



Governance and Partnerships

Introduction

The previous chapter addressed frameworks and regulations that support the move towards sustainable tourism. On their own however, these are not enough. First, they need 'buy-in' from the people who will be affected by them, the stakeholders on the ground. Second, they may not always be fully supported by politicians and governors, who can overturn policies at different opportunities. We don't need to think any further than US President Trump making a shock statement on June 1 2017 that his country would withdraw from the Paris Agreement, jeopardising the whole process, as the US is one of the largest producers of GHG emissions.

These two issues, buy-in from stakeholders and support from managers, can be viewed as:

- 1 The 'top-down' approach – often starting out as a command and control governing approach which seeks stakeholder buy-in to translate the rhetoric of sustainable tourism into practical, on the ground, outcomes.
- 2 The 'bottom up' approach – where stakeholders seek to have on-the-ground concerns and actions taken up by policy makers, who are encouraged to consider the social, environmental as well as economic outcomes of their decision-making.

In addition to these two issues, a third issue is the move towards power-sharing and collaborative engagement between governments/regulatory bodies and other stakeholders is also driven by political ideologies and economic interests, labelled variously as the 'New Right', corporatist or neo-conservative agenda.

The idea is fairly simple: the underlying logic is that economic growth is good for society (a logic that needs to be questioned in itself). So in pursuing public good, governments are looking for economic growth opportunities, which usually come from the private sector. Which in turn means that governments align with industry and focus on economic efficiencies and investment returns through public-private partnerships. It is then left up to the public, us average citizens, to stand in defence of all other public goods – including protecting the

environment and intangible social values – a relatively new role for citizens, one that used to be done by elders in some types of communities and governments in others.

A fourth point, and one that is linked to the idea above, that is very specific to the tourism context, is that the local community itself, as well as the natural environment, are actually part of the tourism ‘product’ for sale. Tourists interact with the local community in a way that is different and more extensive and intimate than in most development planning settings. This creates an added incentive to have local buy-in with tourism planning.

All of these issues lead to a requirement for a new form of engagement between policy makers and sustainable tourism stakeholders – an integrated approach that is neither top-down or bottom-up.

As a result we are witnessing the growth of a partnership approach, which in the case where it involves joint decision-making by the governors (political leaders) and the governed (citizens/stakeholders) about the exercise of authority and control, and is referred to as a governance approach. This involves multiple stakeholders from the public and private sectors, local community, NGOs and other relevant actors, representing complex, diverse and differentiated values that inform the development decision-making processes.

A governance approach is intended to create a more co-operative, participatory and communicative policy-style, which acknowledges the diverse and differentiated values that must be represented through consensus-based partnership building. It allows the views of stakeholders involved in any sustainable development projects to be represented by government and industry, as well as consumer groups, researchers and other interested parties.

And, as a result of including multiple participants, with their differing views, values, and positions, a governance approach ought to provide greater transparency and accountability as well as a more inclusive decision-making processes and therefore greater social legitimacy for these plans. Another outcome will be policies that are responsive to changing circumstances.

To understand how and why a partnership approach is necessary for sustainable tourism, and what makes up a good partnership, this chapter will consider the principles of good governance, some techniques for developing good governance, as well as some of the pitfalls. Next the chapter will explore one case of governance in practice. The final section will look at other forms of partnerships that can be useful in driving sustainability in tourism.

First though, it is worth making sure that we are starting from the same page, by clarifying what we mean by partnerships.

A **partnership** – the underlying principle of governance – refers to regular, cross-sectoral interactions, based on some agreed norms and rules, to address a common issue or develop a specific policy goal. Some of the common things that we want to look at when thinking about partnerships in this context, are:

- What is the problem domain being addressed?
- Who are the stakeholders and who do they represent (are they inclusive)?
- To what degree is agreement reached about how to act on the problem domain?
- What is the outcome and achievements of the partnership?

The final section of this chapter will consider the hot topic of ESG – Environmental, Social and Governance, as well as other forms partnerships in tourism and how they can benefit the move towards greater sustainability. These partnerships are not so much concerned with decision-making and power-sharing in governance, but with co-learning for sustainability. We'll revisit this in Chapter 9 on operationalising sustainable tourism.

Key words and concepts

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| ■ Bottom up/top down | ■ Enterprise defence |
| ■ Stakeholders | ■ Civic engagement |
| ■ Governance | ■ Interest-based negotiations |
| ■ Partnerships | ■ Appreciative Inquiry |
| ■ Transparency | ■ Groupthink |
| ■ Accountability | ■ Tokenism |
| ■ Inclusiveness | ■ Ladder of civic participation |
| ■ Explicit, tacit and embedded knowledge | ■ Environmental, social and governance- ESG |
| ■ Enlightened self-interest | |

7.1 Principles of good governance

There are a number of terms with which one must become familiar in order to practice good governance and be able to call out times when governance is poorly practiced. The key terms are:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Inclusiveness

Transparency means that anyone can obtain information about how a decision was made, what factors went into the decision-making process and how these were weighed up. *Accountability* means that someone is taking responsibility for those decisions and their outcomes – and this must be someone with the power to rectify matters if decisions are poorly implemented or not implemented. *Inclusiveness* means that all stakeholders are represented, and not just those with the most experience at decision-making or the greater ability (in terms of position and resources) to do so.