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The interplay of governance, power and citizen participation in community tourism planning

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This research examines a unique case of tourism planning and explores the relationships between governance, power, and citizen participation in community decision-making. In less than two years, the community of Sitka, Alaska, undertook two separate tourism-planning processes in response to proposed tourism development. The first plan followed a participant-led governance structure; the second plan a council-led governance structure. The participant-led governance structure produced a plan through a collaborative process that empowered citizen participants and sought to limit growth, while the council-led structure utilized an external consultant and produced a more pro-growth plan that downplayed citizen concern for maintaining quality of life. The council-led plan was adopted as the guiding document for the community. Ultimately, the power over plan adoption and implementation lay in the hands of the local government, creating a stressful community environment for many involved in both planning processes. Evidence of the advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation in each planning process is presented.

Keywords: social and community change; tourism industry stakeholders; collaboration; sustainability; case study

Resumen

Esta investigación examina un caso único de planificación turística y explora las relaciones entre gobierno, poder, y participación ciudadana en la toma de decisiones en la comunidad. En menos de dos años, la comunidad de Sitka, Alaska ha emprendido, en respuesta al desarrollo turístico propuesto, dos procesos de planificación turística separados. El primer plan sigue una estructura de gobierno emprendida por participantes y el segundo plan una estructura de gobierno emprendida por el Ayuntamiento. El plan emprendido por participantes creó un plan a través de un proceso de colaboración que habilitaba a los ciudadanos participantes y busca limitar el crecimiento, mientras que el plan emprendido por el Ayuntamiento utilizó un consultor externo y generó un plan más a favor del crecimiento que minimizaba la importancia de las preocupaciones de los ciudadanos por mantener la calidad de vida. Se adoptó el plan emprendido por el Ayuntamiento como el documento guía para la comunidad. En último extremo el poder para la adopción e implementación del plan está en manos del gobierno local, lo que creando un ambiente de

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comunidad estresada para muchos de los implicados en ambos procesos de planificación. Se presentan las ventajas y desventajas de la participación ciudadana de cada proceso de planificación.

Palabras claves: cambio social y comunitario; stakeholders de la industria turística; colaboración; sostenibilidad; estudio de caso

Résumé

Cette recherche examine un cas unique de planification touristique et explore la relation entre la gouvernance, le pouvoir et la participation citoyenne au processus de décision communautaire. En moins de deux ans, la communauté de Sitka, en Alaska, a entrepris deux processus de planification touristiques en réponse au développement touristique envisagé. Le premier schéma suivait une structure de gouvernance dirigée par les participants ; le second schéma avait une structure de gouvernance dirigée par la municipalité. La structure de gouvernance menée par les participants a produit un schéma selon un processus de collaboration qui valorisait les citoyens et cherchait à limiter le développement, alors que la structure de gouvernance dirigée par la municipalité a fait appel à un consultant externe et a produit un schéma favorisant davantage la croissance qui a minimisé la préoccupation des citoyens souhaitant préserver leur qualité de vie. Le schéma dirigé par la municipalité a été adopté en tant que document de référence pour la communauté. En fin de compte, l'adoption du schéma et son implémentation reposent entre les mains du gouvernement local, créant ainsi un climat communautaire stressant pour tous ceux qui sont impliqués dans les deux processus de planification. Les preuves des avantages et inconvénients de la participation citoyenne dans chaque processus de planification sont présentées.

Mots-clés: changement social et communautaire; acteurs de l'industrie touristique; collaboration; durabilité; étude de cas

摘要

本研究考察了一个独特的旅游规划案例，探究了在社区决策制定过程中治理、权力、市民参与的关系。为回应提出的旅游发展方案，Sitka, Alaska社区在不到两年分别采取了两种旅游规划进程。第一种遵循了参与者主导的治理结构，第二种采取协商委员会主导的治理结构。参与者领导的主导的治理结构通过给参与的市民赋权的协商过程产生出一个限制发展的方案，而协商委员会领导的治理结构则采用了外部顾问的方法，产生出一个更支持增长方案，该方案忽略了市民对于保持生活质量的关注。协商委员会领导的方案被采纳并用作社区的纲领文件。最后，采纳和实施方案的权力在地方政府手里，使得许多参与到了规划编制中的人们感到来自社区的压力。本文呈现了在每种规划进程中公民参与的利弊证据。

关键词: 社会和社区变迁; 旅游产业利益相关者; 协作; 可持续性; 案例分析

Introduction

Tourism, by many definitions, can only be sustainable if the lives of those in host communities are improved while also managing environmental and economic impacts that may occur. To achieve this, tourism planners and developers must be aware of how residents and other stakeholders in host communities view their role within the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism can provide positive experiences and facilitate a community climate that creates opportunities for favorable interactions between

hosts and guests. One way to encourage sustainable tourism is through tourism planning that allows for host community resident input.

