

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS AND TOURISM

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Introduction. Change is normal in politics as it is in tourism. Yet, historically, the relationship between politics and tourism has been a relatively small sub-field of the social science of tourism, even though there are an immense number of examples of the way that political change has affected the patterns, processes and directions of tourism development. In trying to draw the interconnections between political change and change in tourism this article will outline some of the elements of politics and public policy that are determinants or at least influences on tourism, as well as the interrelationships between them. It goes on to highlight the importance of temporality to understanding public policy change.

Political Concepts. Politics is concerned with both the exercise of power and influence in a society and in specific decisions over public policy. A common element in definitions is that 'public policies stem from governments or public authorities. A policy is deemed a public policy not by virtue of its impact on the public, but by virtue of its source' (Pal, 1992:3). Public policy is what officials within government decide to do or not to do about issues and problems that require government intervention. Government is a term that refers to the legitimate institutions and associated political processes through which public policy choices are made. Unfortunately, the language used to discuss public policy is often confusing. Policy is more than just a written document, although that may represent an important output of a decision and policy making process. Instead, public policy is an extremely broad concept that covers such matters as:

- the purpose of government action;
- the goals or ends that are to be achieved;
- the means to achieve goals, usually referred to as plans, proposals or strategies;
- the programs that are established to achieve goals, the decisions and actions that are taken with respect to policy, including implementation.

In addition, it is also important to differentiate between public policy outputs, which are the formal actions taken by government with respect to policy from public policy outcomes, what are the effects government policy outputs actually have. As a result public policy can be defined as 'a course of government action or inaction in response to public problems' (Kraft and Furlong, 2007: 5). The idea of inaction is a key concept in policy studies, for example, Dye (1992: 2) also defined public policy as 'whatever governments choose to do or not to do'. Such an approach is extremely significant as it is important to recognize that what government does not do is as important as understanding what it does do. Utilizing this approach Hall and Jenkins (1995) described tourism public policy as whatever governments choose to do or not to do with respect to tourism. Such state actions with respect to tourism are justified from a number of economic and political rationales including:

- improving economic competitiveness;
- amending property rights;

- enabling government decision makers to take account of economic, environmental and social externalities;
- providing widely available public benefits;
- reducing risk and uncertainty for investors;
- supporting projects with high capital costs and involving new technologies;
- encouraging social and economic development in marginal and peripheral areas;
- assisting specifically targeted and often marginal populations;
- educating and providing information.

Tourism policy is therefore a course of government action or inaction in specific relation to tourism. It is specific so as to differentiate tourism policy from other policy fields, such as environmental policy, transport policy, and international relations, which can have an enormous impact on tourism but are not developed as tourism policies.

Conclusion. This article has utilized an understanding of public policy theory to emphasize that change is actually the norm in politics and policy, including in tourism. While the focus is often on external events or shocks to the tourism policy system as a change factor, the reality is that the multi-layered levels of policy processes are probably more important to explaining change. This is especially the case given that tourism policy and politics is only a small subset of the wider field of political arenas and policy advocacy coalitions that will actually affect tourism. Moreover, many studies of change actually do not fully consider the way in which temporality will affect understandings of change not the importance of the selection of a theoretical framework, especially if it is implicit in policy structures. The changing interplay of tourism and politics and policy means that it is vital for students of tourism to understand the rules of the game by which they are played and how, even if the rules are different from one location to another, the game still goes on.

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