

## **Title page**

### **Communicating across tourism silos for inclusive sustainable partnerships: A case study of the Network for Community Hospitality**

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## **Author Bios**

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Kim Smith is a disability advocate with a wide range of experiences across a number of industries including a lived experience of disability. She uses these skills to bring together the Waikato community through Disabled Persons Assembly Waikato and the Network for Community Hospitality to tackle the issues that matter with a particular focus on employment and empowerment.

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## **Communicating across tourism silos for inclusive sustainable partnerships: A case study of the Network for Community Hospitality**

### **Abstract**

Overcoming traditional tourism silos to develop long-term relationships with stakeholders is essential for transformational change. Adopting broader networks connects researchers to pertinent issues facing society, develops reciprocal capacities for learning and creates inclusive sustainable partnerships. As critical tourism scholars and not-for-profit employees, we illustrate the journey of how we engaged collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, from businesses, not-for-profits and the university, to tackle issues of economic disadvantage and social exclusion. Critical hospitality and dialogue theory were adopted to provide a framework for the processes of collaboration, research, networking and advocacy work for inclusive sustainable spaces. Drawing on our involvement with co-founding a collaborative research network, the Network for Community Hospitality, and analysis of data from two focus groups and interviews with 29 network members, we present reflections on setting up and facilitating the network. In addition, two examples of collaborative activities are presented to illustrate how principles of critical hospitality and dialogue theories were embedded in the network's processes and actions. The paper thereby provides empirically informed and reflexive understanding in order to shed new insights into the experiences of working within long-term inclusive partnerships of diverse stakeholders to create traction for positive social sustainable change.

**Keywords:** Sustainable partnerships; Social change; Hospitality; Networks

## Introduction

With regards to sustainability, tourism scholars have called for a wider consideration of the involvement of diverse stakeholders, within longer term relationships focusing on the local community, which transcend tourism boundaries. Bahaire and Elliott-White (1999) for instance, argued that tourism does not exist in isolation and needs to include a broader range of stakeholders, such as non-tourist organisations, community groups and other institutions. They argued that this would open up involvement, create traction for participation and draw on diverse competencies for change. They concluded that “the model of community involvement is not about tourism *per se*” (p. 271) instead calling for researchers to overcome tourism silos to open up diverse networks of knowledge and resources. Similarly, Jamal and Camargo’s (2014) study of destination development in Mexico concluded that “[a]ctive and informed civic participation is a necessary bridge between an ethic of fairness (justice) and an ethic of care .... facilitating sustainability as well as well-being” (p. 27). In reviewing the sustainable tourism literature, Bramwell, Higham, Lane and Miller (2016) also call for work that makes an impact and ensures that researchers are “connecting with the key challenges facing society” (p. 4). They conclude that tourism scholars need to consider working across disciplines, creating networks that develop inclusive partnerships in order to tackle and make changes around sustainability issues. The overall premise being the need to focus on inclusion, crossing silos and participation in social sustainable change for all the community – moving beyond focusing on just tourism businesses (Bahaire & Elliott-White, 1999; Butler, 1999; Lui, 2003; Misener & Mason, 2006).

This article aims to respond to these calls within sustainable tourism scholarship by providing an account of the organising processes and relationships, as well as activities used to develop and facilitate a community research network that moves beyond tourism boundaries. We will illustrate through discussion of setting up a network, the Network for Community Hospitality, how we engaged with diverse stakeholders from businesses, community and the university to collaboratively tackle issues of economic disadvantage and social exclusion. Our framework adopts critical hospitality and dialogue theory to reflectively understand how we collaborated, connected and advocated for inclusive sustainable spaces. Additionally, much of our work challenges mainstream tourism academic approaches in research and consultation – and how institutions usually reward scholars – it moves us from the lone expert to collaborators for change (Hart & Wolff, 2006).

Much of the previous research has been ‘on’ communities rather than ‘with/in’ and excluded participants with lived experiences to “objectify the subjects and reproduce existing stereotypes and prejudices” (Gómez & Sordé Marti, 2012, p. 23). Our collaborative work through the Network for Community Hospitality (NCH) illustrates that sustainable tourism can be “rooted in moral and ethical stances about how tourism should develop ... securing positive change, either directly or through mobilising others to work toward it” (Bramwell & Lane, 2014, p. 3-4). In this paper we will reflect, discuss and illustrate our journey of facilitating and participating in research for social change, across silos *within* and *with* communities. Specifically, the collaboration provided access to shared resources and knowledge between the university and community organisations. The key question driving the academic researchers was: how can we mobilise resources, relationships and communication to create awareness and organise actions for social change? To unravel this question, we provide a case study describing the set-up and processes involved in a collaborative network. We draw on our involvement and primary data from a total of 41 participants involved in the network members to illustrate how we attempted to respond to Higgins-Desbiolles and Powys Whyte’s (2013) call for critical tourism scholars to “show transformation in the world” (p. 431).

