercher & Ritchie, 1997; Pearce, 2001) or the strengths and weaknesses of networks and collaborative structures and practices (e.g. Bramwell & Pomfret, 2007; Dredge, 2006; Jamal & Getz, 1999; Pavlovich, 2001; Reed, 1999). This research is diverse, but most studies resonate with Pearce's (2001) finding that local tourism policy is more the result of "a happy juxtaposition of the right people and the right skills and a sympathetic council" (p. 351) than the result of clear structures and processes.

Moreover, much of the research suggests that tourism policy is often pragmatic and opportunistic, which in turn suggests that the effectiveness of institutional arrangements is subject to the personal and professional characteristics of those involved. A number of somewhat dated studies shed light on these personal and professional characteristics. McKercher and Ritchie (1997), for example, discuss the challenges of local government tourism officers in Australia, concluding that tourism officer positions have generally been filled by graduates with a tendency to stay only a short time in the job. The loss of corporate knowledge and lack of expertise in the political arena can impede progress in addressing tourism issues. Godfrey (1998) surveyed some 300 tourism officers employed by local councils in the United Kingdom and found that just under a half had some qualification in tourism or leisure. Around 40 per cent indicated their primary responsibility was tourism marketing, 20 per cent were mainly responsible for planning and development, 25 per cent indicated a range of responsibilities including planning, developing and marketing, and 10 per cent indicated they were purely involved in providing visitor information services. Long's (1994) study of British local government tourism strategies found that the majority of local governments were concerned with "expanding tourism" and the main benefits were considered revenue and employment. Similarly, a study of local councils in Victoria, Australia, by Carson and Beattie (2002) found that two-thirds of tourism units were located in economic development units and that 70 per cent of respondents agreed that their council was most concerned with tourism's economic contribution. These results indicate that the majority of tourism officers supported a pro-economic development focus on tourism and that this stance affected the way in which they frame and undertake their duties. Effectiveness of institutional arrangements in these cases then was defined in terms of economic development.

Dimensions of local tourism governance effectiveness

In order to address the comparative effectiveness of different governance arrangements, parameters of good local tourism governance were derived from an extensive review of the literature (see Dredge et al., 2006; Dredge & Pforr, 2008). These parameters include:

- Positive cultures, constructive communication and engaged communities (e.g. Good Governance Advisory Group, 2004; Vernon, Essex, Pinder, & Curry, 2005; White, 2001).
- Transparency and accountability (e.g. Dredge & Pforr, 2008; Edwards, 2002; White, 2001).
- Vision and leadership (e.g. Good Governance Advisory Group, 2004)
- Acceptance of diversity and the pursuit of equity and inclusiveness (e.g. Dredge & Pforr, 2008; Thompson & Pforr, 2005)
- Developing knowledge, learning and sharing expertise (e.g. Fischer, 2003).
- Clear roles and responsibilities of participants and clear operational structures and processes of the network (e.g. Dredge & Pforr, 2008; Edwards, 2002; White, 2001).

An examination of these parameters provides the basis for the following case study. Prior to examining the case study, however, there is a need to clearly identify and characterise the networks that are the subject of this study.

Networks and governance

In the tourism literature, structures, processes and relational characteristics have been examined in the emerging body of tourism network scholarship (e.g. see Dredge, 2006; Scott et al., 2008). The focus of this scholarship has been on exploring the impact of different network arrangements on stakeholder communication, trust, legitimacy and knowledge generation and transfer, and how, as a result, networks have worked together. Within these discussions, claims have emerged that networks provide a more flexible and responsive way of dealing with complex issues that transcend public-private sector divides (Scott et al., 2008), but there has generally been limited attention to the comparative effectiveness of different governance arrangements (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). The question of whether networks do promote better governance is still unresolved (Dredge & Pforr, 2008), and there has been no theory “on the various forms of governance that exist, the rationale for adopting one form versus another and the impact of each form on network outcomes” (p. 3).

In response, Provan and Kenis (2007) argue for a move away from examining collective outcomes of “the” network as the unit of analysis, to develop more nuanced, multi-network understandings of the collection of networks around a goal. According to Provan and Kenis (2007), goal-directed networks are set up with a specific purpose, have clear participation and evolve as a result of conscious efforts, and are increasingly important in achieving specific outcomes (Provan & Milward, 2000). Provan and Kenis (2007) identify three network forms, or modes of governance, that provide the focus of the case study analysis in this paper:

1. Lead organisation-governed networks, which are networks wherein a lead organisation takes a central coordinating role, facilitating and enabling collaboration, often contributing in-kind support and leadership. Power is generally centralised and communication and decision-making may be top-down. A network that is established and led by Council is an example of this lead organisation governance arrangement.

2. Participant-governed networks, which are networks wherein members themselves collaborate to achieve goals that would otherwise be outside the reach of individual stakeholders. Participant-governed network relations are generally decentralised, less formal and dependent upon the social and human capital that exists in its members. A grass-roots community network is an example of this governance arrangement.
3. Network administrative organisations, which are networks wherein a separate administrative entity is established specifically to undertake governance activities. This administrative unit, such as an LTO, operates as a central node for communication, coordination and decision-making.

