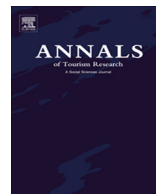




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Research Note

Leadership in destination management organisations

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Within a new funding and governance landscape, pooling knowledge and resources has become a fundamental prerequisite to ensuring the long-term sustainability of often financially-constrained Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). DMOs face challenges to deliver value to their destinations and member organisations (Beritelli & Laesser, 2014; Coles, Dinan, & Hutchison, 2014; Ness, Aarstad, Haugland, & Gr.nseth, 2014). Distributed Leadership (DL) is a recently adapted paradigm to gain momentum in the domain of DMOs and destinations as a promising response to these challenges (Hristov & Zehrer, 2015). Challenges serve as a wake-up call for practitioners to explore alternative governance models and rethink current approaches to strategic processes and practices in DMOs (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013). A number of recent academic contributions emphasise the importance of considering alternative approaches to destination governance (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013; Reinhold, Laesser, & Beritelli, 2015) and the opportunities provided by DL in particular (Hristov & Zehrer, 2015; Kennedy & Augustyn, 2014; Kozak, Volgger, & Pechlaner, 2014; Valente, Dredge, & Lohmann, 2015). Indeed, Valente et al. (2015) called upon surfacing the opportunities for embedding DL practice in destination governance structures, i.e. across lead destination organisations, such as DMOs.

This research note provides a response to the narrow research evidence into the leadership paradigm and its distributed dimension in the domain of DMOs and destinations (Benson & Blackman, 2011; Hristov & Zehrer, 2015). Despite some recent progress (see Kozak et al., 2014; Pechlaner, Kozak, & Volgger, 2014), no studies to date have investigated how such DL models are enacted and DL practice nurtured across DMOs undergoing change. Equally, evidence of conceptualising and thus enquiring into DMOs through the perspective of both DL and Social Network Analysis (SNA) in order to yield network data-driven DL insights is scarce (Benson & Blackman, 2011; Hristov & Zehrer, 2015; Pforr, 2006). The wider organisational leadership literature also called for further empirical evidence into how DL is enacted and practiced by a multitude of leaders (Cullen & Yammarino, 2014). The underpinning study investigates how DMOs and their network of member organisations collectively

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enact and practice DL following the organisational transformation of these DMOs as a response to the introduction of a new funding and governance landscape.

A case study approach is adopted, which unfolds the case of Milton Keynes—an emerging destination in England and its local destination management structure—Destination Milton Keynes (DMK) through an SNA investigation. Unlike established English destinations and their DMOs, DMK presents a case that is well placed to investigate the challenges and opportunities that less-prominent destinations and DMOs face within a new funding and governance landscape. In addition to adopting an SNA approach, the underpinned enquiry was guided by Hoppe and Reinelt's (2010) framework, which is a set of both generic and specific organisational network questions for evaluating leadership development initiatives in networks embedded in formal organisations. The chosen Type 2 network route of the framework provided a number of questions with focus on both network actors and network flows, which in turn informed the selection of a set of network measures and visualisation approaches (see Fig. 1).

Gephi SNA software package (see Cherven, 2015) was used to analyse both binary and valued organisational network data in line with the identified set of network measures and visualisation approaches on Fig. 1. Gephi has a number of network and actor-level functions that can be used to measure the structural and relational properties of networks (Cherven, 2015). The study also adopted a range of network layout algorithms within Gephi, which are used for transforming network data into readable and insightful network visualisations as the strength of SNA lies in network visualisations (Stienmetz & Fesenmaier, 2015).

Initial insights derived from the application of Hoppe and Reinelt's (2010) framework provided evidence that leadership can come from a collective of DMO member organisations and can also be embedded in sectoral and membership diversity (Fig. 2). Hence six types of leaders who have the

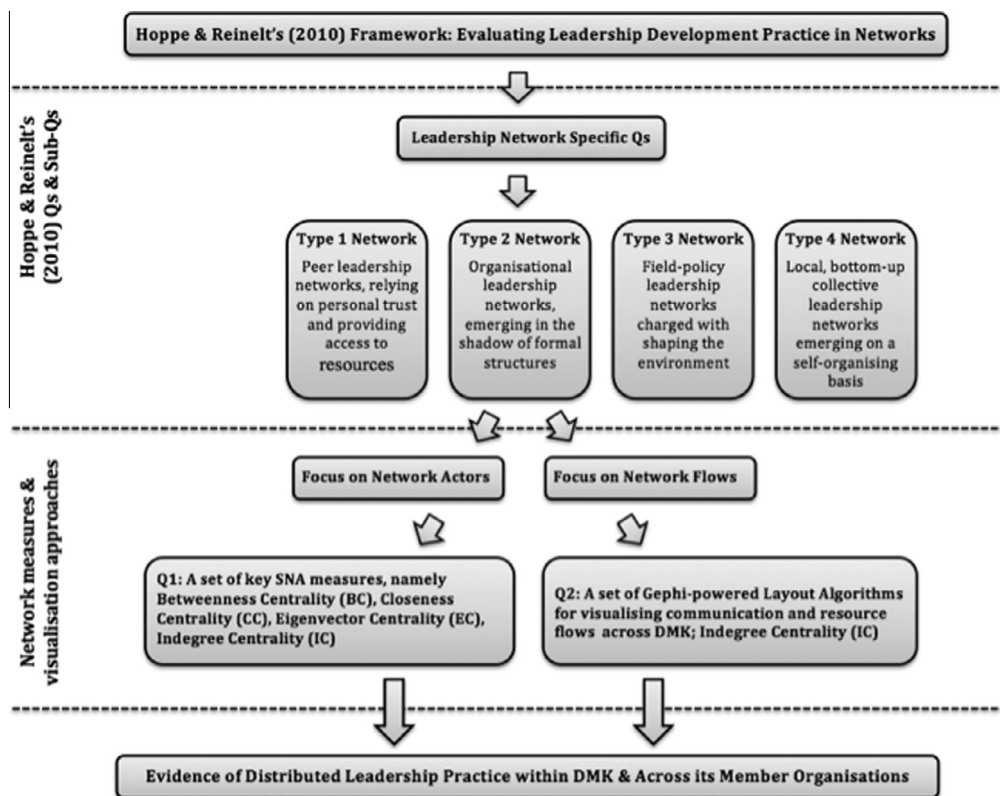


Fig. 1. Adapting and adopting Hoppe and Reinelt's (2010) Framework: The Route.

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