Firstly, we discuss the sustainable tourism literature, followed with a discussion of how spaces can be created for collaboration and the importance of implementing principles from critical hospitality and dialogue theory. These theories illustrate the processes required for crossing silos and how a “[c]onsciousness of values and due care [are] keys to flourishing personal lives as they are to a sustainable world” (Leipoldt, 2006, p. 6). We detail a case study to illustrate how we adopted principles from critical hospitality and dialogue theories to set up, facilitate and work with the members of the university-community research network; the Network for Community Hospitality. The case study draws on our reflections and primary data drawn with 41 participants involved in two focus style workshops and three semi-structured interviews. This will be followed by a discussion of two collaborative projects with not-for-profit member organisations, and their involvement in working *with* and *alongside* academics. These projects illustrate and provide some indication of the wider work and activities of the Network for Community Hospitality. Then, we critically reflect and discuss the tensions involved for researchers in this type of university-community network. We conclude by reflecting on the role of the academic as ‘translator’ and communicator. Here, we position that the network provides an “intensely communicative” space that creates

“welcome, the feeling of belonging, gestured back and forth in moments of hospitality” (Bell, 2017, p. 38). It is in these hospitable moments, from our experiences and data from the network, that collaborative relationships flourish and sustainable social impact can occur.

## **Literature Review**

### *Engaged collaboration and crossing silos for sustainable tourism*

To achieve meaningful sustainable social change within communities relies on developing ethical longer-term collaborations, connections, and participation with others. Engaged collaboration and participation are argued to be the key requirements for achieving progress towards sustainability (Disterheft, Caeiro, Azeiteiro, & Leal Filho, 2015). The wider sustainability literature has previously focused on environmental operational issues at the expense of approaches that involve diverse individuals, groups and stakeholders (Leipoldt, 2006). Much of this work has focused on tourism corporate and business perspectives in order to gain participation, engagement and actions towards change initiatives for sustainability (Wearing, McDonald & Ponting, 2005). A lack of coordination and cohesion has been recognised as a key problem facing the tourism industry given the diverse range of stakeholders involved in the tourism planning and development process (Aas Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Araujo & Bramwell, 1999). Each organisation in the tourism system is autonomous, but for decision-making and implementation to occur, consensus through collaborative strategies that cross silos is required to deal constructively with differences between diverse stakeholders, especially those from different sectors.

Bahaire and Elliott-White’s investigation into tourism planning and community involvement within the city of York concluded that “community involvement is not about tourism *per se* but rather centres around the way in which the city is managed as whole” (1999, p. 271). Importantly for this paper, previous tourism planning studies have wielded the importance of collaborative thinking, derived from stakeholder theory, to imply that all stakeholders be considered equal in an educational and enabling process of collaboration (Byrd, 2007). Critical tourism scholars, from alternative, pro-tourism and ‘hopeful’ (Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic, 2011) perspectives have sought to consider involvement from a broader range of stakeholders to “effect transformation through different academic spaces and practices” (Fullager & Wilson, 2012, p. 1). Similarly, in the wider sustainability literature, researchers have noted that social goals are often positioned as secondary to economic gains, despite definitions of effective sustainability being linked to limited or no

growth (Leipoldt, 2006). Instead, Bradlow (2007) and the NZ Internal Affairs Review (2011) call for a definition of sustainability that works across silos to connect to the broader systems in society, which can maintain longer term relationships, include diversity and recognise interactions within and between systems. For tourism academics as Ren, Pritchard and Morgan (2010) note, this would involve “develop[ing] conceptualisations of tourisms that encompass multiple worldviews” and one that broadens out from hierarchal control and traditional business conceptions of stakeholders to include holistic long-term relationships that allow “multiple positions, practices and insights” (p. 885-886).

### *Creating spaces for engaged collaboration, hospitality and dialogue*

Universities have typically focused on communicating and engaging partnerships through the corporate, professional associations and their alumni. Recently however, there has been a move towards considering the value and impact of universities and their research on communities (Dempsey, 2012). Hart and Wolff (2006) note that this move to engage may be driven by a sense of obligation and values, or perhaps driven by external assessment such as research ranking exercises. Despite this move to collaborate with their local communities many of these links have been critiqued for alienating non-academics, modelling top down approaches and only providing partial participation (Dempsey, 2012; Hart & Wolff, 2006).