There is increasing interest in community tourism planning that emphasizes citizen participation, promotes principles of sustainability, and recognizes the importance of sense of place to host communities (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Marzano & Scott, 2009; Zapata & Hall, 2012). This type of tourism-planning effort may face resistance from traditional or formal entities such as city councils, other elected or appointed officials, tribal councils, chambers of commerce, and convention and visitor bureaus that are accustomed to expert-led planning processes and implementations. Residents expect these formal entities to be inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all community members, not just formal or recognized stakeholders; however, the power structure and selected processes for plan implementation are often unclear. Residents can also form non-profit, non-governmental organizations to address community needs and to pursue social change. Engaged or collaborative processes may have all of the requisite participants including residents and traditional entities, and may use widely accepted and desired approaches and processes, but in the end power may reside with traditional or formal entities.

Community change requires legitimizing plans as policy and supporting their implementation. Planning in and of itself is grounded in values, commitment, and behaviors of individuals and stakeholder groups. In many cases, the planning process itself can have unintended benefits for both formal and informal stakeholders who participate. Plans are developed through formal meetings and informal community networks, but ultimately require adoption and capital investment by those who hold the power of approval and financial support. Ultimately, the social environment created by planning processes can play an important role in how residents of host communities interact with tourists and manage the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of community tourism growth.

In this case study, we explored a community with a recent and unique experience of both collaborative and expert-led tourism planning. The first, collaborative planning approach was intended to illuminate the values held by residents and the concerns they had for large-scale development and increased tourist volume from a proposed cruise ship docking facility. A broad representation of community members participated in the collaborative planning efforts. From the researchers' perspective, these residents attempted to balance quality of life, economic development, and environmental protection. A second, expert-led approach was conducted shortly after, and the local government encouraged several stakeholder groups that were either absent or withdrew from the earlier collaborative planning process to engage in the planning efforts. The expert-led plan attempted to balance the collaborative plan's focus on maintaining quality of life while encouraging economic growth. This study aims to describe a unique tourism-planning process involving two contrasting planning efforts and to discuss the interplay of governance, power, and the involvement of citizen stakeholders during problem-framing and direction-setting stages of each process.

This article makes three key contributions. The first contribution is to expand our knowledge of hosts' or residents' behaviors during several planning processes conducted within a short timeframe. A second contribution is to provide a contemporary applied case where an isolated island community in the USA attempted newer theoretical approaches to community-based planning (i.e. collaborative planning) and encountered traditional power structures and commercial interests that may not have shared local residents' interests. A third contribution is to discuss the role of citizen involvement in community decision-making and how tourism-planning processes and outcomes were affected by different levels of citizen participation.

Literature

Local systems of governance play an important role in the decision-making processes of most organized communities. The governance structure of a community can facilitate or inhibit citizen participation in community decision-making, and they determine how decision-making power is distributed. The election of government agents by local citizens creates a unique power structure within communities, with elected officials possessing ultimate decision-making power over community operation and fiscal spending and citizens possessing the voting power to elect or remove those officials from office. Local governments can empower their citizens by allowing them to form committees designed to advise government agencies and aid them in their decisions. One way to empower citizens is to include them in the creation of plans that are used to guide local government decision-making. If the residents of host communities are to be truly empowered, they must also be given the power over actual implementation of tourism plan recommendations. Recently, collaborative processes have been promoted as a method of soliciting community engagement and providing opportunities for dialogue among stakeholders and decision-makers. Collaborative planning as applied in tourism is 'a process of joint decision-making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain' (Jamal & Getz, 1995, p. 188).

Governance and decision-making processes

Beaumont and Dredge (2010) outlined three forms of governance structures employed by communities to undertake tourism planning and management. A local tourism organization (LTO)-led structure would be employed if a chamber of commerce or convention and visitor bureau organized and led a planning effort to discuss short- or long-term goals and programs that aim to attract more tourists and spend hotel tax revenues. The second structure is a council-led structure and describes a process where local government asks a standing or special taskforce to convene a planning process that most often focuses on economic development. The third structure is a participant-led structure that might be convened by individuals or non-profit groups with a focus on social or community character, quality of life issues, environmental concerns, or increased stewardship.

The council-led structure is the most common, simply because local governments are often the only entities that have the financial capital to fund a tourism-planning process, have the authority to regulate land use, and the resources to implement planning priorities. In many cases, local government officials serve part-time, retaining whatever other roles in the community they may have served prior to their election. For these individuals, it is exceedingly difficult to separate their roles as government agents and their roles as business owners, members of non-profit organizations, or professionals (Rossi, 1960).

In their study of tourism governance in Australia, Beaumont and Dredge (2010) found that the type of network governance had considerable influence upon the power structure of relationships between government, businesses, citizens, and LTOs, and the group's focus. The council-led network structure was seen to focus on economic and marketing interests, while largely ignoring environmental and social issues. The participant-led network generally focused on environmental and

social issues of tourism development and produced a tourism action plan for the community. Finally, the LTO-led network created a plan that focused primarily on addressing the needs of LTO member organizations.

Tourism planning

The tourism industry plays an important role in the economic welfare of many communities. Tourism development has often been viewed as an imposed action, done with little input from the majority of community residents or non-tourism sectors (Sautter & Leisen, 1999).

As such, the social, cultural, and environmental implications of tourism development are often afterthoughts for those wishing to develop tourism products and services and the communities in which they operate. Planning for tourism can help balance economic, social, cultural, and environmental considerations and provide an opportunity for stakeholders in the host community to voice their opinions. Planning for tourism is an essential activity for communities seeking to integrate tourism into their economic and social plans (Gunn, 1988). A substantial body of literature posits that tourism planning and development that utilizes community input can be beneficial to all stakeholders (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011).

