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Keeping people ‘in the tent’: governance in the New Zealand outdoor activity sector.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine governance in the New Zealand outdoor activity sector. We conducted thirty-five interviews with key personnel from organisations with responsibility for national co-ordination, education, and membership services. Using Bransden and Pestoff’s (2006) co-processes framework, we describe and analyse governance of the outdoor sector. In so doing, we provide insight into the challenges facing this complex sector with regard to funding and stakeholder relationships, programme delivery, and personality conflicts. We also contribute by highlighting some of the shortcomings of the co-processes model, and offer constructively critical insights for its development.

Keywords: Governance, New Zealand, co-processes; outdoor sector

Introduction

Since the 1970s, voluntary and community organisations have become central to ‘mixed economy welfare’ states’ delivery of government agendas, policies and programmes (Cairns, Harris, and Young, 2005). The relationships that have developed between government, voluntary and non-profit organisations over the last 40 years in many countries such as the UK and New Zealand (NZ) attest to this. In an environment of rapid change and more stringent accountability, governance has become a key interest for governmental, funding and non-profit agencies and also researchers. This is so much the case that some, such as Pollitt and Hupe (2011), have noted “it might be thought that everything that could be

said about [governance] has already been said” (p. 642). Davies (2007) has also noted that “[governance’s] popularity ... is in danger of increasing in inverse relation to its value as an analytical tool” (p. 48). In addition, Pollitt and Hupe (2011) have argued that the concepts of governance, networks, and accountability have taken on almost magical status in the non-profit arena. These concepts are reified and privileged within new public management and they “become the standard components of the public management vocabulary ... [facilitating] new orientations and frameworks” (Pollitt and Hupe, 2011, p. 652).

Despite the increased focus on governance by various stakeholders and researchers and the associated ‘governance fatigue’, others such as Farazmand (2009) suggest that researchers do not understand enough about non-profit governance. Indeed there is an argument that research has focused too much on the development of prescriptive models, rather than recognising the complexities of governance and the realities faced by non-profit organisations. Farazmand (2009) claims that “traditional models of governance and public administration are no match for the challenges of this ... environment” (p. 1007). Researchers still struggle to provide frameworks that illuminate the slippery and at times conflicting governance realities that are faced by non-profit organisations. These realities may be particularly evident when the organisations in question have either little experience of, or little opportunity to develop, governance both at a board and sector level, or they have governance structures that are in a state of flux, or both (Farazmand, 2009). Yet it is arguably these types of organisations that could benefit most from analysis that outlines new governance approaches. Examining the experiences of such organisations might also provide new insight into governance itself, for, as Davies (2007) noted, “theory-building now needs to make a more decisive move away from official rhetoric and to be based on closer examination of specific cases” (p. 47).

Supporting both Davies (2007) and Farazmand (2009), we argue that examining a specific group of organisations and the governance challenges that face them will provide insight into current governance practices and offer alternatives that may differ from common governance forms, or what are considered ‘ideal’ types of governance. One group of non-profit organisations that is actively engaging with questions of governance at both the organisational and sector level is the outdoor organisations of NZ. This is a complex and varied group of organisations, which do not fit easily into common governance frameworks, as this paper illustrates. What follows is an analysis of sector governance in the outdoor activity sector of NZ.

Situating the study: New Zealand Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor activity may be understood as the use of the outdoors for recreational, youth development, and educational purposes. Organised outdoor activity has been a feature of NZ life since the late 1800s (Olssen, 1995). There is currently both commercial and non-profit provision of outdoor activity but this research focuses exclusively on governance within the non-profit domain. Outdoor activity is organised by a complex array of participation clubs (e.g. tramping/hiking clubs); safety organisations; educational organisations; and qualifications providers. There are two umbrella organisations that advocate to government on behalf of other organisations in the sector: Outdoors New Zealand (ONZ) and the New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA). The sector is also exposed to the same constraints and requirements as other non-profit providers, due in part to an increasingly complex legislative environment where training, qualifications and accreditation are now seen as prerequisites to the delivery of outdoor activities.

The NZ government extends significant influence over sport and recreation through funding¹ and providing direction on considerations such as governance (Tennant, O'Brien, and Sanders, 2008). Outdoor recreation's value to the government as a social good is illustrated further by Sport NZ's commitment to "increase the number of people who participate in outdoor recreation activities through ... supporting the outdoor recreation sector's ability to react to changing participant needs" (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009, p. 5). One area through which this support will occur is "governance and leadership" (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009, p. 5) and its effects spread to outdoor education and youth development organisations because they articulate into the sector with outdoor recreation organisations.