Academics can provide environments that facilitate spaces of welcome, empowerment, longer term engagement and inclusion through alternative organisational practices and philosophies that are adaptive, inductive and responsive. For instance, critical hospitality theory offers promise for helping to create these types of spaces of engagement and welcome, and for shaping academic and community relationships. A positive discourse surrounds the notion of hospitality particular in terms of its broader definition of its capacity to bring people together to interact in a hospitable fashion, and for forming or consolidating relationships with strangers (Lynch et al., 2011; Lynch, 2017; Selwyn, 2000). To explain further, embedded within the practice of hospitality are issues of identity, ex/inclusion and reciprocity/generosity, and constructs of welcome, kindness, acceptance, invitation and hospitableness (Gibson, 2010; Hamington, 2010; Hearn, 2014; Lynch, 2017; Muldrew, 2000). Hospitality regulates, whether consciously or unconsciously, a structure for relationships and connections between people, and how to cross thresholds and how they communicate their identity. Hospitality is a practice embedded in our cultures and connected to our sense of self,



community, home and ethics (Germann Molz and Gibson, 2007). The works of Derrida have heavily influenced the theory and practices of hospitality, with a particular focus on his concept of unconditional hospitality (Westmoreland, 2008; Still, 2013). Unconditional hospitality is a practice of welcome without any restrictions, politics or barriers. Unconditional hospitality involves “letting the other in to oneself, to one’s own space” and being open to the stranger (Still, 2013, p. 13). This entails being open to risk and vulnerability, and, whilst unconditional hospitality may be difficult to provide, the lens of hospitality is seen as heralding possibilities for creating healthy and welcoming societies (Bell, 2009; Lynch, 2017).

Since 2000, critical hospitality scholars have questioned the existing boundaries of knowledge of hospitality, arguing that it is a concept that should be broadly conceived and embedded within society, and not merely attributed to the world of business and management (Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007). A critical hospitality approach thus calls for plural social lenses through which to view and understand hospitality and with the aim to transform. The approach challenges complacency, the consequences of organisational power, and cultural or political barriers (Lynch et al., 2011). Critical researchers have discussed hospitality offered in the localised sphere of communities as practices of hospitality that try to reduce issues of power and involve some form of transformation either for the individual and/or the wider community. Community hospitality has been stated as involving actions of advocacy that helps to create inclusion and create a positive impact for society (Cockburn-Wooten, McIntosh, & Phipps, 2014; Kalargyrou, & Woods, 2015). Community hospitality involves reciprocity, generosity, improvising and advocacy. It goes beyond simply compassion and instead is a spectrum of activities created by doing hospitality, welcome, support and care. Compassion, Weaver and Jin (2015) argue, is an underlying driver for sustainable tourism projects and they conclude that it is essential for “emancipation” sustainability activities in order to achieve effective engagement towards ethical social change practices (p. 668). Arguably however, displaying compassion does not always lead to actions, transformation or change that benefits individuals or groups. For community hospitality, establishing trust through actions is essential for any activities because, for many marginalised groups, there has been a historical “disregard for oppressed people’s humanity [that] have influenced the creation and maintenance of social and institutional structures that limit and denigrate” (Miller, Brown & Hopson, 2011, p. 1082).

Universities, as one of these institutions has not had a good history of relationships with vulnerable individuals, with many community groups calling academic researchers “epidemics” (Bell, Addy, Madew & Kainulainen, 2012, p.95). Feminist hospitality theorists have argued that the historical context and agency of communities needs to be understood in order to facilitate “nonhierarchical understanding of hospitality that mitigates the expression of power differential, while seeking greater connection and understanding for the mutual benefit” (Hamington, 2010, p. 23). In order to develop moments of community hospitality, actions and spaces for collaboration then, context, assumptions and traditional top-down hierarchical ways of organising need to be challenged. Communication needs to open up opportunities for challenging structures and practices that persist in excluding, instead enabling new indexical knowledge. Stanley and Wise (1993) note that this type of knowledge draws on feminist epistemologies and is embedded in “concrete and diverse practical and everyday experiences ... reflexive, indexical and local” (p. 191 & 192). The term illustrates how values, emotions, the body and knowledge are interconnected. Indexical knowledge can be explained simply as meanings that develop from people interacting and doing things together. It “connects ‘knowing’ with ‘doing’” within a situation (Gherardi, 2008, p. 517). Within tourism, Phillmore and Goodson (2008) also note that it involves researchers and participants collaborating to “research in a reflexive way” (p. 36). In essence then, it is grounded, reflexive dialogue, actioned within relationships and the situation that the activity or communication occurred. From this interaction deeper, tacit understandings are developed from that specific to time, place and person (Stanley & Wise, 1993).