It is often assumed that the community tourism-planning process is pluralistic, and residents are on equal ground in terms of economic and political resources (Reed, 1997). In the past many local government agencies chose to seek expert guidance in forming their tourism plans. While many experts seek input from local residents, the power structure of an expert-guided tourism plan is almost certainly elitist, with ultimate decision-making power residing with the expert and the government agency financing the plan. Recently, there has been a movement by some communities toward a pluralist, collaborative planning process intended to put decision-making in the hands of all community members who are interested. Collaboration in the tourism-planning process can take many forms, such as participatory planning processes, informal meetings, roundtable discussions, advisory committees, or public-private partnerships (Zapata & Hall, 2012).

Citizen participation in community decision-making

Citizen participation is 'A process in which individuals take part in decision making in the institutions, programs, and environments that affect them' (Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger, & Wandersman, 1984, p. 339). Citizen participation in decision-making is a key feature of the democratic governmental process, and is often sought either directly or indirectly through the election of representative officials. Direct citizen participation is often more feasible at a local level than a regional or national level, and as such is more common in a community context. Tosun (1999) posited that citizen participation in local tourism planning was spontaneous, induced, or coercive. Spontaneous citizen participation is initiated by citizens and places full responsibility and authority upon the citizenry (Tosun, 2006). Induced participation is generally initiated by a decision-making body and gives citizens a voice in the decision process, but places ultimate decision-making power squarely with the organization that initiated the participatory process. Finally, coercive participation is a manufactured replacement for legitimate participation, where the real objective is to reduce political fallout of decisions rather than provide citizens a voice in the decision-making process (Tosun, 2006).

Table 1. Advantages to citizen participation in government decision-making.

	Advantages to citizens	Advantages to government
Decision process	Bi-directional education Persuade and enlighten government Gain skills for activist citizenship	Bi-directional education Persuade citizens Build trust and allay anxiety or hostility Build strategic alliances Gain legitimacy of decisions
Outcomes	Break gridlock; achieve outcomes Gain control over policy processes Better policy and implementation decisions	Break gridlock; achieve outcomes Avoid litigation costs Better policy and implementation decisions

Source: Irvin and Stansbury (2004).

Irvin and Stansbury (2004) compiled a list of the numerous advantages of citizen participation in government decision-making to both citizens and government (Table 1). Many of the advantages to both citizens and governments are a result of the increased communication facilitated by increased citizen input. In the end, policies created with citizen input should ultimately result in better outcomes for citizens and governments. While advantages to citizen participation in governmental decision-making are numerous, there are also a variety of disadvantages to such activities (Table 2). One of the main disadvantages is that the facilitation of citizen input often adds time to already lengthy decision-making processes, expanding the horizon for action on important issues weeks or even months beyond when they are needed. If policies are heavily influenced by special interest groups, citizen participation may result in worse decisions than if they had not been involved.

The various advantages and disadvantages to citizen participation in government decision-making are uniquely tied to how citizens are able to participate in the decision-making process and the level of influence their contributions bring to bear upon actual decisions (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). Furthermore, individuals and groups involved in decision-making frequently lack homogeneous views about how important issues in their communities should be addressed, leading to discursive deliberation between groups with opposing viewpoints (Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004).

Table 2. Disadvantages to citizen participation in government decision-making.

	Disadvantages to citizens	Disadvantages to government
Decision process	Time consuming Pointless if decision is ignored	Time consuming Costly May backfire, creating more hostility toward government
Outcomes	Worse policy decision if heavily influenced by opposing interest groups	Loss of decision-making control Possibility of bad decision that is politically impossible to ignore Less budget for implementation of actual projects

Source: Irvin and Stansbury (2004).

When individuals and groups with disparate viewpoints come together for participation in community decision-making, the underlying power structure of the decision-making process and community plays a role in how decisions are made and which decisions are implemented in the community.

Empowerment and power

Citizen participation in community decision-making can impart a sense of empowerment and perceived control to those involved (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). In this study, empowerment is defined as ‘the process of gaining influence over events and outcomes of importance’ (Fawcett et al., 1994, p. 471). In the community context, the scope of empowerment is broadened to include conditions that matter to people who share neighborhoods, workplaces, experiences, or concerns (Fawcett et al., 1995). Empowerment is a process that happens over time, with certain events and actions imparting a sense of empowerment that may grow or decline cumulatively (Rappaport, 1987). The gain of citizen influence over events and outcomes is no doubt a positive step in the local decision-making process, but not all empowering actions give actual power to the citizen stakeholders involved (Timothy, 2007).

Power in a community setting is ‘conceived as the ability to exercise influence in a decision-making process. It is viewed as a personal attribute that distinguishes leaders from followers’ (Hawley, 1963, p. 422). In a community setting, the ability to exercise influence may be in the hands of individuals, groups of like-minded individuals, or organizations. Riger (1993) described two types of power: *power over*, which is explicit or implicit dominance, and *power to*, which provides the opportunity to act more freely. Those who are empowered may or may not wield any actual *power over* any decision-making process. There are two traditional notions of the distribution of *power over* within any given community (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). The elitist power structure is highly centralized, with decision-making controlled by a handful of individuals or groups. Power in an elitist structure is most often held by those in government, business owners, or those with important social status or access to resources, financial or otherwise. The pluralist power structure is diffuse, with decision-making power residing with many rather than few. At the community level, the concept of power is inexorably linked with politics; as stakeholders within a community struggle for scarce resources, government agencies are often forced to exercise their ultimate decision-making power (Hall, 2003). Power structures within communities are complex, and power can shift on an issue-by-issue basis. It is not uncommon to have several agencies with partial control over a particular issue.

