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## Governance: Tourism



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Governance is a complex, multifaceted, multi-actor, multiscale, polysemic, and dialectical concept. It is a term that can be traced back to classical philosophical discussions about power, authority, public administration, and societal change (Dredge 2015).

From the social and political sciences perspective, governance can be defined as an open process of coordination, collaboration, and cooperation among diverse stakeholders that include the state (public sector), businesses (private sector), civil society, and nongovernment organizations (third sector) to achieve mutually beneficial goals (Ruhanen et al. 2010). A widely cited tourism governance definition is:

[A] practice of government that is measurable, that is aimed to effectively direct the tourism sectors at the different levels of government through forms of coordination, collaboration and/or cooperation that are efficient, transparent and subject to accountability, that help to achieve goals of collective interest shared by networks of actors involved in the sector, with the aim of developing solutions and opportunities through agreements based on the recognition of interdependencies and shared responsibilities. (Duran 2013: 14)

From this perspective, tourism governance emphasizes the participation of all stakeholders in a destination to achieve shared goals by more effective use of resources (tangible, intangible, human, etc.), ultimately fostering different forms of commitment, synergy, and collaboration, and promoting sustainability thereof (Pulido-Fernández and Pulido-Fernández 2019).

## Characteristics and Dimensions

Governance has three common characteristics: It is about steering and the rules of the game; it implies less government control and predictability, no self-evident leadership, and no given hierarchy; and it involves multiple stakeholders (Ruhanen et al. 2010). It is also commonly agreed that governance refers to how power and responsibilities are exercised (who governs), how decisions are made (how they govern), and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say (in whose interest is the act of governing) (Dredge 2015; Islam et al. 2018).

An analysis of published governance studies from the political science and corporate management literatures identified 40 separate dimensions of governance. The six most frequently identified variables were accountability, transparency, involvement, structure, effectiveness, and power (Ruhanen et al. 2010). Various principles necessary to measure good destination governance include participation, the rule of law,

transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision (Pulido-Fernández and Pulido-Fernández 2018). Furthermore, governance has progressively become an efficient tool toward sustainability.

A governance framework for sustainable tourism should be inclusive of different values and issues and encourage the participation of all interested individuals and organizations (Dredge 2015). The governance framework should also be consistent with the rule of law and transparent in the flow of information. Additionally, it should include mediation of different interests and power in decision-making, responsiveness to the widest range of interests, consensus building and the development of shared understandings and objectives, effective communication and problem solving, and efficient use of resources and accountability to the widest range of stakeholders.

## Typologies

Differences in governance arrangements may lead to differences in the effectiveness of stakeholder interactions and hence to differences in destination competitiveness. Governance is multi-dimensional as well as place and path contingent. Its mechanisms are not neutral and instead serve as paradigms, ideologies, and interests (Amore and Hall 2016). Therefore, governance should be evaluated based on the geographical context in which it is practiced. This may be the reason why scholars have deployed substantially diverse analytical methods for evaluating governance.

Using the notion of “policy as theory,” four governance types have been identified: hierarchies (steered by the public sector), markets (steered by the private sector and the markets), networks (dominated by various forms of public-private partnerships and associations), and communities (governance at the local level without government involvement) (Hall 2011). However, in practice, a range of factors complicate governance and reasons for its failure which include but is not limited to inefficiencies, market failures and

inadequacies, individual behaviors, ineffectiveness, bureaucratization, external events, secrecy, distorted communications, mistrust, betrayal, asymmetry, and codependency (Amore and Hall 2016).

Governance is an increasingly significant issue in destination research (Pulido-Fernández and Pulido-Fernández 2019). It has been sought as an efficient tool to mediate contemporary tourism-related social, economic, and environmental policy, problems at a time when the role of government has changed. This is critical in the current context of climate change emergency, growing decarbonization of human activity, widespread digitalization, the deepening of socio-spatial disparities and imbalances at different scales, and the global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Critical contexts are drivers that unveil new vulnerabilities in destinations, necessitating new governance mechanisms to increase their resilience. This situates research on governance within the core of debates on globalization effects and their limitations at different scales. It also connects governance research to current challenges identified by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## See Also

- ▶ [Destination](#)
- ▶ [Globalization](#)
- ▶ [Management](#)
- ▶ [Planning](#)
- ▶ [Policy and Policymaking](#)

## References

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