Application of principles from dialogue theory usefully open up individuals to challenge deductive assumptions and traditional ways of working. Instead, it allows new forms of organising, draws on indexical knowledge, develops learning, leadership and relationships in order to create new heuristics for solving problems (Heath, 2007; Heath & Frey 2004; Zoller, 2000). Dialogue theory is defined as processes that negotiate power that opens up opportunities for discussion, listening and learning. Dialogue is an inductive set of processes that start without a specified outcome instead this outcome emerges through the processes of face-to-face communication, developed through listening and understanding as participants develop reciprocal understandings. It aims to allow “people to listen empathetically ... to reevaluate and reframe preferences ... reach considered judgement” (Anguelovski, 2011, p. 386). Heath (2007) defines dialogue as having three parts: generative, diversity and power. Zoller (2000) explains that dialogue that is generative involves “risking

one's position in order to arrive at new understandings, and a commitment to keeping the conversation going" (p. 193). To achieve diversity in dialogue, a focus on the other person, listening and being open to differences in understandings is important. In relation to power in dialogue theory, the wider structures, institutions and ideologies need to be considered to ensure that power is shared and negotiated in decision-making.

Dialogue theory is closely connected to some critical feminist theories and also draws on other diverse works such as Habermas and Freire (Anguelovski, 2011; Ganesh, & Zoller, 2012; Toledano, 2017). It embraces an inductive approach to communication, organising, and emphasis is placed on developing trust, collaboration, and shared power which challenges "hierarchical organizational systems" (Zoller, 2000, p. 194). Dialogue has been practiced in a variety of ways, but generally it recognises difference between and within groups and appreciates the "the difference in circumstances that forges the identities of groups and individuals" (Davidson, 2016, p. 147). It aims to be a tool for developing relationships between people, which seeks to value difference and open discussion, as well as offering opportunities for differing opinions to be identified. However, despite the goal of understanding and gaining some agreement in an open genuine way, dialogue processes can mask conflicts, power and attempts to reduce resistance (Anguelovski, 2011). When academics engage in community issues for instance, they need to appreciate that they enter with their own individual cultural histories, assumptions, in addition to perceived status based on their academic identity. Also the background of their institutions may have an impact on the community depending on whether the organisation's previous contact developed a good reputation within the community. Wallerstein and Duran (2008) argue that this academic power can be reduced if scholars are willing to become reflexive, "negotiate these dynamics" through actively challenging the relationship between researcher and participant, reconsidering alternative ways for decision-making and "voice and representation in writing and publishing" (p. 24). Despite these concerns, authentic dialogue processes have been viewed as ethical, reflective spaces that can provide opportunities for change and transformation (Ganesh, & Zoller, 2012).

Activities that illustrate dialogue theory in action call for alternative ways of organising relationships and collaboration. For example, encouraging stakeholders to listen to alternative claims allows diversity and conflict to be voiced in order to open up assumptions, develop clarity, and work against homogeneity. In Heath's (2007) research, she found that traditional stakeholder models "disqualified diverse perspectives from the conversation and

systematically distorted the likelihood that organizing structures and practices would be questioned” (p. 162). Similarly, Bahaire and Elliott-White (1999) concluded that, despite the presence of community and neighbourhood groups in the city of York, U.K., “not only has the involvement of the community been constrained but it has tended to be episodic, centred on surveys of residents and Resident First Weekends” (p. 272). This discursive closure and restraining tactic, whether conscious or unconscious, facilitates exclusion, allows practices to remain uncontested, and limits the potential for any social change to occur. In adopting the features of dialogue theory, we are endeavouring to enable inductive reciprocal communication, allow indexical understandings to emerge, and provide commitment to the long-term relationships, processes and outcomes. This all involved being humble, listening, starting with “others” in the community and working inductively and being open to risk. The risk involved being open to alternative ways of organising that do not involve top-down hierarchical processes, such as agenda setting and structured meetings. In doing so, our overall goal was to develop the capacity for individuals to “serve as tools for communities to change their own conditions on their terms” (Higgins-Desbiolles & Powys Whyte, 2013, p. 430).

Overall then, for any researcher wishing to work with and within communities, they must have both an understanding and, importantly, involvement with the situation, individuals, history and culture (Bell, Addy, Madew & Kainulainen, 2012). This approach embeds inclusion, draws on indexical situated community knowledge, and has a commitment to translation of knowledge gained in the research to be communicated in appropriate formats back to the community (Stanley, & Wise, 1993; Cockburn-Wooten, Pritchard, Morgan & Jones, 2008). Indeed, many critical, feminist tourism scholars and health researchers have endeavoured to adopt this framework for their research in order to ensure social change occurs in society (for example, Wallerstein & Duran, 2006; Wilson, Small, & Harris, 2012).