Speer and Hughey (1995) posited that there are three main ways power is manifested in communities. First, power can be wielded through control of resources used to reward or punish other parties. Second, those in power can create or eliminate barriers to participation for those individuals not in power. Finally, power can be exercised through the control of information flow, either keeping important information in the hands of those in power or distributing it widely. In a tourism-planning context, power can also be exercised through the control over whether a tourism plan is adopted and implemented or not (Yuksel, Bramwell, & Yuksel, 1999).

Case study background

Sitka is a community of approximately 9000 residents located on the outer coast of Baranof Island in southeast Alaska’s Tongass National Forest. Home to Tlingit

Indians for 10,000 years, Sitka was settled in by Russian fur traders, was the capital of Russian America, and became the first capital of the Territory of Alaska after the USA's purchase of Alaska in 1867. The community has a strong sense of Alaska Native, Russian, and early Alaskan history and a strong attachment to place. For many years the Sitka economy was based on a timber pulp mill, commercial fishing, and tourism. At its peak, the mill employed 400 workers providing 10% of the community's wage jobs and 18% of the local payroll with an additional 400 to 600 timber-related jobs (Gilbertson, 2003).

Since the closing of the pulp mill in 1993, the community has attempted to expand its tourism base by attracting more in-state and regional visitors who stay longer and spend more money. Sitka's tourism infrastructure includes 200 hotel rooms, several dozen bed and breakfast operations or lodges, and public and private campgrounds. Twenty-four attractions are listed on the National Register of Historical Places. Commercial and guided charter fishing are very important to Sitka's economy and identity, and Sitka has a history of being among the top 25 ports for fish landings in the USA (Gilbertson, 2003).

The community of Sitka is accessible only by air or marine transportation. Marine transportation is provided by the State of Alaska's Marine Highway System with year-round weekly runs. Cruise ships operate from May through September. During 2012, cruise visitation reached an all time low of 110,714, decreasing by more than 60% from a high of 290,000 cruise visitors attained in 2008 (Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska, 2012). Much of this decline can be attributed to the lack of a dock to facilitate loading and unloading of passengers and Sitka's location along Alaska's outer coast, which has experienced a significant decrease in the frequency of Gulf of Alaska crossings by multiple major cruise lines. Sitka currently receives visits from several major cruise lines including Holland America and Celebrity, and from several mid to small cruise lines including Silver Seas, Regent Seven Seas, and Lindblad Expeditions. Today, small cruise vessels are increasing in numbers and perceived by some coastal ports to be desirable over large ships due to perceptions that these passengers spend more money while in port. The social and economic impact of small versus large vessels is central to the type and size of tourism in port communities.

Large-scale and modern-style cruising in southeast Alaska started during the 1970s, grew slowly during the 1980s, and boomed during the 1990s. Cruise visitation reached current passenger volumes during the late 1990s and steadily grew until the onset of the national recession during 2008. With the increase in cruise visitation to Sitka, locally elected leaders and residents have voted, multiple times, to financially support the development of a cruise docking facility and upland support facilities. Notably, residents have only voted on a bond proposition about once per decade (most recently 1998) because the local governing body's vote to place the bond on the ballot nearly always fails.

Sitka's planning experiences

In 2005, the Sitka Assembly (the local governing body) was advised by its Long Range Planning and Economic Development Commission to initiate and fund a tourism-planning effort. Over the next two years, two separate planning processes were undertaken. The first process was *pluralist* in nature and involved a diverse body of residents who followed a collaborative planning model (Tourism Plan #1) (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). We consider inclusion of citizens and other stakeholder groups in this

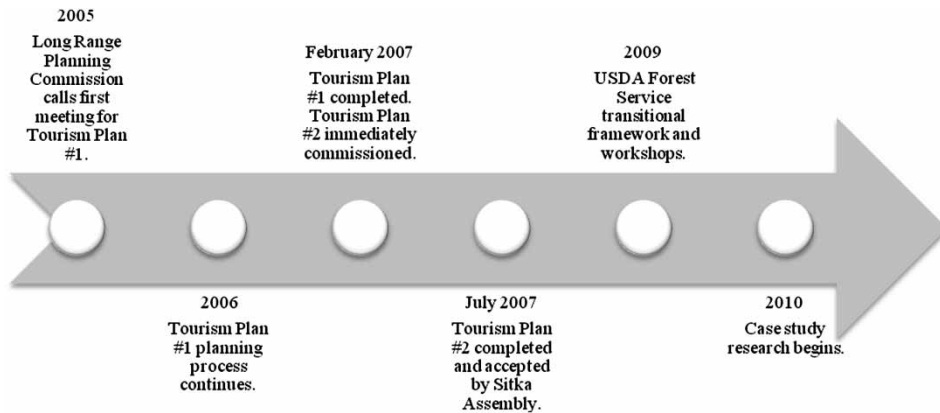


Figure 1. Case study.

tourism-planning process as citizen participation in governmental decision-making for the purpose of this study. The first tourism-planning process took place over the course of nearly a year, during which some stakeholder groups withdrew their participation. The second, *elitist* leaning planning process was initiated soon after the first effort was completed, and an external consultant was hired to lead the process (Tourism Plan #2). In the end, Sitka had two planning documents but little implementation by the government or other tourism governance entities followed (Figure 1).