Research approach

As noted above, research examining the advantages and disadvantages of different organisational structures and arrangements for local tourism is fragmented. This is perhaps because of the highly contextualised and parochial nature of local tourism and the lack of enthusiasm tourism researchers have shown for immersing themselves in complex, multi-sectoral and post-disciplinary research (Hollinshead, 2004). Bramwell and Lane (2005, p.2-3) argue there is considerable scope “for more research on tourism and sustainable development that considers the changing economic, social and political relations in contemporary society and that evaluates them by drawing on theoretically informed frameworks”. In this research, an exploratory case study is used to interrogate the local organisation of tourism. Provan and Kenis’s (2007) modes of governance and the parameters of governance identified from the literature provide the theoretical scaffolding. The case is set within a larger, shifting national socio-political landscape wherein local government managers were increasingly pressured by ideological undercurrents such as neoliberal public management, the pressure to implement market forms of organisation, and demands for increased transparency and effectiveness. Three governance networks in one local government setting provide a unique opportunity to compare and contrast the implications of each network. The three tourism officers leading each of the networks possessed considerable internal knowledge and provided the rich qualitative data necessary to understand the opportunities and implications of the governance arrangements in place (see Browne, 1999; Palmer, 2002). To this end, the study was ethnographic to the extent that the researchers studied how these tourism officers did their jobs, and the way they worked within the governance arrangements over the period of approximately 18 months during the council’s restructuring of tourism.

Mixed method data collection was undertaken and included archival research and analysis of newspaper reports, council minutes, technical reports, corporate plans and historical tourism strategies. Socio-economic data at regional and local levels was also collected and analysed. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with five individuals involved in local tourism management in Redland City (the three tourism officers and two economic development officers). Researchers attended tourism meetings over a period of 18 months, attending both public meetings and meetings organised between council officers and individual stakeholders. During this engagement with the case study, the researchers built up a rich, in-depth, “insider” appreciation for each of the networks via the three tourism officers:

- The Tourism Development Coordinator (TDC), a local government employee, who facilitated the council-led governance network;
- The Sustainable Tourism Coordinator (STC), a contract appointment working for the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee (a community interest group) who was associated with the participant-led governance network; and
- The General Manager (GM) and former Chairperson of the LTO, who played a central role in the LTO-led governance network.

Case study

Background

Redland City Council (537km²) is located south-east of Brisbane in the State of Queensland, Australia, and encompasses mainland coastal areas adjacent to Moreton Bay and a number of southern Moreton Bay islands. Whilst it was a shire when this study was conducted, it was proclaimed a city in March 2008. The City is highly urbanised, but also includes significant areas of coastal wetlands, agricultural land and semi-natural bushland (ATS Consulting Solutions, 2003a). The bay islands include North Stradbroke Island, which has been regarded as “the jewel in the crown” for tourism due to its sandy beaches, wetlands, freshwater lakes, sandhills, and eucalypt, wallum and heathland habitats. Many areas on both the mainland and islands have high nature conservation and recreational value, as well as significant social and cultural value. The location of the City on Moreton Bay, the natural attributes of the area and the close proximity to the State capital, Brisbane, have made Redland City a desirable tourism and day trip destination, and a major residential dormitory for Brisbane City. As a result, there is a large number of SME (small and medium size enterprise) retail, accommodation, cafes, restaurants, personal and other service businesses in Redland City that serve both residential and visitor populations (Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2008). In 2006, the population of the City was estimated to be 131,300 (Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2008). The City attracts around two million visitors each year. Visitors to the mainland are mainly day trippers from the Brisbane metropolitan region, whereas North Stradbroke Island is predominantly a weekend or short stay destination attracting some 400,000 visitors each year (ATS Consulting Solutions, 2003a). As a result, there is a concentration of tourism operators on North Stradbroke Island, but many of these are SMEs including owner operators and lifestyle businesses.

Shifts in tourism local governance

Historically, roles and responsibilities for tourism in Redland City have emerged organically. During the mid 1990s Council began to outsource marketing and visitor information centre services to a membership-based local tourism organisation (LTO) Redlands Tourism to the tune of \$250,000AUD per annum. As one Council officer observed of this history “I think [the] Economic Development [Unit] had a role in tourism but there was this sort of dividing line in that it was almost seen in the early days that by handing over a sum of money to Redlands Tourism we were sort of outsourcing our responsibility”. The LTO, an incorporated association, has had a small but stable membership of approximately 150 members since 1994. A Board comprising three voting members from the Redland City

Council, five voting members representing the tourism industry and two non-voting members managed the LTO, with a General Manager responsible for day-to-day management and operations. Until 2004, and with little Council input, the LTO progressively extended its activities to include industry liaison, marketing, visitor research and visitor information services. It also built up strong industry and sponsorship networks and additional revenue streams. To demonstrate, in 2004, Council funding accounted for only 26% of LTO income. Other income included commissions from bookings and permits (21%); tourism services (e.g. publications printing, advertising, tourism awards, consumer shows) (42%); membership income (5%); and other sources (6%).

