



DESTINATION MODELS AND PROPERTY REGIMES

An Exploration

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Abstract: This paper suggests that property regimes determine destination structures; and compares—positioning them in an analytic framework—two destination models based on a different allocation of property rights. It then proposes a third model founded on an altogether different institutional regime, intellectual property, claiming that it could be considered superior to the previous two. In Creative Tourism Districts participation in tourism development is favoured and at the same time competition among a heterogeneous network of producers is prevented from become destructive of place and product. Though the various points of this argument are illustrated by means of real-world examples, this is a purely conceptual paper which inaugurates a research track on property rights and tourism development. **Keywords:** destinations, sustainable tourism, participation, competition, intellectual property. © 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

A large stream of the tourism development literature (Butler 1980; Haywood 1986; Ioannides 1992; Knowles and Curtis 1999; Priestley and Mundet 1998; and for a comprehensive collection of applications and variations of the original life cycle model, see Butler 2006) acknowledges that destinations undergo cyclical dynamics, determined by several factors such as variations in land use, property, and control, the nature and quality of the attractions, their degree of resiliency face to increasing visitor pressures, and the timing of tourism policy. Eventually, combinations of these factors may determine altogether different trajectories, and divergent models of tourism development,

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approximating a “spectrum” of situations rather than a deterministic and univocal cycle development, as in [Prideaux \(2000\)](#).

The main focus of the analysis of development scenarios has been on tourism marketing and destination planning ([Fayos-Solá 1996](#); [Weaver 2000](#)). Institutional and governance issues are singularly under-explored in the literature (a notable exception is in [Yüksel, Bramwell, and Yüksel 2005](#)). Questions as which kind of property regime supports different (and more or less desirable) development models are of utter relevance in an age of globalised tourism pressures, when the manoeuvre space of national and local governments to steer development is steadily tapered off.

This article inaugurates a research track that considers those issues as central. Its main claim is that the structure and development of destinations is to a large extent determined by property regulation regimes. In order to investigate how properly chosen property regulation may induce virtuous development trajectories, this article begins by describing two “extreme” destination models from the perspective of property regimes, and their market structure. These models are positioned within a two-dimensional analytic toolbox, which eventually permits to devise a development strategy based on *collective intellectual* property, and on their establishment, designing and monitoring as the way to achieve sustainable development.

This is a purely conceptual paper, proposing an analytic framework and discussing its value for tourism policy analysis. Though it contains many references to real cases, this is done to better illustrate specific points of our argument rather than to “demonstrate” the validity of the analytic tool, which instead stands on its capacity to link property regimes (and their modifications) with market structures.

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A Destination Spectrum Model

Tourism destinations may be structured according to organisational models which reflect local market conditions and ownership structures. We thus share [Prideaux's \(2000\)](#) argument that the market structures of destinations and their development trajectories are rather understood as a “spectrum”, and we claim that to a large extent these differences can be explained by property regimes and their management.

Two extreme models can be devised in this respect.

The first may be called the “5-star” model, standing for high-value, property-led development, mainly of the resort type, whose driving economic principle is the exploitation of economies of scope. According to this model, all the components of the tourist experience, from attractions and entertainment to accommodation and other services (wellness, golf, banking, transport, guides, etc.), are produced and consumed in a delimited or even fenced space, thus hindering competition from small local suppliers, and normally under a unified

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