Both efforts produced plans with implementable projects but each plan ultimately included some competing ideas. The council-led planning process (Tourism Plan #2) ultimately won out over the citizen-led planning process (Tourism Plan #1) that had engaged and imbued citizens with a sense of empowerment. Tourism Plan #2 was accepted by the Sitka Assembly as a guiding document for the community. Currently, Tourism Plan #2 resides on the city's website under the page for the Tourism Commission, a newly formed group that emerged from the two-stage planning processes. Tourism Plan #2 appears to be guiding the local government, but may not be influencing other stakeholders including the local Alaska Native Tribe, chamber of commerce, or tourism bureau.

Methods

In April 2010, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service research managers and regional and local Forest Service staff organized a community forum to engage community members in developing a research agenda that incorporated local research needs. The decision was made to explore past planning processes and identify the challenges of implementing planning outcomes. Why could the community not implement the projects that had been identified? Instead of implementation it seemed that when implementation was blocked the community proceeded by circling back and initiating more planning. The perpetual planning without proceeding through implementation was time consuming, costly, and frustrating to those who invested their time. It seemed that helping the community to better understand the challenges to the implementation of their plans might help them, and other communities facing similar planning dilemmas, to move forward.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of this unique tourism-planning experience and explore the interplay of governance, power, and citizen participation in tourism planning in Sitka, a case study was conducted. The case study consisted of interviews with citizen stakeholders, content analysis of tourism plans, and content analysis of tourism-planning-related public documents. Researchers analyzed the planning processes and resultant plans, with the benefit of in-depth conversations with local participants to help inform understanding of the context of these efforts, community politics, and governance surrounding them, shortcomings of the planning processes, and final plan documents, and barriers and challenges to the implementation of proposed strategies found in recent plans. Case studies such as this are particularly useful for tourism researchers and practitioners because the research conducted in the tourism domain is ultimately intended for application to real-world situations. The practical knowledge gained from case studies may be more informative to practitioners than large sample studies that are generalizable to wide populations but lack specificity for those tackling issues on the ground (Stake, 1978).

Sample, data collection, and analysis

The sample of potential interviewees ($N = 100$) was compiled from names listed in acknowledgements in the planning documents, planning meeting minutes, memos, or invitee lists, and individuals who were invited to or attended at least one planning meeting. From these lists, positions held or roles served were researched and documented. Two study phases (March 2010 and June 2010) included face-to-face interviews. The final phase in 2012 involved phone interviews with select individuals who continued to participate in elected government positions, appointed commission seats, as staff members of state or local government resource agencies, or as directors of non-profits. In all, 29 interviews were conducted with Sitka residents representing various sectors of the community and stakeholder groups. Interviews typically lasted one to two hours and were held in public places like coffee shops or agency offices like the USDA Forest Service or the City and Borough of Sitka. Researchers arranged for the most convenient place for the interviewee. Most interview sessions involved one or two people from the community and two or more research team members.

Researchers drew from a guide consisting of 16 questions to help frame conversations with each interviewee. Each individual offered a unique perspective on tourism planning in Sitka and the direction of each conversation was guided by their particular areas of knowledge, personal experience, and expertise. Research team members also attended meetings held by the USDA Forest Service and the Sitka Sustainable Outdoor Recreation planning team during the field research trips. These meetings afforded the researchers additional opportunities to validate interview and content analysis data.

Interviews were recorded, with consent, and later transcribed by researchers. Transcriptions were later matched with interview notes taken by researchers during each interview (Burnard, 1991). Quotes provided in the results section are paraphrased from transcribed interviews and researcher notes taken during each interview. Thematic analysis was conducted on each interview and a coding system for emergent themes was developed (Patton, 2002). Each set of interview notes and transcriptions were read and analyzed by multiple researchers in an effort to reduce individual researcher biases. A focus group style meeting was held among the interviewers to share and compile findings across interviews. Major themes were organized and summarized in a single document and distributed to all researchers to read and confirm.

Content analysis of documents related to tourism planning in Sitka was conducted after thematic analysis of interview data. Researchers analyzed documents for themes that emerged from interview data as well as any new themes that would add depth of understanding to the tourism-planning process in Sitka (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Each tourism plan was read and thematically coded by multiple researchers, and common themes were retained for use in analysis. Meeting minutes from community meetings that took place between 2005 and 2009 were read, summarized, and thematically analyzed by a single researcher, and distributed to the entire research team for interpretation.