Like other non-profit organisations, those in the outdoor activity sector have a "constantly evolving and changing" relationships with government agencies (O'Brien, Sanders, and Tennant, 2009, p. 4). According to Sport NZ, "of particular concern is the lack of strategic direction and leadership... conflict and duplication of effort among sector groups ... contribut[ing] to the sector's limited ability to effectively advocate for outdoor recreation within government and ... has resulted in uncoordinated sector funding and inefficiencies in investment" (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2008, p. 4-5). Within this context, Sport NZ has indicated a desire for organisational and sector-wide governance to be developed, and there is also a recognition by organisational decision makers that there is a need for some coherency and consistency in governance. Outdoors NZ, for example, has a commitment to a sector in which there is strong organisational governance as well as sector governance and vision (Outdoors New Zealand, 2012). How sector-wide governance might play out is, however, a contested question, given the sector's disparate history. Outdoor organisations

¹ Funding of over \$1m per year is provided by Sport New Zealand (Sport NZ) to outdoor recreation organisations. Prior to 2012 this organization was known as Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). References prior to 2012 will refer to SPARC.

have come into existence in NZ in response to changing participation patterns and the needs of the sector, for example, access to the outdoors or qualifications. As such, each organisation developed its own governance and membership structures consistent with its mandate. There is also a history of individuals being members of boards of more than one outdoor organisation simultaneously. This history is evidenced through the complex inter-relationships that exist between many of the organisations in this study.

The purpose of this research is to examine sector governance within the NZ outdoor activity sector. In order to achieve this purpose we present the following research questions:

1. How do organisational members understand inter-organisational relationships in the delivery of outdoor activity in NZ?
2. In what ways has sector governance been pursued by sector organisation members?
3. What constrains and what permits sector governance in the outdoor activity sector?

By addressing these questions, we hope to contribute to research on two fronts. First, we examine the hitherto unexamined governance activities and relationships of the outdoor activity sector. Second, we contribute to governance theory building by analysing the strengths and limitations of the co-processes framework based on our findings with this group of organisations. With this approach, we address Davies' (2007) call for theory generation.

Situating the study: contextual research

We concur with Davies (2007) who indicates the potential for researchers to learn about multiple governance approaches. She contends that governance research of this type provides a framework for different levels of analysis “releas[ing] us from the straightjacket of conventional disciplinary categories” (p. 49). She also argues that governance addresses relationships between the state and organisations, allowing for a focus on power relations. Finally, and perhaps most pertinently for this study given the changes sought by the outdoor

sector, focusing on governance allows discussion to move away from organisational efficiencies towards processes, “outcomes, and alternative futures” (Davies, 2007 42, p. 49).

Conceptual framework

In an attempt to provide a broad but encompassing framework to analyse governance experiences across NZ outdoor organisations, we turn to Bransden and Pestoff’s (2006) framework to define various levels of sector governance: co-governance; co-management; and co-production. While Bransden and Pestoff (2006) refer to this framework collectively as ‘co-production’ we refer to it as ‘co-processes’ to avoid confusion between the collective label and the single element of ‘co-production’. The framework is useful for this research because it allows an examination of inter-organisational relationships at the governance level without prescribing how those relationships should work. Consequently, it encourages an understanding of governance that is more nuanced than prescriptive models but provides some architecture upon which to build ideas about governance. By adopting it, we are able to address our three research questions highlighted above by examining governance structures, and key individuals’ interpretations of those structures.

Co-governance

Co-governance is an arrangement in which non-profit organisations participate in planning and delivery of public services. Alongside government agencies, the non-profit sector plans policy and development strategies. As outdoor activity is deemed to be a social good by the NZ government because of its “contribution to New Zealanders’ quality of life” (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009, p.4), co-governance may go some way to describing the relationship between the NZ government, in the form of Sport NZ, and the outdoor organisations. At face value, this description of the relationship between the non-profit sector and government seems to be inclusive and beneficial to both parties: government is able to influence governance of the non-profit sector at ‘arm’s length’ and the non-profit

sector is able to “self-steer” (Groeneveld, 2009, p. 425). There are, however, political and cultural considerations pertinent to the development of co-governance that Bransden and Pestoff (2006) do not fully explore, as we now discuss.

First, contemporary co-governance is situated firmly within the contract driven, competitive environment of neo-liberalism (Bode, 2006). In NZ, along with other Western economies (Cribb, 2006), agencies develop funding processes that mimic market requirements regarding ‘investment’ and ‘contracting’. Through such mechanisms, governance becomes a way to manage a funding relationship whereby the funder requires accountability through areas such as Board management, stakeholder relationships, and wider sector mission statements (Eagles, 2009). This scenario has ensured that despite the desire of governments to develop social services, in our case outdoor activity delivery, alongside seemingly autonomous organisations, development is consistently skewed by the requirements of neo-liberal, semi-market provision (Evans, Richmond, and Shields, 2005). This can impact on the quality of programme delivery. For example, in her discussion of football development in Europe through the co-processes lens, Groeneveld (2009) explained that football organisations engaged in sport as a social development tool may be reluctant to engage with the co-governance approach as it means working alongside the bureaucratic machinery of the European Union. While outdoor organisations in NZ are a considerable organisational, geographical, political, and financial distance from the European Union, identifying whether and how co-governance exists in the outdoor activity sector will enable us to identify opportunities for co-governance relationships between the state, in this case represented by Sport NZ, and the organisations involved.