## **The Case Study**

Academics have noted that there is a dearth of research on community collaborative work that provides insights into the processes or go beyond the positive image to acknowledge the tensions involved in doing this type of work (Dempsey, 2010; Goodson & Phillimore, 2012). Indeed, Dredge (2006) has argued that tourism planners need to move beyond the controlled models that “can remain a desktop exercise” to develop understandings

and “skills in dialogic interaction” (563). To this end, we present below a case study from a university-community research network, the Network for Community Hospitality (NCH), to illustrate how we adopted principles from critical hospitality and dialogue theories to create a longer-term space for inclusion, collaboration and transformational change. Case studies have been well used within tourism research as they provide opportunities to learn from practices or a context that may be unique (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Beeton, 2005; Stake, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2006). Case studies are useful as they draw on context-dependent learning and expert experiences to provide knowledge for future competencies for social change (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The case approach used here is descriptive as we “describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). The descriptive informational case study draws on our critical reflections and primary data, from two focus style workshops and 3 semi-structured interviews involving a total of 41 participants involved in the Network. Two focus style workshops were held using a creative participatory tool in order to allow individual and group points to be identified. The first focus style workshop had 21 people attend. The second focus style workshop had 17 people involved in the session. In addition, there were 3 participants who were keen to share their experiences but could not attend the second focus style workshop. To include their content, we held three semi-structured interviews with them as they were passionate about the network, been involved in several events, research projects and teaching courses over the years and were keen to have their experiences included. Two example projects collaboratively conducted by members of the network are then presented in the section below to illustrate typical processes adopted in the Network and the social impact that emerged from these collaborations.

A desire to understand the needs and research issues for the wider community was the main driver for us making the first contact with external groups and organisations in our region. Adopting critical hospitality and dialogue theory, the first two authors designed the first focus group to ascertain if there was interest from the broader community, organisations and academics. We were keen to understand the issues and/or barriers facing many community and not-for-profit’s organisations in our area. The first focus group was held in December 2013. Invitations were sent to all not-for-profit organisations, health organisations, government related institutions and academics in Hamilton, a city in the North Island of New Zealand. A variety of communication channels were used to promote the focus group with invitations being emailed, placed on websites, posted on community notice boards, hand

delivered to the organisations and notices were also left at certain areas in the city, such as cafes, libraries, community centres etc. In total, 21 individuals representing 18 different community organisations, not-for-profits and government agencies participated in the first focus group.

The focus group was held at a non-university venue, a community hall where food and drink was also freely provided for participants. We felt it was important to hold the focus group off campus for two reasons. Firstly, because the campus can be a confusing environment to access and in turn intimidating to those unfamiliar with the institution. Research has consistently highlighted that low income groups, diverse individuals and refugee students are underrepresented and under-prepared for dealing with campus life, and higher education can often be associated with xenophobic experiences (Harrison & Peacock, 2009; Milward, Stephenson, Rio & Anderson, 2011; Naidoo, 2015; Naidoo, 2015). Moreover, researchers analysing the discourses in higher education settings have concluded that the campus privileges certain forms of embedded assumptions that make certain groups more comfortable and more likely to succeed in this environment (Earnest, Joyce, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010). These powerful discourses are communicated in a variety of ways from the physical environment, promotions to conversations in the classrooms, all of which “legitimised and reproduced [the] dominance ... by white (European) groups over ethnic and racial minorities, refugees or other immigrants” (Van Dijk, 1996, p. 90).

Secondly, by encouraging different organisational representatives to meet and talk to each other over a ‘cuppa’ and some food, we hoped to develop an environment that was informal and allowed a hospitality space (Hess, 2015). We were hoping that the act of sharing would encourage commensality to occur between people (Sobal and Nelson, 2003). Commensality is simply the act of being involved, sitting at the table and sharing food. These acts of sharing food has been argued to develop relationships, help social integration and reinforce any commonalities between people. Bell (2017) comments that the act of commensality through sharing food, sitting and eating together “materialises hospitality”, allowing conversations to emerge about relationships and the social world (p. 38). Moreover, it is through these moments of hospitality exchange that connections are made between people, the sharing of resources occur and “the development of social relationships or the pursuit of political agenda” (Lugosi, 2008, p. 141). In fact, ‘eat, talk and be happy’ became a motto of the NCH.

The focus group was facilitated by a visiting academic, who was also an experienced international community workshop facilitator. The group decided the key question to discuss, think and reflect together was ‘welcoming people’. Ketso methodology, a creative toolkit for community engagement, was used to allow individual perspectives as well as collective decision making ([www.ketso.com](http://www.ketso.com)). Ketso also allowed the building of trust and rapport between individuals and with the facilitator. The individuals divided themselves into four smaller groups and each was given a Ketso workstation/mat, with the key question placed in the centre of the mat. For those interested in the methodology, a full review of the Ketso methodology has been discussed elsewhere (McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2015).