In 2003 Council-appointed consultants developed a Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy (ATS Consulting Solutions, 2003b). The Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy recommended that the Council abandon the existing organisational structure and funding arrangements for the LTO. The consultants noted that strategic planning should be part of the Council's role and the LTO, as a membership-based organisation, was not an appropriate agency to be undertaking strategic tourism planning. It chastised Council for "abdicating its responsibilities. As a result, the Council clawed back strategic planning functions and sought a new agreement to limit planning and marketing by the LTO. The Council also took issue with the LTO's selective representation of tourism interests aligned with the major operators on North Stradbroke Island. In response, the Council established a loose informal tourism industry group, the Redland Tourism Advisory Network, to advise on tourism matters. It was the intention of Council that this group be geographically representative of the City, and that it give a voice to small operators on the mainland.

During this time, a grass roots participant-led network emerged on North Stradbroke Island. In 2002 the LTO responded to growing concerns from community and operators on North Stradbroke Island that tourism was destroying the natural features and amenity of the Island and that the Council was not taking the threat seriously. The LTO initiated a sustainable tourism visioning process for North Stradbroke Island. It also helped to form a local committee, which subsequently became the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee. However, the Council interpreted these initiatives as a challenge to its hegemony over tourism issues.

Three modes of governance

This restructuring meant that the three networks identified by Provan and Kenis (2007) were simultaneously in operation in Redland City. Table 1 summarises the characteristics of each network in terms of the officer by whom they were facilitated, the communities of interest each network served, their primary geographic focus, the focus of network activity, resourcing characteristics, background of facilitator, and network roles and responsibilities.

First, the Council's Redland Tourism Advisory Network, which was organised by the Council's Tourism Development Coordinator (TDC), is akin to Provan and Kenis's (2007) lead organisation-governed network (hereafter called the Council-led network). The Council established this loose network to counter criticisms that the LTO-led network was

geographically focused on North Stradbroke Island and not representative of broader interests. The Redland Tourism Advisory Network had no official role or powers, no formal membership or rules of conduct. It existed as an informal consultative body representing the broader interest of Redland City's constituents. Resources and the power to identify initiatives and implement actions were vested in the Council's TDC.

[insert Table 1 about here]

The second type of network identified by Provan and Kenis (2007) is the participant-governed network. The North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee exemplified this network (hereafter called the participant-led network). It was comprised of a group of residents and business operators with a commitment to a balanced and holistic approach to sustainable tourism. The identification and implementation of the initiatives of this participant-led network were fostered by the Sustainable Tourism Coordinator (STC) who was employed on a one year contract. The STC saw her role in grass-roots facilitation, playing an important role educating, identifying, communicating and implementing sustainable tourism actions and initiatives for the North Stradbroke Island community.

Provan and Kenis's (2007) third type of network, the network administrative organisation, was represented by the LTO (hereafter called the LTO-led network). The LTO-led network was an incorporated membership-based association, organised and run according to established rules and procedures. Under the direction of an elected Board, the General Manager (GM) of the LTO managed the network, identifying and implementing a range of activities to develop and promote tourism.

Findings

This research clearly illustrates that different types of networks can be more or less effective in achieving good local tourism governance. Each has strengths and weaknesses in interpreting and promoting sustainable tourism and each can have a profound influence upon how ideas and initiatives are empowered or inhibited. In the discussion that follows, the three networks are compared and contrasted in terms of the dimensions of local governance identified earlier. Table 2 summarises these findings and should be read in conjunction with this discussion.

[insert Table 2 about here]

Positive cultures, constructive communication and engaged communities

The Council-led network, the Redland Tourism Advisory Network, did not exhibit a particularly strong or positive culture, and despite claims that it had been set up to represent the broadest interests in the City, it did not promote engaged communities or consultation. The network was constituted via a generic invitation that was sent out via the local newspaper and direct mail to existing LTO members and "any interested parties...known to Council". Invitations to monthly meetings were sent by broadcast email to the tourism

business register, a total of about 200 people. Anyone who was interested could attend the meetings with average attendance around 10 attendees. Environmental and Aboriginal groups on North Stradbroke Island were included in the list of invitees but did not attend any meetings. Feedback obtained during public meetings suggested these groups saw this network as yet another Council action in a long list of actions that had achieved very little. To facilitate participation from all parts of the City, meetings were held alternately on the mainland and on North Stradbroke Island. Despite the fact that a Council officer (the TDC) had established this network in response to criticisms that the LTO-led network was not representing the broadest spectrum of interests within the City, the TDC revealed that the network had not been consulted in relation to the Council's Sustainable Tourism Action Plan nor the visitor guide. With regard to the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan, the TDC indicated that the community had already been consulted on the Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy prior to its preparation by the consultants some three years earlier, so their input was not needed. Production of the visitor guide was outsourced to a consultant who developed a new style and format based on Council's requirements. Industry involvement or consultation was limited. When asked if the guide would be presented to the network prior to printing, the TDC indicated "I would probably give them a look at it but I actually wouldn't be encouraging them to critique it...it's got to happen by a due date". This response illustrates low levels of meaningful engagement between the TDC and members. The TDC acknowledged that engaging the community was difficult. Apathy was an issue, but there was also a belief amongst some stakeholders that Council, as the lead agency, should be 'getting on and doing it'.