One oft-cited criticism of the case study is the reflection of researcher biases in case study results, as the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Beeton, 2005). To address this issue, researchers attempted to triangulate findings using multiple data sources and methods of analysis. In-depth interview data were transcribed and thematically coded by multiple researchers. Content analysis of Tourism Plan #1, Tourism Plan #2, a 'crosswalk' document prepared by the facilitators of Tourism Plan #1 comparing similarities and differences in the two plans, and meeting minutes from the Sitka Assembly, Long Range Planning Commission, and Convention and Visitors bureau was conducted.

Results and discussion

Qualitative data from interviews and content analysis illuminate the complex interplay of governance, power, and citizen participation in tourism planning. Analysis of data revealed that plans created under participant-led and council-led governance structures were somewhat divergent in their goals and objectives. Despite citizen stakeholders' perception of empowerment during their involvement in the first planning process, the local governing body ultimately possessed *power over* both the ability to commission tourism plans and the ability to adopt and implement plan recommendations. Many advantages of citizen participation in decision-making were evident during the first, collaborative tourism-planning process, while the decision to commission and adopt a second tourism plan revealed many of the disadvantages of citizen participation (Table 3).

Governance

In Sitka, the two planning processes provide examples of plans produced by different structures of governance. The first planning process demonstrates a participant-led structure that produced a plan (Tourism Plan #1) focused on the concerns of many stakeholder groups, including maintaining quality of life within Sitka, and conservation of natural resources. The citizen participation in the first planning process was *induced* by the Sitka Assembly, and was intended to lend a voice to the many concerns Sitka residents had about tourism development in their community. The subsequent planning process used a council-led structure and produced a second tourism plan (Tourism Plan #2) that focused on economic concerns voiced by many local businesses. The Assembly gave the convener of Tourism Plan #2 the authority to invite or strongly encourage participation by selected organizations that were explicitly identified by the Assembly. Unlike the conveners of Tourism Plan #1, the Tourism Plan #2 convener had prior tourism-planning experience, primarily working in Alaska.

Table 3. Evidence of Sitka's stages of tourism planning.

	Ongoing governance	Proposed development	First tourism plan	Second tourism plan	Current
Stages	Problem-setting stage ^a	Direction-setting stage			Implementation stage
Power versus empowerment ^b	Formal power held by Assembly, businesses, and other formal entities	Residents through voting on bond to pay for dock Strong voter sentiment ignited in opposition to development of a cruise ship dock	Empowerment (<i>power to</i>) to conduct long-range planning with a plan for approval consideration by local government. Locally led and attended	<i>Power over</i> continuing tourism planning to reach a widely supported plan. Outside led and locally attended	Power through elected positions and newly appointed formal Tourism Commission

^aAdopted from Gray (1985, 1989) and Jamal and Getz (1995).

^bAdopted from Speer and Hughey (1995).

The participation of certain citizens and stakeholder groups in the second planning process was viewed as *coerced* participation by many, as one interviewee commented:

For the second tourism plan stakeholder seats that were empty in the first planning process were filled by requests from the Assembly, but only the trade groups were really involved in planning.

Tourism Plan #1 was based on the overarching principle that no community retains its special attributes by accident. This plan sought to maintain the unique character of the community by remaining a high-value, moderate-volume tourism destination. The plan focused on keeping businesses locally owned and operated, and integrating the tourism industry into a diverse and healthy economy. The plan states that benefits from the tourism industry should be distributed to residents of Sitka rather than nonresidents or corporate interests, and that decisions about tourism should be transparent and based upon factual information. In contrast to Tourism Plan #1, the main goal of Tourism Plan #2 was to maintain a healthy economy through characteristics like durability, capacity to change as markets change, year round activity, reasonable pay, and growth (consistent with the goal to maintain quality of life). Maintaining quality of life was also included in Tourism Plan #2, by highlighting the importance of maintaining Sitka's sense of place, while keeping stores, restaurants, and other local businesses open year round. Tourism Plan #2 promoted action to help local residents and businesses become successful in their tourism enterprises, and encouraged the community to take a proactive role in managing tourism growth.

Power and empowerment

The collaboratively derived Tourism Plan #1 was conducted under the assumption that the resultant tourism plan would guide the tourism industry and tourism development in

the coming years. This perception instilled a sense of empowerment (*power to*) in citizens and organizations involved in the process. Despite the perception of empowerment by individuals and groups involved in Tourism Plan #1, their document was not adopted or implemented by the Sitka Assembly. One interviewee commented:

At a public meeting after Tourism Plan #1 was commissioned, people were excited and there was energy around a plan that was community driven and that demonstrated the community had a vested interest in understanding and helping shape economic growth. However, some tourism industry businesses dropped out of the discussions and later were able to block adoption and implementation of the plan. Members of the business community didn't feel the process was going their way so they dropped out. In the end Tourism Plan #1 was rejected because it did not have the engagement of some visitor industry representatives.

Power over decision-making was exerted when some stakeholders felt threatened, as one interviewee said:

The second plan was guarded by visitor trade groups and not as innovative as the first plan. At a public meeting after the first planning process, residents were excited and there was energy around something that was community driven. The community had a vested interest in understanding and helping shape economic growth. The visitor trade groups didn't participate in the effort and were under no obligation to share their perspectives. The trade groups went to the elected Assembly and exerted their influence and power, which lead to killing the process and not approving or implementing the first plan.