Finally, the development of co-governance has led to the evolution and emergence of dominant organisations within the co-governance conversation. In the UK for example, Martin (2011) has described how the MacMillan Cancer Support trust has embraced its co-

governance role in negotiations with the National Health Service with regards to the provision of cancer treatment and palliative care. Within this relationship, MacMillan saw its role as “steering” (Martin, 2011, p. 918) rather than directing other stakeholders such as the NHS and service providers. By using groups such as the National User Reference Group (NURG), MacMillan was able to facilitate discussion between doctors, palliative care providers, and other stakeholders. At the same time, however, MacMillan was very clear about the need to be seen to ‘do’ participant discussion in these situations and was quite explicit to stakeholders about their roles in a user engagement scheme in order to manipulate and strategise with the NHS. On one level, this model reflects strong leadership by MacMillan, however, at another level, it raises questions about those organisations and individuals who were not included in the discussions for various reasons, and the potential for avenues to be opened up through which they could contribute (Martin, 2011). Political mechanics need to be carefully thought through, therefore, when analysing co-governance. Given the varied political nature of the outdoor organisations in NZ, the development of dominant organisations could be seen as a deterrent to organisational sector governance.

Co-management

The second co-process, co-management, is closely related to co-governance. In this element of the co-processes network, non-profit organisations focus on programme delivery. Some researchers, such as Martin (2011), have argued that co-management more accurately reflects the realities of the relationships between the state and non-profit organisations. This is because the mechanics of neo-liberalism limit the amount of true governance negotiation that non-profit organisations can have with government and the provision of government-driven programmes is a more realistic role (Groeneveld, 2009). Bransden and van Hout (2006) argue that once the façade of co-governance is lifted and co-management is examined, we are able to get a much better picture of how organisations work alongside each other in

the delivery of social services. They argue that differentiation and integration are key to co-management, allowing for difference in skills and expertise, while looking for overlap in provision (Brandsen and Van Hout, 2006).

Co-management relies on good communication between the organisations involved. One of the ironies of the neo-liberal environment is that while the State has entered into more horizontal service networks, which implies an improvement in dialogue and communication, the competitive tendering or contract processes that underpin neo-liberalism have worked to encourage secrecy and ‘turf protection’ (Brandsen and Van Hout, 2006). Consequently, a balance between integration and differentiation of services has been problematic to develop (Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006). So, rather than focus on sector-wide issues such as the development of safety in the outdoors, organisational decision makers may feel pressure to develop ‘their’ organisation’s safety certification to ensure legitimacy within the sector. Equally, funding regimes encourage the development of niche organisations through mission statements and value propositions. While this may encourage differentiation, it does very little to foster integration.

Critically, Brandsen and van Hout (2006) outline the need for trust and communication within co-management relationships. Shaw and Allen (2006) have also highlighted the importance of trust in such non-profit funding and provision relationships. The co-management element of the co-processes approach appears to be somewhat contradictory: with organisations in competition to deliver, there is a lack of trust, yet trust and integration seem to be central to its success. Recognising and examining such complexities allow us to examine intricate co-management relationships, and will assist in our analysis of the governance of outdoor activity in NZ.

Co-production

The final element of co-process is co-production, in which individuals work within the frameworks of co-management and co-governance to deliver services. This element is important because it recognises individual work, an area that is often over-looked in non-profit research where interactions between organisations are often privileged (Oakes and Young, 2008). This element also allows for the framing and analysis of inter-personal relationships. For example, Groeneveld (2009) outlined the importance of volunteers in sport development in Europe. Similarly volunteers and volunteer groups are a key feature of outdoor activity in NZ. There are some very strong personalities in the NZ outdoor activity sector, and this factor has historically led to turf-protection, faction development, and overlap in provision (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009). Alongside this, focus at the individual level allows an exploration of trust and communication, which are important factors of co-management (Martin, 2011). As Shaw and Allen (2006) have argued, trust and communication can be best examined by understanding inter-personal relationships, and the co-production framework will enable us to do this.

Within this conceptual framework, we examine governance relationships in the provision of outdoor activity in NZ. Recognising our critical stance, we utilise Bransden and Pestoff's framework to address our two main research purposes: first to analyse sector governance in outdoor activity organisations using the co-process model and second, by contributing to the development of this model with our critical consideration of it in the light of empirical evidence.

Methods

The participant organisations were selected in conjunction with Sport NZ, the project's funder. Twelve organisations were identified and the key personnel who were invited to

interview all agreed. The organisations were selected from across the breadth of the outdoor activity sector and represent the three main sector mandates. The first five organisations have a mandate to support other organisations to provide high quality outdoor experiences, providing, for example, advice on safety or advocacy on access to land for outdoor activities. These five national co-ordination organisations were given the pseudonym NC1-5. The second group of organisations were educationally focused, supporting the sector nationally through advocacy and delivery of educational or training programmes. These three organisations are represented in the findings as NE 1-3. The final group focused on their immediate members or clients (e.g. advocating for youth). These organisations have an internal focus, whereas the organisations in the other two categories have a distinctive external focus. There were four such internally-focused organisations, referred to in the results and discussion as M 1-4.