The key benefit of Ketso is that it facilitates discussion to allow both individual ‘voice’ and group concerns to be communicated. An added benefit is that it encourages groups to think through solutions to the issues they have been raised and then what they would like to address and change. A final stage of Ketso allows individuals to circulate around all the Ketso group mats to examine the recommendation that the particular group wants to take forward from the workshop. Each individual is given a yellow ‘tick’ shape to place beside the solution they want to prioritise for action. The facilitator gathers up the recommendations and places the recommendations with the most ticks on the table for all the workshop participants to see and discuss further.

During the Ketso process, a key challenge discussed frequently in the group was their difficulties in accessing university resources and working with academics. While on the one hand, individuals stated that they felt safe and comfortable with the diversity on campus, they still experienced problems in contacting and establishing a relationship with the university. As one focus group two participant commented, “... the University is up here and the community is in another space – again the Network breaks this [divide] down”. Many stated that they had academics or students come to their community group, to just discuss things or ‘mine’ for data but had not been involved or heard about the findings of the study. It was clear from these comments in the focus group that the development of trusting relationships, with a commitment to including the community within the academic research was not established by researchers with these not-for-profit organisations.

Community researchers have discussed the various activities and skills required for community work that may not coincide with the traditional working practices or paradigms of some academics (Bell, Addy, Madew, & Kainulainen, 2012). To be effective in this context

researchers are required to take the time to become immersed, relinquish being in control or position themselves as the ‘expert’. Instead adopting practices that allow for working inductively and facilitating sharing of knowledge with community members is needed for effective relationships for social change. The reality for many academics, however, is they and their institutions are still based in an individualised academic mode that adopts top down approaches, while ‘mining’ for data with little real change or dissemination for non-academic audiences (Bigby & Frawley, 2010). Some scholars within sustainable tourism studies have also lamented this adherence to mainstream frameworks and definitions of stakeholders which have not gained any long-term traction within the tourism systems for social justice, ‘doing good’ and change (Weaver & Jin, 2015).

The final agreed recommendations from the 2013 Ketso focus group were: resources for social enterprise; cultural awareness ideas; house ownership scheme; promoting and disseminating our work; promoting and understanding cultural diversity; working together to pool resources and grow. The workshop participants decided that, by adopting the final recommendation of working together, they could tackle the five other recommendations. From this workshop, the university-community network (NCH) was born, and the first meeting was scheduled for January 2014. The first meeting aimed to discuss how everyone would work and communicate to each other, what our values would be for the network and ways to secure funding to support activities.

A second focus group using Ketso methodology was held in December 2016 to review and evaluate the NCH. This focus group was facilitated by two visiting academics who were experienced community workshop facilitators. In total 17 people attended the focus group; some were members who had attended the first initial focus group, while others had joined NCH at a later date. Three members could not attend and wanted to still participate by being involved in individual semi-structured interviews. For one interview participant, the key benefits from being involved in NCH were that they were able to “share knowledge, share resources and network [in an] ongoing way without reinventing the wheel in every single organisation”. Many of the participants echoed this person’s statement that “a lot of times when you get that academic and organisation they are normally separate ... the fact that there was actually a university willing to look into things that are a little bit outside of the box, be innovative and to expand on their norm was great and a huge interest to us all”.



## Case study projects

Since the first meeting in late January 2014, the network now has over 130 external university organisations as members and achieved an impressive list of various university-community research funded projects and events including national and regional think tanks, workshops, documentaries, film series, and consultations on various issues with the overall aim to promote awareness around equity, culture and inclusion. In this section, we draw attention to some examples to illustrate the diverse activities, research projects and events that members have worked together on since the establishment of the NCH. Specifically, two projects are presented and discussed below. These are: the ‘New Zealand Tourism for All’ research project, funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development, and the Event Management Class where students designed 10 events. Funding for the student designed and managed events came from ‘Enabling Good lives Waikato’.

### *1. The ‘New Zealand Tourism For All’ project*

The ‘New Zealand Tourism for All’ project was a funded research study that aimed to creatively and collaboratively engage stakeholders to consider future solutions for inclusive tourism in their sector and area ([www.nztourismforall.org.nz](http://www.nztourismforall.org.nz)). The focus was to investigate how tourism could be developed to enable greater participation from individuals who experience a disability. The premise here was that tourism stakeholder collaboration, creative thinking, communication and planning is crucial for enabling problem-solving around complex, unconsidered and polysemous issues (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2015). As with many community research projects, we were keen to have key stakeholders, from businesses, government, not-for-profits attend and gain awareness as well as learning from being involved. This sharing of knowledge and learning development was just as important to acquire for individuals, even if they could not immediately address the problem. As Byrd (2007) notes in support of this tactic that “even if parties cannot resolve a particular issue, the process should be able to help them understand the goals and perspectives of others by fostering communication and build relationships” (p. 9).

