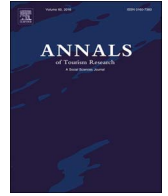


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## The temporal evolution of tourism institutions

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## ABSTRACT

A fuller understanding of tourism processes should include analysis of historical influences, legacies and the sequencing of change. The paper examines the temporal evolution of tourism institutions by employing historical institutionalist and cultural political economy approaches and a process tracing methodology. They are used to study two institutions involved in tourism and environmental management in a protected area. The assessment carefully explores the timing and sequencing of events and interconnections between processes over time. It demonstrates the value of the approaches and methodology, such as by suggesting that path dependence and path creation are not binary categories, but instead are reciprocally intertwined and co-constituting. Both material/social and ideational/discursive processes are also shown as significant for institutional temporal paths.

## Introduction

Tourism involves processes that evolve through continuities and changes over time. When tourism researchers describe tourism growth, decline or crisis, for example, this involves processes that take place over varying time frames. There are also temporal trends in the socio-economic, environmental and political contexts affecting tourism, and in tourism's impacts on them. If we freeze analysis at one moment in time there is a danger that tourism research could overlook or misunderstand these processes, which could lead to ineffective policies. To help avoid such issues, tourism research should consider historical trends in its processes and also examine the approaches and methods used to understand temporal change (Brouder, 2014; Shone, Simmons, & Dalziel, 2016).

This study explores the temporal evolution of tourism institutions. These are social structures that form as human interactions become habituated or reproduced over time (Berger & Luckman, 1991). They are “the rules, norms, and practices that organize and constitute social relations” (Fioretos, Falleti, & Sheingate, 2016, p. 7), and they help people to respond to collective problems (Steinmo, 2014). The paper's case study concerns two institutions involved in policymaking: a tourism-related partnership, and a policy forum involving the general public. While these were more formal institutions, with for instance written rules, they also involved informal rules, values and practices. Such institutions involve constraints and opportunities for political preferences and actions, and for the distribution of political power. They are a vital part of tourism as an activity and industry alongside, for example, tourists, experiences, representations and technologies. Although such institutions are usually conceived as relatively stable and recurring patterns of behaviour, they also tend continually to evolve.

The paper focuses on examining longitudinal trends over time for two case study tourism institutions, using approaches and methodology from the historical institutionalist research tradition. Historical institutionalism has deep political science roots, but by the 1990s it had become a significant academic approach (Fioretos et al., 2016). Fioretos et al. (2016, p. 3) observe that it “examines how temporal processes and events influence the origin and transformation of institutions that govern political and economic

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relations". It highlights the timing and sequencing of temporal processes and events associated with institutions (Thelen, 2002). When things happen, and the order in which different processes unfold, can be extremely important in establishing the validity of particular causal claims. The approach also seeks to appreciate the significance over time of contextual embeddedness and interconnections among processes (Suddaby, Foster, & Mills, 2014).

The paper, first, considers past research approaches to temporal trends in tourism institutions. It extends this work, second, by developing an historical institutionalist approach combining historical institutionalism with cultural political economy perspectives. More generally, there is also scope for ideas from the specific research tradition of historical institutionalism to be evaluated in more sustained depth in studies of tourism institutions. The approach sees path creation and path dependence as reciprocal and constitutive, and it also recognises the importance of both the material/social and ideational/discursive, and of their interconnections. Use is also made of a "process tracing" methodology. Third, this approach and methodology is used to assess temporal trends for the case of two institutions involved in managing tourism and environmental tensions within a UK protected area. The first of these institutions, the Stanage Steering Group, was a partnership organisation which reported to the second institution, the Stanage Forum, which involved members of the public and with which it was closely associated.

## Literature review and conceptual perspectives

Past approaches to research on temporal continuity and change in tourism institutions are considered next. This is followed by discussion of the two approaches to assessing such trends brought together in the present study: historical institutionalism and cultural political economy.