Interviews

Interviews were chosen for data collection as they enabled gathering of in-depth information regarding respondents' views on governance. The Chair (or equivalent)², a new board member and the CEO (or equivalent) in each of the organisations was interviewed, with one exception. One organisation had no equivalent CEO position, so only two interviews were conducted. The rationale for interviewing people in these three positions was to gain a range of perspectives on governance in each organisation. The Chair and the CEO in any organisation have key roles to play in governance and in setting and implementing

² Throughout the research we refer to Chair and CEO even though in some of the organisations in this study these roles have different titles. We have chosen to do this to reduce confusion and to make some individuals less identifiable, though we do recognise the difference in title may represent some differences in scope of responsibility.

strategic directions for an organisation. The new board member was interviewed in order to gain insight into her or his experiences of governance through relatively fresh eyes.

Interviews provided us with the opportunity to investigate governance relationships in some detail with the participants. Individual semi-structured, open ended interviews ensured that participants were able to talk about their perspectives on governance. In order to provide context, respondents were asked about their organisation's governance processes and structure. They were then asked about their interactions with external stakeholders within their governance framework. Finally, they were asked to describe an 'ideal' co-governance scenario in outdoor recreation in NZ. This approach allowed us to ask specific questions but also enabled the participants to talk more openly about how they would like to see governance operating in their organisation and across the sector.

Thirty-two interviews took place in person. Conducting in person interviews was preferable as it allowed rapport to develop with the participant. An additional three were conducted by phone or skype when time or logistical constraints did not allow for in-person interviews. These interviews lasted a similar length of time to the in-person interviews. We felt that a similar quality of data was achieved through both in-person and telephone/skype interviews. The interviews took place between 20 June and 10 October 2011. They varied in length from 35 minutes to one hour 30 minutes, were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. The transcripts were read by all three researchers. The interview data were supplemented with document analysis of publically available documents (constitutions, most recent annual reports, websites) for each organisation. Ethical approval was obtained from the lead author's home institution.

Data analysis

The data were analysed using both axial and open coding methods (Saldaña, 2013). Initially, the transcripts were read through thoroughly by each of the researchers, looking for evidence of the co-process outlined by Bransdon and Pestoff (2006). As we read the data, it became clear that there were sub-themes within each of the co-processes. Within co-governance (that is, the potential for organisations to work with and plan with the government), the sub-themes included stakeholder development and governance relationships with Sport NZ. Within co-management, the sub-theme was the management of relationships with Sport NZ. Finally, within co-production, the role of individuals in organizational service provision revealed some of the personality politics that characterise the sector. As these themes emerged through our open coding, we developed axial coding, in which we sought to develop those themes to express the nuances evident in our co-processes framework. We realize that there is overlap between these themes but we present them as discrete for clarity.

Results and discussion

In this section, we present each of the co-processes with their sub-themes. We discuss our findings in relation to the co-process research. We follow this section by outlining how our research extends the co-processes theoretical framework.

Co-governance

Co-governance is the potential for organisations to work alongside the government to govern the sector and deliver services. The various organisations have to work together because there is no single outdoor activity organisation that is set up to provide all aspects of the services government requires. This means that they must have good relationships with

one another. We explore these stakeholder relationships first, then turn to the relationships organisations have with government.

Stakeholder relationships

Interviewees highlighted the importance of stakeholder relationships in order to achieve organisational and sector outcomes. The Chair of NC1 noted “it’s really important to keep them [other national organisations] on side. If we ever just go along [to Government] as [ourselves], we just get shown the door. If we have those other organisations behind us, we actually get in the door and that make[s] quite a difference.” The organisation’s CEO extended this description by noting how all organisations were important to NC1, “I think our key stakeholders are actually the ones that provide outdoor participation ... I don’t want to toss the other people to the side who still want to be [in] and [I want] to keep everyone in the tent.”

The Chair of NE1 noted the importance of collaboration and developing relationships to ensure that there was support for the national co-ordination organisations. He suggested that “if [NC1] were to fall over next week and we need an umbrella organisation [to represent the sector] that would be us.” He also recognised the importance of having relationships to avoid duplication in the provision of services because “the sector is not big enough to duplicate things. Everyone’s funding is tenuous and it is all relying on community money from somewhere.”

There was clearly a desire for the national co-ordination organisations to have a communally driven approach to governance within the outdoor sector in NZ. As with Martin’s (2011) research, the organisational representatives here realised that pressure or advocacy towards government could only be achieved as a group. They also realised that duplication was not palatable within a small economy like NZ’s, and that role clarity was required. The lack of explicit guidance by the NC organisations on how inclusive

organisational relationships might be organised contrasts with Martin's work. The apparent lack of direct leadership by NC1 may also be indicative of the delicate sensibilities of the sector in which the organisations operate. As we will show below, organisational relationships can be fragile. In keeping with Davies (2007), we suggest that NC1's less direct approach reflected an acute understanding of the local environment that would not sustain a more direct, hands on approach from that organisation. It does, however, leave room for other organisations to stake their claim as alternative sector leaders.