Another interviewee said:

Good, honest, and caring people put together documents that were good-hearted, but then the political process took over and the outcome was different than the intent because members of the Assembly act on a short-sighted vision. They get caught up in the moment without any time or ambition to think long-term about Sitka's future.

The Sitka Assembly, as the decision-making body of the community, ultimately possessed the *power over* adoption and implementation of the tourism plans. The framework for the subsequent plan, Tourism Plan #2, was based on some of the overarching principles of Tourism Plan #1, which allowed for some citizen-empowered efforts to be reflected in the current plan (Tourism Plan #2) and to influence some planning decisions. Despite Tourism Plan #2 being officially approved by the Assembly as a guiding document for tourism industry and development in Sitka, very few recommendations from either plan have been implemented to date. Some recommendations remain contentious, some lack a champion to encourage implementation, some require funding that is not currently available, and some require additional decision-making by the Sitka Assembly.

Tourism Plan #2, in the plan implementation section titled 'coordination and information', acknowledges the need for capacity building, but not necessarily the inclusion of all stakeholder groups, with:

Actions that need to go beyond the capacity of existing local organizations. Implementing the plan will require taking full advantage of existing programs, as well as developing new resources and new approaches. Carrying out these actions will require a decades-long investment of time, money and effort. Guidelines for plan implementation include: increase cooperation, coordination, and trust regarding visitor issues in Sitka, give community members a more meaningful role in setting tourism policy, and expand community capacity to implement tourism plan actions and strategies.

Citizen participation in decision-making

At the end of both planning processes, implementation of tourism plan recommendations was problematic because of the difficulties that had arisen as a result of the inclusion or exclusion of certain individual stakeholders or stakeholder groups during each tourism-planning process. The inclusion of stakeholder groups in tourism planning is not always easy, especially because there are many individuals and groups with a stake in tourism development. Sitka has several standing stakeholder groups involved in tourism planning and development. First, the Sitka Assembly is the local governing body of the community. The City and Borough of Sitka has an Assembly-Municipal Administrator form of government in which the elected mayor and Assembly members establish and implement policy. Second, the Long-Range Planning and Economic Development Commission was created to tackle community issues including affordable housing and tourism planning. Finally, the Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau (a non-profit) is tasked with marketing and promotion of the community and member organizations. There are several other formal agencies and non-profit groups with an interest in tourism planning and development in Sitka including the USDA Forest Service, the United States Department of Interior National Park Service, Alaska Natives (including Shee Atika, Inc., the Alaska Native village corporation), the Sitka City and Borough Department of Parks and Recreation, Alaska State Parks, Sitka Chamber of Commerce, Sitka Conservation Society, commercial fisherman, charter fisherman, tourism businesses, residents at large, and the recently created Tourism Commission.

Throughout both tourism-planning processes, the inclusion or exclusion of certain stakeholder groups and interactions between them exemplified many of the advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation in community decision-making (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). In terms of advantages to citizen participation, the collaborative nature of Tourism Plan #1 facilitated the inclusion of many stakeholder groups and individuals, providing those with opposing viewpoints a platform for *bi-directional education* and compromise. One interviewee who participated in the first plan process said:

The collaborative process, for people that stuck it out – and had different opinions – they had a better understanding of each other's perspective.

Another interviewee said:

In the beginning [of the first tourism planning process], it was high tension and a lot of opinions... All animosity was put aside and enemies worked together. The collaborative process united all these people to see a general goal, not just personal agenda.

Throughout the planning process, the participation of citizen stakeholders led to a better understanding of the decision-making process and some *gained skills for an active citizenry*. Some who participated in tourism planning even decided to later run for local public office:

There is a connection in moving from planning to the Assembly... When you get volunteers together to work on a project, leaders rise to the top. It is a training process and the leaders rise to the top, gain confidence, and run for office.

The inclusion of citizen stakeholders in the tourism-planning process helped to *build trust and allay anxiety or hostility* between citizens and government:

Both tourism planning processes were needed for the whole community to build relationships... Both helped to identify what is important in Sitka and to build common ground.

In addition, the experience of working together to address common goals allowed citizens and government to *build strategic alliances*:

The experience [both tourism planning processes] has reshaped how new groups are formed and influenced how the City and Borough of Sitka does community planning.

Despite the many advantages of citizen participation evident in the first (and, in fewer instances, second) tourism-planning process, several disadvantages also emerged. Perhaps the most important disadvantage was that the first planning process was *time consuming* and ultimately *pointless because their decisions were ignored*:

People involved in the first planning process put a large amount of time and dedication into Tourism Plan #1 and felt disregarded when the Assembly failed to adopt their document. Particularly for members of the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) who started the process, participated in the process, and were also meeting on a regular basis as the LRPC it was difficult to have the work denied. They invested so much of themselves and then they were shot down.

Another interviewee commented:

[Several important organizations] pulled out of the first planning process. These parties did not have the patience or the faith to see the collaborative process through to the end – or they felt their interest and perspectives would not be honored by the process...they did not believe their voice would be heard and therefore their time was wasted.

By commissioning a tourism plan developed through a collaborative process, the Sitka Assembly essentially *lost decision-making control*, in terms of the goals and objectives of the tourism plan itself:

There was animosity between an [elected official] and city staff. The Assembly wanted instant results and lacked understanding that collaboration takes time. Small town politics have resulted in [elected official], elected Assembly, and city staff that collectively did not want to act on [a plan] that another group developed or that a different group will have to implement.