A Ketso focus group format was used to bring stakeholders together from the tourism and accessibility not-for-profit sectors in Christchurch, a city in the South Island of New Zealand, to plan and action change in their region. To develop broader impact from the session, with the consent of all the participants, the session was filmed. In addition,

participants were individually recorded to gain their understanding and future changes that they wanted to pursue after the session. In the days following the Ketso focused planning session, individual stories were captured of people who shared their ability to fully access and engage in travel, internationally and domestically, to illustrate the barriers they face in accessing tourism services. Further interviews were also filmed with key tourism stakeholders who had been unable to attend the focus group. A final documentary was developed and shared in various public venues raising awareness of inaccessible travel experiences and the recommendations posed by the participants.

## 2. *The Event Management Class Event*

A further collaborative activity involved NCH members from not-for-profit organisations working *with* and *alongside* academics and students in teaching an event management class. This second year undergraduate event management class encouraged students to design and implement a series of events to gain awareness and change around creating inclusive employment opportunities for those who experience a disability. The NCH members were involved in the lectures and tutorials and also assisted with the marking of assignments. As interviewee two noted,

“I went to 2-3 weekly lectures and probably I’d say 4 weeks’ of tutorials. I got nearly daily emails from students, just answering their questions or reassuring them or to give them guidance. We were on a panel as they told us what they wanted to do and we gave feedback on how that would look for a disabled person as well as to an employer. We also got all of their marked proposals and just sort of marked to give feedback ... so we kind of worked as a co-lecturer”.

All this work provided specialised knowledge and feedback to the students, tutors and lecturer of the course. For the NCH members, there were several audiences they were trying to tackle in order to gain awareness around disability and meaningful employment. As interviewee one recounts, “A key audience were the students, [also] employers as well as general public”. They initially thought that if they could at least gain awareness and changes within the student audience, this would have a future benefit for disability and employment. As interviewee two noted that:

“Students are the future managers, it was such an amazing opportunity to be able to have that contact with them and answer their questions because they haven’t really been exposed to the world of work or disability... but they are going to be the next generation of managers and it is good to lose stereotypes now rather than later.. the students at the end of the course were all really informed and enthusiastic about it

especially those ones who were not interest at the start they said they gained a lot from doing these events and would actually advocate for employing people with disability – that was a huge bonus in itself”.

Ten events were organised and hosted by the students and they each facilitated both awareness and, importantly, initiated change for corporates, community groups and individuals who attended the events. Job seekers who attended the various students events told the NCH not-for-profit organisations that “their confidence was huge because they were able to have conversations, ask questions, practice and without the pressure of being in an interview situation” (Ketso focus group 2 participant). Employers have told NCH not-for-profit members about the procedural changes they have made as a result of being involved in these events. The third interview participant summed up this activity by stating that being involved in this course was “the highlight of my career so far” as they could see the students and events gained real change for individuals with disability and employers.

## **Conclusions**

NCH continues to meet regularly at quarterly meetings plus various sub-group meetings as researchers, students and organisations work on collaborative activities or research for change. In concluding, we reflect on the outcomes of the NCH projects but also on the use of dialogue theory and how it helped to create a framework for developing the hospitable, reciprocal and inclusive relationships. Following this reflection, we identify key tensions for future work that we have experienced as researchers working within, with and in-between spaces of academia, organisations and organising. Our aim is that this reflexive understanding can shed new insights into the experiences of working within long-term inclusive partnerships of diverse stakeholders to create traction for positive social sustainable change.

In the Ketso focus group session to review the NCH, the NCH members identified the values they perceived for this collaborative network. These were, ‘thinking differently, working creatively’; ‘Mahia te mahi – ‘Getting the job done’; ‘Working together to advocate for vulnerable populations’; ‘Eat, talk and be happy’; ‘Crossing thresholds to a more inclusive society’. NCH members and interviewees noted that these values came through the network by adopting a collaborative, organic and nonhierarchical approach. In essence to create spaces for collaboration and dialogue, the NCH effects hospitality as welcome (Lynch,

2017), and performs a boundary spanning role that draws on the principles of dialogue theory.