While there were some strong relationships between the organisations which could produce a united voice for the sector in conversation with Sport NZ, there was also some concern about the possibility of joining forces. The board member for NE1 highlighted a commonly expressed view that some key personnel were in the habit of thinking their own organisation was leading by example and other organisations in the sector had to change to follow that lead. She said:

it's a long journey ... I think one of the risks I see in [NE1], we held [our plan up] as the holy grail, and most people won't even understand what you are talking about on the first go. And you know,[it] is quite hard stuff to get your head round. So you actually in some respects you almost need to keep that in your back pocket, and work out a different way of having the conversation with people.

Alongside this somewhat insular approach were historical disagreements between organisations, which limited their ability to find common ground to negotiate with Sport NZ. The Chair of NE 3 noted that his organisation's long term relationship with NE1 was "scratchy". When describing an attempt to develop a joint qualification scheme, he noted how

NE1 came along...took all our written stuff...and went off and said, we're outta here. So the whole thing fell apart.

He recognised that this difficult relationship was partly due to individuals, but also due to the organisations being pitted against each other to provide qualification advice for different, yet overlapping, audiences.

Given the delicate and complex power relations (Davies, 2007) that are inherent within the sector, it is hard to see how the required coherency across the sector could be achieved to enable a united front for co-governance. It does, however, provide an interesting background to the sector's relationship with Sport New Zealand.

Relationship with Sport NZ.

In order to be in a state of co-governance, the sector organisations need to have a strong, mutually respectful relationship with their funding stakeholder, Sport NZ. A number of the national co-ordination organisations described their relationship with Sport NZ as 'close'. A Board member of NC3 noted how influential Sport NZ could be if that organisation were to endorse NC3 as "an umbrella organisation catering to the needs of different members and stake holders who have an interest in [outdoor] safety education" This comment indicates that Sport NZ has the potential to use its endorsement to encourage a more cohesive sector. The Chair of NC3 stated that

Organisations like Sport NZ, they can establish models of good governance and I think in doing that they do actually provide a valuable contribution to the sector.

The Chair of NC 1 reinforced this view, stating his vision based on an overseas example. He said.

In Finland, you've got an organisation that is a subcommittee of something like Sport NZ. It would be a small organisation of probably a Board of 7, 8 people who are elected in some way to represent the sector. There'd be a number of sub-committees who look at specific projects that are required and there'd be a CE and

a small secretariat of maybe 2 or 3 staff, someone to do communications, someone to do the administration, someone to run it, nothing else.

For a number of the organisations, there was a clear need for the relationship with Sport NZ, and they saw it as mutually beneficial. A key point here, however, is that the respondents were all speaking about their organisations in isolation, not relationships across a united sector. This is a feature of neo-liberal influenced funding agreements; isolation and differentiation lead to an inward organisational focus rather than a wider sector view. This is reflected in the attitude described by NE1 above, in which respondents were quick to present their own organisation's perspective but had a very limited sense of sector, in governance terms.

This organisation focus indicated the level of fragmentation in the system. For some, fragmentation is compounded by the relationship with Sport NZ, which represented a clash in sector governance philosophies. NC2's Chair noted

You know our governance of our management of, and delivery of, sport and recreation in NZ is basically rooted in the 1960s. Sport NZ's still supporting structures that are about fifty years out of date. We've taken that model and we've retained it through to 2011.

The same interviewee went on to note that the nature of the sector makes change difficult:

[We] will try to build a, a professional management and a professional participation layer [Having] paid staff ... based on a structure that [is] essentially voluntary, it just doesn't happen.

The board member from NC3 illustrated how the relationship with Sport NZ needs to be improved. During decision making about a safety qualification, a representative from Sport NZ had placed ownership of that qualification with another organisation, whose remit was elite performance. The board member continued

[we said] oh my God what on earth are you talking about? It caused a lot of angst. And someone within Sport NZ who has a really good idea of the sector, at the last moment said look, hang on... The relationship with Sport NZ needs to be improved, it needs absolute clarity and each side needs to know what it gets.

This contested relationship with Sport NZ highlights many of the difficulties in any claims to co-governance within the outdoor sector. There was a strong feeling of being 'owned' by Sport NZ, which did not allow for a frank exchange of ideas between Sport NZ and the national co-ordination organisations in particular.

On a more positive note, the Chair of N2, indicated that Sport NZ had a powerful means of encouraging sector collaboration:

[Sport NZ] has asked that people getting funds collaborate. So they want to see instances of that, they want to have concrete examples of that which is useful, sometimes its pushing people together that maybe are uncomfortable bed fellows, but I think it makes people look more closely at how they can collaborate.