In the participant-led network, the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee demonstrated a high level of positive engagement and sense of ownership over sustainable tourism initiatives and actions. Network meetings were regular and well attended, and there was a strong commitment to sharing information, learning and the development of innovative ideas. Members of this committee were chosen from a general meeting of the community on the Island in 2002. Members represented a diverse range of groups and interests in the community, the tourism industry and government, including representatives from Council. According to the STC, membership of this committee was stable and leadership had been strong, with members accepted by the community as being representative of the factions they represented. The STC indicated that the committee was outcome-driven and the creation of the STC position had empowered the community and brought focus and tangible outcomes. According to the STC, "There were originally a number of different community groups, all off doing their own thing, but we brought these groups together and they are all singing off the same page now".

The LTO-led network had a very strong communication network with its members sharing a strong sense of purpose and strategic direction. The LTO was well resourced as a result of its multiple income streams and, as a result, could be highly responsive to its members' interests and ideas. The GM played a pivotal role in connecting industry interests with opportunities and had the potential to be an important player in the establishment of a good governance structure. However, her community of interest was defined by the membership of the LTO,

and as a result, her capacity to promote good governance across broader communities of stakeholders was limited. Nevertheless, this network had great flexibility to pursue opportunities as they arose including a successful funding application for the STC's position on North Stradbroke Island.

Transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability are important parameters of good governance because they allow stakeholders to feel their input is worthwhile and that decision-making follows good process (Good Governance Advisory Group, 2004). Transparency and accountability are also important in establishing credibility and trust (Mulgan, 2000). The Council-led network, the Redland Tourism Advisory Network, was set up by the Council in response to a perceived need for greater accountability to the City's broader constituency. The TDC, employed to create and foster the network, reiterated that transparency and accountability underpinned her activities: "I suppose what we're driving at... is accountability and we really need to make sure that every dollar fights for its existence and that we're getting the benefit out of it". These concerns were reiterated by Council's Economic Development Officer who spoke of heightened concerns about accountability and transparency: "Our perspective from Council was that this [LTO funding] isn't reasonable. There's public money going into this pot, therefore it's reasonable to assume that the services are available to all businesses across the Shire [City], not just the select few [members of the LTO]... So the challenge for us is to work out how we overcome that, how do we set up a system that means that tourism-oriented businesses across the Shire [City] all get access to the services". Ironically, however, the lack of meaningful consultation or input into decision-making meant that this network exhibited lower levels of transparency and accountability to its members than other networks demonstrated to their members. In effect it appears that the Redland Tourism Advisory Network was established to provide a sense of legitimacy for the relatively bureaucratic activities of the Council and the TDC.

In the participant-led network, the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee, accountability is less easy to evaluate. The Committee was constituted informally through regular interactions between interested members. There were no formal transparency or accountability requirements between the Committee and the residents, tourism operators, the indigenous community and other interests on North Stradbroke Island. The researchers observed regular communication and a high degree of trust within the broader community for the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee, suggesting that open, ongoing dialogue and shared commitment were fundamental to the creative and innovative achievements of this network. For the STC, who facilitated the network, accountability was defined in terms of her contract with the LTO, and her duties with the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee.

In contrast, the LTO-led network demonstrated a high level of transparency and accountability to a well-defined constituency – i.e. LTO members. By virtue of the rules and procedures under which the LTO operated, the GM was accountable to her Board, and the Board was ultimately accountable to its members. The Council argued that, because the LTO

received some public funding (i.e. 26% of total LTO revenues) it should be accountable to the wider population of Redland City. This lack of agreement between the LTO and Council about how to define accountabilities ultimately led to Council withdrawing funding support, effectively usurping much of the LTO's power and autonomy to pursue sustainable tourism initiatives.

Vision and leadership

The Council-led network, the Redland Tourism Advisory Network, was newly formed when this study was undertaken. Nevertheless, its informal structure and lack of engaged community illustrate the difficulty of developing vision and leadership within the network. The lead organisation driving the network, Redland City Council, had also historically shown low levels of vision and leadership, preferring to outsource tourism issues to the LTO. However, during this study the Council sought to establish vision and leadership by taking a more active role in aspects of tourism planning and management, including the creation of the Redland Tourism Advisory Network. This restructure, and the subsequent clawback of LTO roles and funding, resulted in a breakdown of relations. One notable shift in vision and leadership occurred during the reframing of Council's tourism functions. The TDC observed that there was an emerging "belief within Council that tourism should not necessarily be always segregated from economic development – there's this whole sort of mindset in the tourism sector that they're sort of different from everyone else, and I guess in some respects they are, but in many respects, from our perspective in local government, they're there to simply help us build the economic base of the Shire [City]." This reframing of tourism as a local economic development function became embedded in the Corporate Plan, Council's overarching strategy document. At the same time, the Advisory Network, which was not provided with any resources or powers by the Council, became little more than a tool to legitimise Council's directions and actions.