The decision to commission a second tourism-planning process essentially *backfired, creating hostility toward government*:

The people that were part of Tourism Plan #1 are now just ‘pissed off’ and don’t have the energy to move any of the projects forward anymore. Pissed off, burnt out, and lack trust in the process that the City and Borough of Sitka used. [Another result was the] disenchantment and disillusionment of the volunteers that would have ordinarily been involved in implementation activities.

Conclusions

This research provides a practical case study for researchers and practitioners interested in understanding contemporary tourism planning. As is often the case, tourism planning in Sitka took a roundabout journey on its way to completion, and there are some lessons

to be learned from the findings of this research. First, the structure of governance under which a tourism plan is formed plays a role in its process, form, and content. Second, the power structures in a community may influence stakeholder participation, plan formulation, and the ultimate decision over whether a plan is adopted or implemented. Finally, citizen participation in tourism planning can result in a variety of benefits to both citizens and government in terms of the decision-making process and outcomes; however, there are a variety of pitfalls that communities should be aware of before engaging in tourism planning with broad citizen involvement.

Evidence from content analysis of plans and other community documents revealed that each plan, produced under different governance structures, resulted in some conflicting goals and objectives for tourism within the community of Sitka. Guidance of the first, collaborative tourism-planning process was placed in the hands of many with mediators on hand to facilitate interaction and plan formation. Guidance of the second, expert-led tourism plan was placed in the hands of an external consultant, with input from stakeholder groups sought from a select few representatives of stakeholder organizations and the community at large. Tourism Plan #1 focused on controlling growth and maintaining a healthy balance of tourism and other industries, while Tourism Plan #2 focused on pushing for economic growth through tourism development while maintaining quality of life for Sitka residents. Each plan contained essentially the same elements, but the overall focus, approaches, and goals of the plans were different.

The collaborative nature of Tourism Plan #1 imparted a sense of empowerment (*power to*) to participants. During the year of meetings, some participants left the planning process because of the demanding time commitment or growing perceptions that the plan was not supportive of cruise tourism or other forms of fast-growth tourism development. The Sitka Assembly exerted *power over* the adoption of the tourism plan, and commissioned a second plan that some believe was influenced by businesses and special interest groups in the community. Tourism Plan #2 participants were invited and obligated to participate, enabling the Assembly to adopt Tourism Plan #2 with little input from community members external to the process. Three of the five individuals we interviewed who participated in these community planning efforts commented that while Tourism Plan #2 was formally accepted and can be found on the city's website, few of the recommendations from the plan have been implemented.

The power of the Assembly in not accepting Tourism Plan #1 and replacing the plan (and most stakeholders) in a second planning process was viewed as a short-term defeat by some Plan #1 participants. This outcome discouraged some participants, causing them to become disinterested in participating in community-level engagement. For other participants the planning outcome was energizing, motivating them to become even more politically engaged. Some individuals continued to work to change the power structure in the community and advocate for many of the recommendations in Tourism Plan #1. This outcome has influenced subsequent municipal elections and has resulted in some newly elected leaders in the community. In the end (actually the beginning), Sitka citizens held the ultimate *power over* whether or not a public cruise dock was constructed. Twice they voted down bonds that would have publically financed a large cruise ship dock. Since this case study was completed, a privately funded dock, appropriate for cruise ship use, was constructed in an industrial park a short drive from downtown. Cruise passengers are transported by bus from the dock through a residential area to retail and cultural areas in the downtown Sitka.

Both tourism-planning processes described here allowed for citizen participation in community decision-making, revealing some of the advantages and disadvantages of such activity in a tourism-planning context. Many positive outcomes were associated with the first, collaborative tourism plan such as bi-directional education, gaining skills for an active citizenry, building trust, allaying anxiety or hostility, and building strategic alliances. The planning process for Tourism Plan #1 was time consuming, and when a second tourism plan was commissioned, many of those advantages quickly shifted to disadvantages. The Sitka Assembly feared a loss of control in the decision-making process after the first tourism-planning process went in what many perceived as an anti-growth direction. Many participants thought their input was pointless because their decisions were ignored, and the involvement of citizens in the first planning process backfired, creating hostility toward government.

Implications for tourism management and practice

For tourism plans drafted by volunteers, as many tourism plans are, something smaller in scope or having a shorter duration may have better success, support, and community engagement from start to finish. One of the major obstacles to collaborative planning is the time commitment it takes from all stakeholders to be successful. If communities attempt to undertake tourism planning with citizen involvement, the entity that commissions the plan must include stipulations for plan adoption and implementation in the community. While tourism planning for tourism planning's sake may have some short-term benefits for those involved, the ultimate goal of a tourism plan is to shape tourism in the community based on input from community stakeholders.

It is important to recognize that proposed development projects can motivate community-initiated planning activity. Tourism destinations need to anticipate potential changes that could result in a significant tourism development project (public or private) and assure that there is adequate consideration of the impacts of such developments on local quality of life and sense of community and ample time, money, and other resources for an adequate planning process. Planning exercises that consider these elements can ultimately create a sustainable tourism environment that promotes positive interactions between hosts and guests, creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the two.

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