Overall, it appears that there is limited evidence of co-governance between Sport NZ and the outdoor activity sector. Exploring co-governance has allowed us to do two things, however. The first is to address the first of our research questions: outdoor sector organisation members do consider sector coordination but are somewhat wary of it. We argue that while sector governance was appealing to all the organisations concerned, there was a lack of understanding of it which undermined any drive towards it. Moreover, given the environment in which the organisations operated, differentiation was much more evident than integration across the sector (Evans, et al., 2005).

Co-management

While there was little evidence of co-governance, we found more to support co-management, or the contracting of work in the sector. As indicated in the above discussion, Sport NZ was seen by the respondents as setting the agenda for outdoor activities, rather than a true co-governance relationship. This perspective supports our claim for describing this relationship as co-management. For some respondents, even more clarity on this relationship would be welcome. The Chair of NC 4, for example, thought “the best mechanism for Sport NZ might be direct, if they wanna purchase the outcomes ... I think it would be more effective to have the money as close to the activity as possible”. This statement suggests that a more direct and open contracting relationship might provide clarity without the façade of consultation (Bransden and Van Hout, 2006). Further, when his organisation had not achieved its funded mandate, the NC 4 Chair understood Sport NZ’s decision to “pull our funding ... I don’t want this to be seen as sour grapes 'cause you know if I was a bureaucrat at Sport NZ, I would’ve pulled our funding too”. Another example was provided by the Chair of NC1, who noted “Sport NZ told us quite clearly when they gave us [funding] that they wanted to see clear progress towards sustainability and we’ve done nothing towards that, in fact we’ve gone backwards, significantly backwards in that area.”

These comments provide a clear example of co-management, in which a government funding agency sets a delivery agenda which is then implemented by various non-profit organisations. Organisational direction is set by funding requirements; that is, a provider only receives funding if they are committed to, and deliver on, the funder’s requirements. As Groenveld (2009) suggests, this simplifies the relationship between funder and recipients considerably, as the funder takes the majority of responsibility for the strategic direction. While this may be palatable for some respondents (e.g. the Chair of NC 4), others feel constrained by this approach, leading to turf protection, which we address below.

For others, however, a tight contractual relationship was problematic. Exclusion and inclusion were a particular problem for the NE 2 board member, who described how she thought her organisation was outside of Sport NZ's inner circle, despite its national responsibilities.

Sport NZ has a major role in funding and that is probably a point of tension in some ways because, there is a sense that some of [the organisations] are more in the [Sport NZ's] palm. [We don't] have a bloke ... that can have coffees in Wellington [the nation's capital and location of Sport NZ offices] on a weekly and fortnightly basis, you know.

This respondent noted how co-management can lead to exclusion. In part, exclusion is created because co-management encourages organisations to differentiate in order to access funding, and differentiation will lead to inclusion and exclusion as governments focus on one area over another (e.g safety, qualifications, participation, education, training). By contrast, differentiation had the unintended consequence of leading to duplication during a long running feud between two national education organisations. NE1 Chair described this:

NE3 have received some Sport NZ funding for some of their leader development training and stuff like that, which we probably felt was a little mis-directed because they got the money and then didn't really know how to spend it so they probably set up parallel structures

In other words, by setting up a contractual, competitive environment to achieve certain outcomes, in this case leadership qualifications, Sport NZ have arguably, and probably inadvertently, caused an inefficient duplication and contributed to the complexity of sector governance (Bransden and Van Hout, 2006).

A key to co-management is the relationship between the funder and the recipients. Trust and good communication is required. According to the NC 1's Chair, this was in short supply

with Sport NZ. He argued that Sport NZ's funding policy created difficulties for the co-ordination organisations to develop their own agendas and strong leadership in the sector:

We can never say anything against [Sport NZ], that's in the contract ...

If we are critical of Sport NZ, they cut our funding, they've told us that directly ... we're constantly working through hoops that are not really always our hoops.

More forcefully still, the CEO of NE1 argued that the direction of Sport NZ's funding was wrong and needed to move away from operational matters towards governance development:

[Sport NZ shouldn't be] involved in whether I've got good financial systems ... [it should] make sure I've got a good senior management team [and] a good CEO-Chair relationship. Sport NZ [needs to] start hosting some forums where you bring us together. Sport NZ [has] an [outdoor recreation] strategy, get on and deliver it.

Neither respondent trusted Sport NZ's direction in co-management. A lack of trust is contrary to the development of strong funding relationship development (Shaw and Allen, 2006) and the subsequent delivery of policies and programmes. This was a particular frustration for these two respondents because they represented national organisations who were expected to take a lead on sector development overall. The respondents were somewhat impeded by Sport NZ's focus on operational rather than strategic matters. Supporting Martin (2011) and Groenveld (2009) this enables us to illustrate the funding environment of the sector, and show how sector-wide governance was executed.