On North Stradbroke Island, the participant-led network was characterised by strong leadership and vision due to a collective commitment to sustainable forms of tourism development that would benefit the local community and economy but that would not compromise environmental or socio-cultural qualities that made the Island special. North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee meetings were not always harmonious, but the underlying commitment meant that vision and leadership emerged from rigorous, grass-roots contestations.

The LTO-led network had traditionally provided leadership to a small, engaged set of industry stakeholders, the majority of which were located on North Stradbroke Island. But Council contested this leadership. Criticisms emerged from Council's consultants that the LTO was focusing too much on its membership base, and that marketing and industry development initiatives were too focused on North Stradbroke Island. Mainland operators argued that Council funds should benefit the whole City and not a particular subgroup of operators. Throughout this contested period, the GM of the LTO demonstrated strong leadership and a vision for sustainable tourism that extended beyond the financial interests of

operators, to include support for environmental initiatives on North Stradbroke Island (e.g. a campaign to discontinue the use of plastic bags from commercial outlets on the Island).

Acceptance of diversity, pursuit of equity and inclusiveness

Engaging with and accepting difference strengthens opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and consensus building (Dredge & Pforr, 2008; Healey, 2005). The Council-led network, the Redlands Tourism Advisory Network, was established on the premise that the LTO-led network was not representative. This network sought to be inclusive and to provide equitable access to policy-making. However, there was little evidence of actions to encourage diversity, equity and inclusiveness of participation.

In the participant-led network, the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee comprised a diverse network of interests drawn from the indigenous and other communities, the tourism industry and government. According to the STC, the network had at times been characterised by conflict, but finding a common goal and acknowledging the interests of others enabled the network to move forward: “Some conflicts existed initially between the environmental and tourism interests, but the focus on sustainable tourism effectively welded these two factions”.

The membership of the LTO-led network was characterised by a body of members whose interests were predominantly aligned with growing tourism on North Stradbroke Island. However, the interests of the network were not homogeneous. A commitment to the environmental management of tourism and to the mediation of socio-cultural impacts stimulated interest in applying for the grant that eventually led to the appointment of the STC on the Island. Whilst this network was a membership-based organisation, the GM demonstrated a higher level of understanding and engagement with the community than the Council-led Redlands Tourism Advisory Network.

Developing knowledge, learning and sharing expertise

There was little evidence of education, training or knowledge transfer during the Council-led Redland Tourism Advisory Committee meetings. The GM of the LTO observed that the tourism role within Council was not unlike any other bureaucratic role and that there was a distance between the tourism officer and the industry: “Whilst the Council undertakes some tourism planning functions, these tend to have a marketing and industry development focus and tend to be project or task specific”. Broad scale analysis of tourism is undertaken by the economic development officers, which then feeds into the strategic plan, but there appears to be no regular communication with the industry and the diverse needs of the industry are homogenised in the strategies produced. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that only one person (TDC) was employed to undertake all tourism-related actions including strategic planning, day-to-day networking and consultation, marketing and integration with other sections of Council’s organisation.

The participant-led network on North Stradbroke Island was characterised by membership with extensive knowledge of the Island environment and tourism. Many of the members

were highly educated with a strong commitment to share their knowledge and use it effectively to lobby for improved tourism management. Participants within the network belonged to other networks

Similarly, the LTO-led network demonstrated a commitment to information sharing, communication and education inside and outside the immediate membership base. GM reflected a very deep and complex understanding of tourism built up over time and communicated this to the industry network. For example, they were engaged as consultants to adjoining local governments and shared their marketing expertise, industry surveys and generic industry research.

Clear roles and responsibilities of participants and clear operational structures and processes of the network

The Council-led network, the Redlands Tourism Advisory Network, was set up as an informal consultative network but it lacked a clear structure, roles and responsibilities. This adds weight to the observation that it was principally used to legitimise TDC activities. The roles and responsibilities of the TDC, as a council officer, were clearer. According to the Council's TDC "my whole role is frameworked on this sustainable tourism strategy, which very clearly pointed out that a new approach had to be taken in this particular region because in the past there had been a lot of ad hoc marketing done, ad hoc selling and promotion and advertising, but it had lacked structure and lacked strategy". The focus of the TDC's role, as a council officer, was quite process-oriented, with emphasis placed on tasks, outcomes and accountability. Her first task was to determine priorities from the Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy, condense them into a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan, and implement them. The TDC's responsibilities also included implementing the Economic and Tourism Development Marketing Plan, creating a brand for the City, producing a new visitor guide, and coordinating and meeting with the Redland Tourism Advisory Network. Reflecting upon this position, the GM of the LTO observed "My concern is that Council officers are Council officers and they don't really have, I don't think, the time. They're trying to mix it with economic development and other things [and don't have the time] to really dedicate [nor do they] have the contacts within the tourism industry".