The most influential conceptual study of historical trends in tourism is Butler's (1980) destination life cycle model. It proposes that a graph of tourist numbers in a destination against time often evolves through a broadly S-shaped curve, which can be divided into different development stages. Many studies apply Butler's destination life cycle model as a framework to assist with explanations of the development trajectories of destinations (Zhong, Deng, & Xiang, 2008). This model has at times been combined with conceptual ideas about institutions. Ioannides (1992), for example, combines the model with an examination of relations between destination institutions and external tour operators (Rodríguez, Parra-López, & Yanes-Estévez, 2008), and Garay and Cànoves (2011) integrate it with regulation theory – a political economy perspective – to explain institutional interventions in destination development trends.

Some previous studies focus on examining temporal trends specifically for tourism institutions. They often draw on conceptual ideas from one of two distinct fields of academic study: either institutional studies, a broad research field that includes the more specific approach of historical institutionalism, or evolutionary economic geography (EEG). Several of these studies draw on concepts from the research tradition of institutionalism. Jamal and Getz (1995), for example, evaluate evolving institutional processes in different phases of tourism partnership working; Pavlovich (2003) examines evolving organisational networks in tourist destinations; and Wray (2009) considers institutional "issue lifecycles" affecting tourism policies.

A number of studies of the evolution of tourism institutions are informed by conceptual ideas from the EEG research literature. This literature examines the temporal and geographical evolution of economic activity, such as in industrial zones and regional economies (Martin, 2010). While most tourism studies drawing on EEG concepts focus on the evolution of destinations rather than institutions, a few do consider institutional development in destinations (Brouder & Fullerton, 2015). In one study applying EEG concepts to assess tourism institutions, Ma and Hassink (2014, p. 595) assert that "The evolution of tourism areas is a dynamic open path-dependent process by which tourism firms, products and institutions coevolve along unfolding trajectories". Halkier and Therkelsen (2013, p. 42) draw on EEG approaches to assess the evolving flexibility of institutions involved in coastal tourism. Gill and Williams (2014, p. 547; 2017; 2011) use EEG concepts to examine governance shifts in a mountain resort "from a growth-dependent model towards one grounded in principles of sustainability". Some studies of tourism institutions based on EEG approaches draw on concepts from the more specific historical institutionalist research tradition, but they can tend to be based on this tradition's coverage in the EEG literature, and there remains clear scope to examine historical institutionalist ideas in more sustained depth.

The present study of historical change in tourism institutions extends these past approaches through its in-depth, combined use of historical institutionalism and cultural political economy perspectives. These perspectives are now reviewed, including their key concepts used in the paper.

Historical institutionalism focuses on the historical processes involved in institutional creation, reproduction and change. Its historical reasoning emphasises timing and sequencing in the analysis of institutional and political processes, considering "the significance of an event or action in light of antecedent and subsequent developments" (Wadhvani & Bucheli, 2014, p. 9; Thelen, 2002). It also entails a complex understanding of time in which multiple temporal processes often operate together to influence an action at a particular moment in time. Thus, its "historical studies of institutions focus on *complex*, rather than *unitary* causality" (Suddaby et al., 2014, p. 104, emphasis in original; Fioretos et al., 2016). A hallmark of historical institutionalism is close proximity to each empirical case under investigation, but there is also scope for theorizing and knowledge accumulation across studies (Suddaby et al., 2014; Thelen, 2002). While historical institutionalist practitioners share a focus on temporal effects, they can hold differing views, such as about the degree of dynamism within institutions and the role of actors in institutional accounts.

Two prominent historical institutionalist concepts are used in the present study. The first concept, of "critical junctures", concerns periods – often rather short periods – of significant path-creating change that leave distinct historical legacies for organisations. While critical junctures involve path-creating openness, they subsequently tend to reproduce themselves, so that they mark the beginning of path-dependent processes (Collier & Collier, 1991). The second concept, of "path dependence", applies to periods when organisations experience a narrowing down of the scope for alternative actions, so that it becomes difficult to reverse the established direction for

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