Revealing these frustrations illustrates the complexity of the funding relationship and sector governance in the NZ outdoor sector. The outdoor organisations were autonomous with regard to organisational structure, programme development and services to members. However, they were strongly influenced by Sport NZ's strategic direction (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2009). This finding is typical of neo-liberal influenced

‘contracting’ of public services, in which the state is supposed to be at arm’s length but in reality exerts influence through agenda setting and financial influence (Harvey, 2005).

Highlighting this aspect of co-management allows us to examine the relationship between the organisations and Sport NZ in some depth. This analysis exposes the frustration felt by the decision makers in this research, some of whom were quite willing to work through forums with Sport NZ but felt stonewalled by that organisation’s perceived inability to communicate and face constructive criticism. This finding outlines the importance of good communication between such organisations, and reinforces Shaw and Allen’s (2006) call for trust and communication in non-profit relationships. In producing a guiding document, Sport NZ indicated its commitment to outdoor development, and there would have doubtless been frustration on the part of Sport NZ at the seeming lack of engagement with it by the outdoor organisations in this study.

Co-production

The final co-process is co-production, or the role of individuals in the sector provision and governance. In this research, the role of individuals was most strongly evidenced by personality politics, which had considerable impact on organisational and sector development. For example, the Chair of NC1 described how the first CEO he worked with had directed the Board away from dealing with problematic finances. Consequently “the very first Board meeting we came to, [we] had a massive ding-dong about finances and she admitted [the organisation] was seriously in the red and I then ended up taking on the portfolio of restructuring the organisation and acted in a pro-bono role of CE for the period of 5 months.” He further noted the importance of having strong individuals on Boards who were willing to do the work required. He described a new board member

she's fantastic, very bright young woman, wants to get involved. I would say within 3 months she was up to her eyeballs in sorting out issues for us ... we've had Boards in the past where we've had people come and they do nothing ... and we've had other people on the Board who come along and use the information they've taken from the Board to further their own organisation.

As Oakes and Young (2008) have noted, individual perspectives are often overlooked in non-profit research, with a more common focus on organisational decision making. The co-production element of the co-processes model allows us to examine individuals' input into the governance development process. In particular, with a view to our focus on sector governance, it enables us to see how individuals can influence organisations in the short and long terms, which may then ensure organisations follow certain routes. NC1's example shows how important the relationship between a CEO and the Board is: in that case, the Board's attention was directed towards fixing a financial problem. In so doing, its focus was on operational rather than strategic matters. Such examples were common within our research. It also shows how the Chair, stepping in to take control, illustrated dominant 'heroic leadership' characteristics (Eicher, 1997). While this may have been necessary to avoid an immediate financial crisis, it also ensured that control and direction of that organisation was largely held by one person. As Martin (2011) has argued, such strong individual personalities can lead to long term changes to an organisation's governance and place within the sector that may not reflect the organisation's mission.

In NC1's case, however, it appears that the Board was strong enough to mitigate such a change in direction, as it was populated with competent individuals who were committed to the organisation's direction. This finding indicates the importance of board recruitment and retention policies, which are important within the context of sector governance: that is, having the right people on boards ensured that organisations would stay on mission for the

sector. This finding supports Shaw and Allen's (2006) research in which the importance of individual input was highlighted. Similarly to that research, however, we question the ability of organisations to continue to have strong board candidates at a time when such volunteering is on the wane. There was also little evidence of succession planning or planned professional development for board members amongst many of the organisations within this study.

Other perspectives were voiced about the importance of individuals driving change within the sector. The CEO of NC 3 described how, when there was poor communication regarding accidents and subsequent safety reviews from the various organisations involved in safety, it was not until he "whacked the table" to find out about a number of accidents that some information started to flow so that the organisation could begin a review. He felt that, without personally addressing this problem, his organisation could not do its job.

This is an example of where the sector environment of organisational differentiation makes integration very difficult. NC3's CEO had to ask for information regarding an accident that affected his organisation from safety organisations. In many ways, the communication difficulties are compounded by the neo-liberal influenced environment, which ensures that the organisations are in a state of both co-operation (to deliver services) and competition (for funding and credibility) (Evans et al., 2005; Pollit and Hupe, 2011). When these states intersect, there is a lack of communication because on the one hand there is a desire to co-operate but on the other, a perceived need to withhold or protect information. This is one of the "awkward trade-offs" (Pollitt and Hupe, 2011, p. 110) in which an organisation that is pursuing its mission to the best of its ability does not interact with another that should also be involved in the situation. Frustration for individuals concerned is a likely consequence, leading to 'table whacking'. This situation could easily be dismissed as a need for about 'better communication' between individuals. However, the individuals cannot be solely held to account when they are operating in such a contested environment.

While strong individual leadership could achieve some positive outcomes, a board member from NE3 described its less positive outcomes. She illustrated how the CEO is “a table thumper” and “a prickly character” who “has really burnt bridges in other areas”. With reference to a recent breakdown in a multi-party agreement, she said “I do think that is fairly widely acknowledged that there were personalities at play that have made those relationships more fraught.” The break down was, in part, an outcome of trying to make a qualification “for everyone” in a very diverse sector.

