

## 4

# Managing Uncertainties in the Governance of Sustainable Tourism Networks

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## Introduction

At the turn of the millennium, the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* special issue on collaboration and partnerships (Bramwell & Lane, 1999), and the book *Tourism Collaboration and Partnership: Politics, practice and sustainability* (Bramwell & Lane, 2000), set the agenda for research about the role of collaboration in sustainable tourism. Since then, many more articles on the topic have been published and as a result a solid corpus of knowledge has emerged over the years. This literature can be divided into three main blocks according to whether the focus is on collaborative structures for sustainable tourism (partnerships, networks and governance), on stakeholder identification and involvement, or on the obstacles that these collaborative processes may face.

This chapter draws on this established stock of knowledge to identify the areas that need further research in order to better understand the origin and reason of those obstacles and how they seem to be persistent despite the use and application of practices, models and tools that in particular cases have proven to be effective. Further research on the processes of change to the adoption of sustainable tourism values, on the strong political nature of the governance of these processes, and on the singularity of each local context, is thus identified (Fadeeva, 2005, Nunkoo, 2017; Robertson, 2011) and a clear critical approach is recommended (Bramwell, 2010; Bramwell & Lane, 2014).

This is done after identifying three types of uncertainties underlying governance and presenting a conceptual framework adapted from Governance Network Theory (Klijn & Koopenjan, 2012; Koopenjan & Klijn, 2004), which explains the development of governance networks and the management of such processes in the case of sustainable tourism. In the subsequent section a literature review of

collaboration and governance of sustainable tourism is presented. Next, a conceptual framework of how uncertainties are managed in governance networks for sustainable tourism is outlined. Some guidelines for further research are derived from the model and later discussed in the last section of the chapter.

## **Collaboration and governance of sustainable tourism**

The implementation of sustainable forms of tourism calls for collaboration among a variety of interdependent stakeholders, encompassing public administrations, businesses, local communities and visitors. In practice, this collaboration is shaped in the form of partnerships and collaborative networks of different sorts, and is achieved and sustained through governance mechanisms and structures.

### **Partnerships, networks and governance for sustainable tourism**

The first stream of literature focuses on analyzing both successful and complex cases of collaboration for sustainable tourism, to show how multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks and participatory governance can be effective mechanisms for the adoption and implementation of sustainable tourism practices. Selin (1999) developed a typology of partnerships for sustainable tourism on the basis of the geographical scale, the top-down or bottom-up origin of the partnership, the locus of control, the degree of organizational diversity, or the timeframe of the collaborative arrangement. Later, Bramwell (2010) highlighted the importance of the participation of destination communities in decision-making for sustainability and advocated for critical perspectives and a greater attention to the broad range of contexts and activities of tourism governance. Robertson (2011) studied a cross-sectorial organizational network created to promote sustainable tourism through collaborative governance and discussed the network formation process, the role of public managers, and the features of the local context that may influence the network's likelihood of success. In the same vein, Graci (2013) explored the implementation of a multi-stakeholder partnership as a case of successful collaboration leading to the implementation of innovative sustainability initiatives. Finally, Dredge and Jamal (2013) analyzed the challenges of tourism destination governance and sustainability in complex places where multiple types of mobility coalesce. For this purpose they explored the tensions between these mobilities and established sustainable tourism principles, and suggested that governance should be grounded in local community dialogue and values. Multi-stakeholder and cross-sectorial partnerships, collaborative governance, and participatory community involvement, are thus common mechanisms for the success of tourism sustainable development in all the cases analyzed by these authors.

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Some papers have adopted a network approach to the study of these partnerships and governance structures, focusing on the structural and positional aspects of relational networks to diagnose and guide the management of collaborative initiatives for sustainable tourism. For instance, Fadeeva (2005) studied how tourism networks contribute to the adoption of sustainable practices through the discussion, implementation and dissemination of sustainability as a new value or idea to be promoted and adopted. Later, Timur and Getz (2008) adopted a network approach to collaboration for sustainable tourism and illustrated the use of social network analysis for diagnosing structural and positional aspects of collaborative networks, the knowledge of which can contribute to a more effective design and management of partnership development processes. Finally, Albrecht (2013) proposed a research agenda for networks and networking for sustainable tourism, and noted that while substantial progress had been made in the investigation of private sector networks, networks involving public sector stakeholders and cross-sectorial networks remained limited.

### **Managing stakeholders and their involvement in collaborative processes**

This stream of literature focuses on collaboration and governance of sustainable tourism from a stakeholder approach and with a more managerial perspective. The main concern is the identification of relevant stakeholders, how they can become involved in collaborative networks, and what role each of the stakeholders may play for the development and sustainability of the partnership and the adoption and implementation of sustainable tourism practices.

In the first place, the research by Araujo and Bramwell (1999) focused on how the stakeholders of a tourism project, who might participate in collaborative tourism planning, can be identified. Byrd (2007) also focused on the identification of relevant stakeholders in tourism but with particular emphasis on sustainable tourism initiatives, and highlighted the relevance of four categories of stakeholders, some of them still neglected: present and future visitors, and present and future host communities. The same research also analysed how these stakeholders can become involved in the projects.

Other authors have made important contributions by proposing models or frameworks for the implementation of collaborative practices in sustainable tourism projects, which managers can borrow in their efforts to develop collaborative partnerships for sustainable tourism. For instance, Getz and Timur (2005) studied the involvement of stakeholders in sustainable tourism by balancing their different voices. These authors proposed a process that commences with a legitimate focal group of stakeholders, identifies all the relevant stakeholders, determines their potential interests and prioritizes sustainable issues through consensus building; and ends determining how each group of expectations