By eliminating traditional meeting structures, such as agendas, official note-takers and not having meetings hosted in the same location, NCH enables the dialogue to become generative and reduces any notion of ownership. Generative dialogue is more than having “a say”. Instead, it allows active involvement and “a voice” - from the very conception of the issue or idea – all the way through the processes, decision making and analysis processes. Any collaboration with academics and the university is developed from propinquity. In many instances, the community group or organization will lead the research, activity or funding application rather than the academics. This approach draws on the community members’ expertise, just as the event management course practiced, in order to develop the activities for social change. This has been achieved through developing long-standing relationships and from being close to community and drawing on indexical knowledge gained.

Empathy in terms of support and advocacy through creating spaces for sharing food, volunteers, time, rituals and other resources has also been important for NCH. For example, one metaphorical ritual is the ‘cup of substance’ which was originally a gift from a visiting academic to the NCH. The cup is the Scottish cup of hospitality and at the end of the meeting the current bearer of the cup, after hearing the information from everyone at the meeting, will decide who needs the cup the most to support them through the next few months. Risk is crucial to any dialogue as researchers need to communicate with the members on their terms in order to be open to listening and hearing local knowledge and critiques. Finally, a key point for any NCH members, is to show and action commitment. This has become a key criteria due to community organisations’ experiences of researchers; it is crucial that academics and students have the commitment to see things through. This involves ongoing dialogue, involvement and dissemination of the work to involve the wider community and organisations.

Finally, we reflect and consider future implications revealed by the tensions involved for researchers in this type of university-community research network. There are four key tensions that we work with within our network. The first tension reveals the challenges of participation for academics caught up in traditional systems of publishing and institutional demands. ‘Fitting’ the research into institutional funding and publishing structures and research reporting is challenging. To note examples: local community funding for research

projects is often small-scale and often seen as inconsequential; research outputs such as documentaries and Ketso community engagement workshops are not easily translated into top ranked international refereed journals; the time necessary for continued long-term engaged relationships is not a ready feature of University research time allowances. With the move towards consideration of the value and impact of universities and their research on communities (Bramwell & Lane, 2014; Deem, 2001; Dempsey, 2012), a focus on testaments of impact and social change can, however, to some extent muster the interests of the institution and further encourage academics to connect with the key challenges facing society (Bramwell et al., 2016).

Secondly, these types of networks need to ensure they are vigilant and manage agreement and differing interpretations among community members. For this reason, community engagement methods that encourage equal participation and creative thinking to overcome power imbalances, such as the Ketso toolkit, require greater consideration in future sustainable tourism scholarship and debate. The third tension to be mindful of when engaged with external stakeholders is to move academic members from being seen as “epidemics” to encouraging ethical, hospitable, and longer term meaningful relationships and participation in their research. True participation has been defined as “redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes ... determining how information is shared, goals and policies set” (Arnstein, 2011, p.3). To achieve these processes, facilitators need to be mindful of power sharing, so who is called or able to share their experiences and get involved in the issue. Additionally, consideration also needs to be given to the level of participation for the person or group can or should engage in (White, 2011). The fourth tension for consideration, then, is how researchers represent their work within the community and, importantly, disseminate their findings so that they are accessible and can be activated for change.

To conclude, we have come to understand our role through the NCH as one of the academic as ‘translator’ and communicator (Woolf, 2008). In their role of translators of research, academics refer to the practice of ensuring research knowledge is communicated and accessible for the groups, stakeholders and wider publics (Stanley, & Wise, 1993; Woolf, 2008). It can mean a period of training for the research and/or community group in order to develop capacity for the research. For those involved with community research, reflexivity is also crucial, as the researcher needs to employ a mindful position to listen, be humble and acknowledge shared histories and identities (Knight, Bentley, Norton & Dixon, 2004). This

helps facilitate the researcher to be more aware of thresholds, gatekeepers, differences and the ‘taken-for-granted’ in conversations, as they design mechanisms to facilitate research collaborative processes (Mannarini, 2012). Communication is often minimised in community research but it is a key ingredient for forming, sustaining and gaining engagement in these processes and achieving social change (Dempsey, 2010). For academics and students crossing thresholds into community groups and not-for-profits, it also requires courage; the courage to make the effort to reach out, connect, listen, be humble, accept diverse experiences, situated knowledges and importantly, to let go of being in control. The NCH provides us with an “intensely communicative” space that creates “welcome, the feeling of belonging, gestured back and forth in moments of hospitality” (Bell, 2007, p. 38). As Bell (2017) notes, we make our space and produce actions in it through the indexical relations that are developed from tacitly being in the moment (Stanley & Wise, 1993). It is in these moments, from our experiences and data from the network, that inclusive collaborative relationships flourish and sustainable social impact can happen.

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