The participant-led network on North Stradbroke Island had a clearly defined charter, set of values and objectives as a result of a visioning process undertaken in 2002. The STC, who facilitated this network, was employed to develop and commence implementation of a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan with a "triple bottom line" sustainability focus. The STC stated that these tasks included initiating environmental projects and partnerships with environmental groups, devising methods to enhance the economic sustainability of tourism (e.g. "bring people in in the low season through some sustainable events..."), initiating projects related to socio-cultural aspects of the island (e.g. "working with the CDEP [Community Development Employment Programme], working with [Aboriginal] elders and just community groups").

The LTO-led network, as an incorporated association, also had a clearly defined role addressing the concerns of the local industry and in particular, its members. The GM interpreted this role broadly to include initiatives that generally support tourism in the City, and that would in turn benefit members. Initiatives included support for the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee brand “Caring for Straddie” which the GM thought enriched the marketing and promotion of the City as a whole: “... I think from my perspective is that the ‘Caring for Straddie’ goes back to when the Sustainable Tourism Committee was formed on North Stradbroke Island about three years ago, that was our focus on actually looking at sustainability for the island. And the ‘Caring for Straddie’ is just something that complements that sustainable future or direction... ‘Caring for Straddie’ is about developing a set of principles that not only the operators but also the public who are visiting the island can adhere to.” This LTO-led network demonstrated a high level of flexibility and was opportunistic in the way that it worked. Whilst LTOs are often criticised for focusing on industry growth and development, in this case study there was considerable breadth in the network’s sustainable tourism initiatives. The leadership and vision of the GM was instrumental in achieving this.

Discussion: Three modes of commitment to sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism is a dialectical concept dependent upon the way it is interpreted and given meaning in its particular socio-cultural context. It is therefore unable to be precisely defined (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hall, 2008; Macbeth, 2005). The networks of public and private interests that form local tourism governance arrangements provide opportunities to conceive, communicate, discuss and negotiate interpretations of sustainable tourism. Through the sharing of knowledge, engaging different interests and developing ownership, these networks also provide opportunities to implement sustainable tourism initiatives that transcend public-private divides (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Bramwell & Pomfret, 2007; Dredge, 2006). Accordingly, good understandings of the strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness of local governance arrangements are central to the identification and implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives. In this case study, all three networks recognised the importance of the concept of sustainable tourism and were committed to its achievement. However, the similarity ends there.

The Council-led network’s approach was “frameworked on the Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy”. The Draft Strategy took a holistic, integrated approach to development, planning and management of tourism, emphasising the “triple-bottom-line” approach to sustainability. However, the Council’s Action Plan focused on economic development and marketing issues to attract a more sophisticated and higher spending market and superficially addressed environmental and social sustainability. The logic was that a higher spending visitor would deliver greater economic benefit to the City’s community whilst generating fewer negative impacts. To this extent, the environment was emphasised as an asset and an attraction, but there was little direct action proposed for managing the environmental and social consequences of tourism. Achievements of the Council-led network in this study included the launching of the new council-based tourism development and marketing unit, establishment and coordination of the Redlands Tourism Advisory Network, development of

a Redland City brand “Redlands on Moreton Bay: More to Life, More to Explore, More for Business”, and production of a visitor guide. Accordingly, the commitment to sustainable tourism was little more than rhetoric.

In contrast, the participant-led network, the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee, identified and implemented a range of applied actions that focused on improving the environmental and social outcomes of tourism on the Island. The Sustainable Tourism Action Plan produced by the STC in consultation with the network was based on an earlier draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2002) for the Island. It contained a list of actions with timelines under five priority areas: sustainable tourism marketing, sustainable tourism education, island-wide best practice, communication networks, and recreational/environmental management. Actions from the draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy that were implemented included the following:

- the creation of a sustainable tourism brand “Caring for Straddie”;
- collection of local area visitor data;
- sustainable tourism education campaign including visitor, industry and school-based programs;
- procurement of funding subsidies for local tourism operators to apply for accreditation;
- community networks and action groups focused on particular issues; and
- a recycling program for the Island.

The LTO-led network demonstrated strong commitment to the concept of sustainable tourism, particularly in terms of the sustainability of the industry and LTO members in particular. This commitment was demonstrated indirectly by being the driving force in the development of a successful grant application to appoint the STC on North Stradbroke Island, and in the collection and sharing of tourism data, dissemination of industry research via seminars, and support for industry members interested in exploring environmental accreditation.

These findings illustrate that a number of key tensions exist in this case study, and how these tensions are managed influences the effectiveness of each network in pursuing sustainable tourism. Provan and Kenis (2007) identify three sets of tensions in their network research: (1) efficiency versus inclusiveness; (2) internal versus external legitimacy; and (3) flexibility versus stability. Each is discussed below.

Efficiency versus inclusiveness

The need for an inclusive approach was often at odds with the need to be efficient and responsive. In this case study, the participant-led network and the LTO-led network made no claims on being inclusive, but they were highly responsive and efficient in targeting and addressing issues as they emerged. In contrast, the Council-led network claimed to be inclusive, but in order to be efficient the TDC often bypassed consulting the network in pursuit of efficiencies. For a variety of reasons (e.g. community apathy, lack of expertise and resources), this network was not effective in working with Council. As a result, Council’s

tourism activities became internalised and bureaucratic. The Council-led network's TDC criticised the membership-based LTO-led network as looking after the geographical interests of North Stradbroke Island and focusing on big business. Whilst this is a criticism, it is also an advantage. The participant-led North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee and the LTO-led network had well-defined communities of interest and were highly inclusive and participatory with respect to their membership. The ancillary benefits observed included a strong sense of shared interest, trust, information sharing and ownership.