The second example illustrates more clearly still the pressures on individuals in a competitive environment. At first glance, the relationship between the various qualification organisations and their audiences should be clear: qualifications for non-commercial leaders and teachers taking groups into the outdoors distinguished from those for commercial operators. However, there are blurred boundaries generated from differences in philosophy regarding how leadership and safety knowledge and behaviours, and therefore qualifications, should be organised. This has led to the exposure of various individual perspectives, which in some cases strongly disagree with each other. The “seemingly benign language of partnership” (Evans et al., 2005, p. 78) belies the difficulties faced by individuals in providing services such as qualifications.

The co-processes model: extending the research

This research has enabled us to examine the nuances of sector governance across outdoor organisations in NZ. In so doing, we have extended Bransdon and Pestoff’s (2006) framework in the following ways. Firstly, we have extended the co-processes model by acknowledging and reflecting on the neo-liberal environment that influences the organisations. We have also extended each of the elements of the co-process model. First, we have outlined how important it is to examine governance from the various organisational

perspectives. While other work on co-governance has examined the influence of a dominant partner (e.g. Martin, 2011), very little research has been conducted on the perspectives of multiple organisations. Our approach ensures that the relationships between the various organisations are thoroughly understood in order to appreciate how sector governance occurs. By doing so, we have been able to illustrate the various views on co-governance highlighted by the stakeholders in the relationship in this research, thus furthering an understanding of co-governance. For example, we were able to examine the consequences of competition and collaboration and show how those consequences were problematic for communication between the various organisations.

With regard to co-management, our findings extend Bransden and Pestoff's (2006) model as they indicate the complexities of agenda setting and the nuances of interaction between a government agency and the organisations it funds. While Sport NZ delivers strong messages about governance, our interviewees felt that those messages fell short of sector leadership and at the same time constrained the organisations. Bransden and Pestoff (2006) allude to such complexities, but they do not enter into a full discussion of them, and their implications for co-management, in their work. Future research will need to examine this relationship in full, particularly as such relationships are increasingly described as partnerships (Larner and Craig, 2005). If co-management is to progress to a partnership state as such relationships evolve, then a thorough understanding of that relationship as co-management is required.

Finally, by examining the roles and activities of individuals through co-production we are able to examine how individuals' behaviours affect organisational direction and relationships. Through this, we can see that sector wide relationships and direction can be influenced by the actions of individuals. In so doing, we extend Bransden and Pestoff's (2006) framework by looking not only at service delivery but at some of the politics involved

in individual interactions and the influence of the sector environment. We are also able to examine more fully the implications of ‘competition’ in the non-profit sector which leads to pressures between organisations that are supposed to deliver (integrate) but also compete (differentiate). By giving exposure to the specific difficulties faced by individuals, and their resultant behaviours, we have extended the co-processes framework with more detail on this particular element.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate sector governance within the outdoor activity sector in NZ. By utilising Bransden and Pestoff’s (2005) co-processes model, we were able to examine co-governance, co-management, and co-production. We found that there is considerable will to engage in co-governance, particularly a desire for a communal approach to sector governance, a desire by some of the co-ordinating organisations to work together and avoid duplication in sector governance, and a largely positive relationship with Sport NZ. This is, however, hampered by an internal focus by many of the organisations and competition between organisations.

Outdoor activity sector governance in NZ could be more accurately located within co-management. While this relationship was successful in delivering some of Sport NZ’s objectives, there was a feeling by the outdoor organisation respondents that they were ‘owned’ by Sport NZ and that there was little room for communication with that organisation. Larner and Craig (2005) have argued that neo-liberal service delivery is in the process of become more partnership-oriented in NZ. If this is the case, then the relationship between Sport NZ and the outdoor organisations needs to become more interactive.

Finally, co-production showed the dedication but also single mindedness of some of the key individuals in the outdoor sector, which had both positive and detrimental outcomes for

sector governance. While strong-mindedness can be of service to an organisation, some of the heroic leadership (Eicher, 1997) and ‘table whacking’ antics of key individuals undermined sector relationships. Arguably, the competitive element that characterised the organisations’ environment facilitated the influence of individual personalities who could promote their own organisation over others.

Sector governance within NZ outdoor organisations is therefore complex and nuanced. While there were some consistent interpretations by some participants, the pressures of historic grievances, funding, and inter-organisational competition for legitimacy were also key aspects of sector governance. By utilising Bransden and Pestoff’s (2005) model, we have been able to illustrate these governance characteristics. At the same time, we argue that the model needs to be further developed to better explain the nuances of non-profit governance. We suggest that future research explores each element of co-processes in more depth, adapting the model in light of the critiques we have made here. Future studies could include larger numbers of organisations or more participants from the organisations. This will allow our understanding of sector governance to grow, thus responding to Davies’ (2007) proposal that greater and more nuanced understanding of governance will allow us to build governance theory from the ‘bottom up’ rather than rely on prescription.

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