Internal legitimacy versus external legitimacy

Considerable tensions existed around issues of legitimacy. A network needs to be recognised both externally and internally as credible and representative of members' interests. If a network does not have both external and internal legitimacy, then the network will not have the full commitment of its members, and its actions and initiatives will not be recognised by the wider community (Provan & Kenis, 2007). In this case study, Council criticised the legitimacy of the LTO-led network; its membership structure meant that it did not represent the full spectrum of industry interests. The Council created its own informal network, which was not recognised by the LTO as possessing sufficient expertise and knowledge to make good decisions. As a result, the LTO-led network and the Council-led network questioned the external legitimacy of each other. Internal legitimacy was also problematic for the Council because the informal Council-led network had low levels of participation. Alternatively, the LTO-led network had a high level of legitimacy because members had voting rights and were able to communicate their issues and concerns to a highly responsive GM.

In considering the tensions around legitimacy, the traditional role of local councils as service providers also influenced external legitimacy. In this case study, criticisms that Council officers worked to Council agendas and adopted bureaucratic practices in their planning and marketing weakened the Council-led network's external legitimacy. These tensions emerged largely because of the competitive relationship between the LTO-led network and Council officers who cast doubt over each other's credibility. In contrast, the participant-led network on North Stradbroke Island, whilst dealing with a narrow set of industry and geographical interests, demonstrated a high level of internal and external legitimacy. This was achieved through a responsive STC working closely with community and network members.

Flexibility versus stability

Provan and Kenis (2007) suggest that there are inherent tensions between being flexible and being responsive. That is, tensions emerge from trade-offs between being stable and the capacity to address issues quickly. The stability of a network over time contributes to its legitimacy but can also mean structures, processes and cultures become embedded and hard to change. In this case study, the Council-led network would appear to be highly stable because it was created by an institution of the state. However, the experimentation and restructuring undertaken by the Redland City Council had a highly destabilising effect, so the Council-led network revealed itself to be the least stable but also the least flexible in dealing with emergent issues. In contrast, the North Stradbroke Island participant-led network, which

relied on external grant funding for the STC position, might be considered the least stable. However, the network exhibited a high level of internal coherence and stability because members were drawn from a community exhibiting a high level of commitment to and interest in sustainable tourism. Similarly, the LTO-led network exhibited a high level of stability. Leadership had been consistent and reliable, and membership had been small but stable. Instability only emerged when funding structures changed. In this case study then, networks that would appear at first glance to be unstable demonstrated higher levels of stability because of the background communities from which the network emerged. As a result, further research is needed to examine relationships between flexibility and stability, and particularly the role of funding in these relationships.

Conclusions

This paper investigated the way in which different local tourism governance networks operate and the effects of this governance on sustainable tourism policy initiatives. Using a case study of three local tourism networks, it compared the effectiveness of each mode of governance, and has contributed both theoretical and practical understandings about network governance. The three modes of governance examined were a council-led governance network, a participant-led community governance network, and an LTO-led industry governance network. The study found that each network interpreted the parameters of local tourism governance differently and that trade-offs were made between various parameters highlighting complex relationships and value systems. These tensions included: (1) efficiency versus inclusiveness; (2) internal versus external legitimacy; and (3) flexibility versus stability. Sometimes these trade-offs were explicit and sometimes they were implicit in the perspectives of the local tourism managers, the decisions that were made, the documentation analysed, or the actions deployed.

At a theoretical level, this paper highlights the potential of comparative research into different network governance approaches, and how multiple networks work to produce tourism policy. Whilst much of the research to date illustrates local tourism policy production to be pragmatic and opportunistic, complex and contested, this paper has shown that governance networks operate mostly independently but converge, reinforce and even empower each other when there are shared interests. On occasions, where there are shared interests, the agendas and values of networks coalesce and issues are grafted to one another. In this case, sustainable community and environmental concerns were grafted onto the LTO-led network's pro-economic development values to create strong synergies. These observations open up the potential of further research using regime theory. Whilst outside the original framings of this research, regime theory is useful in exploring aspects of local politics, informal arrangements through which public and private agencies function to produce local policies and govern. In particular, it can highlight how dominant coalitions or hegemonic discourses can constitute a "regime" that in turn shapes local policy-making. Whilst it has not received much attention in the tourism literature, this paper highlights that there is value in using networks as the unit of analysis to analyse relational characteristics and how tensions and trade-offs produce and institutionalise certain ideas and approaches.

Further work is needed to explore the potential of regime theory and to build associated theory related to tourism networks.

At a practical level, the value of this paper is to highlight the trade-offs and tensions in network governance and to bring them into greater focus when devising arrangements for local tourism. In this case study, the local council struggled to achieve legitimacy, efficiency, flexibility and responsiveness as a result of its trade-offs. Despite being better resourced, it lacked authority and credibility with industry. In contrast, the LTO had high levels of legitimacy, flexibility and responsiveness to the industry and did not seek to be inclusive or collaborative across the broader community. This case study illustrates that inclusive collaboration and governance structures are idealistic, but there are opportunities to develop a 'joined up' form of networked governance whereby different communities can be engaged around those issues important to them. Different networks have the capacity to mobilise membership and be responsive to emerging issues in different and complementary ways. In the context of neoliberal public management and the increasing uptake of PPPs and network forms of governance, there is a need to further explore the multi-network governance structures wherein different networks focus on different versions of sustainable tourism policy. In this case study, despite conflicts and lack of agreement between the networks, this structure had a multiplier effect upon the range and diversity of policy initiatives that emerged.

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Table 1. Characteristics of local tourism governance networks.

	Council-led network	Participant-led network	LTO-led network
Facilitated by	Tourism Development Coordinator (Council employee)	Sustainable Tourism Coordinator (employed under contract by agreement between LTO, Council, North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee)	General Manager (employed by the Board of LTO)
Network Community	Redland City Council and Redland Tourism Advisory Network	North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee/1 year contract managed by LTO	Local tourism organisation industry members
Location	Tourism Development Unit, within Economic Development Unit of local government, Cleveland (mainland)	Local tourism organisation (LTO) (Stradbroke Island Tourism as part of Redland Tourism)	Visitor Information Centre, Cleveland (mainland)
Focus of network activity	Marketing and economic development; promotion of tourism; liaising with council on tourism matters	Sustainable outcomes for tourism, community and natural environment	Managing LTO business, responding to membership concerns, visitor information services, representing LTO interests in regional networks
Resourcing	Council budget (100%)	Commonwealth Regional Assistance Programme (50%); Redland City Council, Redland Tourism and local business operators (50%)	LTO (26% of LTO budget from Council)
Background of facilitator	Tourism and destination marketing, convention and event management, and communications	Local government and sustainable management of tourism	Small business operator, marketing
Roles and responsibilities	Determine priorities and implement actions from draft sustainable tourism strategy; Develop new strategic approach to marketing, selling, promotion and advertising Product development and packaging; Implement Economic and Tourism Development Marketing Plan; Develop brand for Redland City; Produce visitor guide; Coordinate Tourism Advisory Network	Determine priorities and implement actions from sustainable tourism strategy Environmental projects Partnerships with environmental groups Economic sustainability – level out seasonal peaks and troughs Socio-cultural aspects – work with CDEP, Aboriginal elders and community groups Investigate sustainable tourism development options and initiatives	Manage and operate visitor information centres Promote local tourism products Liaise with members and local tourism industry Develop sustainable tourism strategy for North Stradbroke Island Obtain funding to employ a sustainable tourism coordinator for North Stradbroke Island Represent LTO and local tourism industry in regional tourism networks

Table 2. Comparative effectiveness of the three governance networks.

Parameters of governance	Council-led network	Participant-led network	LTO-led network
Positive cultures, constructive communication and engaged communities	High (from Council's perspective because they are trying to be egalitarian) Low (from a broad industry perspective Council is paternalistic in its engagement)	High (among LTO and North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee) Low (wider community not involved)	High (among defined LTO membership) Low (seen by non-members to be an "elite club")
Transparency and accountability	High (expectations for high level of transparency to taxpayers) Low (in daily practice and decision-making)	High (to LTO and North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee) Low (to other interests)	High (to the LTO membership) Low (to other interests)
Vision and leadership	High (tourism positioned within a whole-of-council perspective with efforts to integrate across Council's other policy areas) Low (to industry because Council perceived to lack legitimacy)	Medium (egalitarian community values where tourism is positioned as achieving community goals; vision is temporal due to contract nature of the position)	High (GM vision and leadership based on consultation with membership; some members have more experience and louder voice by virtue of their business success) Low (to Council because LTO perceived to lack legitimacy)
Acceptance of diversity, pursuit of equity and inclusiveness	High (in the stated values of the TDC but in practice, egalitarianism devalued by those with strong industry knowledge)	High (within the stated values of the STC, and practised in relations with the North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee)	High (within the stated values of the GM to the LTO membership) Low (to other non-member interests)
Developing knowledge, learning and sharing expertise	Low (activities were highly centralised; limited diffusion of knowledge)	High (within LTO and North Stradbroke Island Sustainable Tourism Committee) Low (to wider community)	High (among defined LTO membership) Low (to wider community)
Clear roles and responsibilities of participants	High (task oriented and outcome focused)	Medium (clear roles and responsibilities but limited because position is not permanent nor well resourced)	High (clearly articulated in LTO rules; capacity for flexibility and responsive to emerging needs of membership)
Clear operational structures and processes of the networks	Low (rhetorical commitment but in practice, activities were centralised within Council)	Low (“organic” committee structure, but highly responsive to the community)	High (clearly articulated in LTO rules)
