

National and urban public policy agenda in tourism. Towards the emergence of a hyperneoliberal script?

Abstract

Following the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2009 and the stagnation of developed economies, national governments in developed countries have been pursuing a counter-reform of the public sector characterized by further policy centralization and the “hollowing out” of regional authorities. Financial issues, such as reducing public expenditure and sovereign public debt levels, have become the pretext to the implementation of hyperneoliberal development agendas aimed at the attraction of inward capitals and a further ‘competitive’ repositioning of major cities within the global market. Tourism and the visitor economy have been used as levers for the attraction of capitals and skilled people in the long-term development strategies of cities. This article illustrates how the economic crisis led the way to the recent restructuring of the public sector and of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). Findings from national and urban development strategies recently implemented in New Zealand suggest a strong, market-driven agenda that follows a common hyperneoliberal script.

Keywords: global financial crisis; destination management organisations; destination marketing organisations; hyperneoliberalism; metagovernance; public policy reforms; tourism planning; tourism policy; urban tourism.

Introduction

The 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis and the economic stagnation of developed countries have affected the tourism economy at large (UNWTO, 2009). Notwithstanding the steady recovery of international tourism flows to pre-crisis levels in 2010, the recovery has been uneven (UNWTO, 2010). Developed countries with chronic sovereign public debt such as Greece, Portugal and Italy have further struggled to recover due to the adoption of harsh austerity measures (Giovanelli et al., 2015; Pagoulatos and Triantopoulos, 2009; Palma Brito, 2014), while other developed countries like the UK underwent a major restructuring of the tourism public sector during the same period (Coles et al., 2012).

At a national level, the governance of destinations in times of crisis has led to a redefinition of the role of tourism in the policy discourse along with the re-allocation of roles and responsibilities between public and private stakeholders (OECD, 2012). However, the effectiveness of public-private partnerships has been already questioned in tourism research from a public policy perspective, particularly as a result of policy closure by sub-governments (Hall, 1999). Notwithstanding empirical findings and academic debates advocating the establishment of alternative models of governance (Harrill, 2009), top-down practices of tourism policy have been utilised in destinations as the main response to crisis and recovery (Amore and Hall, 2016a; Gotham & Greenberg, 2014).

At a local level there has been a further erosion of the public sector in the developed countries, with direct repercussions for tourism policy (Jenkins et al., 2014; Mesquita Nunes, 2014). This is particularly evident in urban contexts, where the merging of authorities and the

re-organization of responsibilities has resulted in more exclusive forms of decision making and market seeking to implement strategies of urban competitiveness with tokenistic forms of public participation and consultation (Bristow, 2010). This results in increasingly depoliticized and increasingly normalised forms of neoliberal practices and concepts (Olesen, 2014) within which “tourism is subsumed under a wider economic development agenda” (Pike and Page, 2014: p.204). It is argued that urban tourist destinations have embraced a new frontier of hyperneoliberal development agenda that harshens the competition for the attraction of visitors and capitals on a global-local scale.

This paper addresses the literature with regards to the politics and the governance of DMOs (Pike and Page, 2014; Bramwell, 2011; Pearce, 2015; Pechlaner and Volgger, 2013) in the context of the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, and is based on an examination of government texts, informal meetings and interviews with key decision-makers (the names of the interviewees have been anonymised for the purposes of this paper). The aim of the paper is fourfold. Firstly, it provides an appraisal of the hyperneoliberal urban agenda through a theoretical framework that acknowledges the three dimensions of power (Lukes, 2005; Hall, 2010a), the three waves of neoliberalization (Olesen, 2014) and the paradigm of disaster capitalism (Klein, 2007). Secondly, it argues that the recent reforms in the public sector call for the conceptualization of metagovernance in the field of tourism (Jenkins et al., 2014; Spyriadis et al., 2011) that underpins the paramount literature in political sciences (Meuleman, 2008; Jessop, 2011). Thirdly, it introduces the reforms in the public sector with relevance to urban tourism and place promotion in the increasingly competitive urban tourism market. Finally, it seeks to address a gap in the literature with respect to urban DMOs in times of economic crisis and public expenditure cuts.

Literature

Public policy and urban DMOs

The literature on destination management and marketing first emerged in the early 1970s (Jenkins et al., 2011, Pike, 2002; Pike and Page, 2014). However, according to Jenkins et al. (2011), research on the political dimension of DMOs lacks conceptual and theoretical development and engagement with the wider public policy literature. With respect to urban tourism research, Ashworth and Page (2011: p. 13) similarly argue that “to begin to understand tourism in the city we must embrace urban studies and its theoretical critiques”. Cities, particularly major urban areas in the western world, are core nodes in the global system and are both major sources of tourists and destinations in their own right. Yet while there is substantial awareness of the way in which tourism is integral the overall positioning of urban centres and processes of place making (Andersson, 2014a, 2014b; Degen and Garcia, 2012;), there is surprisingly little research on the relationships between public policy and urban DMOs.

This research gap is further evident in light of the recent public sector reforms in Western countries as a result of the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis. The literature, so far, has addressed some of the repercussions of the crisis in the wider tourism sector (e.g. Giovanelli et al., 2015; Hall, 2010b; Kapiki, 2012; Mesquita Nunes, 2014; Page et al., 2011; Palma Brito, 2014; Royo, 2009) as well as in urban tourism destinations (Dredge and Jamal, 2013; Montanari, 2010, Stylidis and Terzidou, 2014). However, little research has been conducted so far with respect to public sector reforms and their impact on urban DMOs governance.

Dredge and Jamal (2013) acknowledges the relevance of the Global Financial Crisis in the progressive softening of DMO governance in the Gold Coast (Australia) and highlights how the progressive weakening of the state has jeopardized “any form of integrated or holistic destination management” (Dredge and Jamal, 2013: p. 574). Fathimath (2015), on the other hand, looks at the role of stakeholder collaboration in tourism following the amalgamation of local authorities in the Auckland metropolitan region (New Zealand) as a response to the need for increased place competitiveness at a time of economic crisis and suggests a framework to increase collaboration for the Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEEED) and tourism industry stakeholders at large. A complementary study by Locke (2012), narrows the analysis of the ATEEED governance with respect to the MICE sector and the re-positioning of Auckland as a business tourism venue following the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008.

None of the above mentioned studies, however, explicit deal with the extent to which the Global Financial Crisis and the public sector reforms affected urban tourism policy making and the changing DMOs governance. The present paper addresses these gaps in research with findings from the ongoing changes in the destination strategy and DMO governance taking place in Christchurch (New Zealand). The city has been used as case study for previous research in urban tourism, particularly in a post crisis context (see Amore and Hall 2016a and Hall et al. 2016 for reviews), but the governance changes affecting the local DMO (i.e. Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism (C&CT)) have, so far, been overlooked. This paper reprises the relevance of meta-narrative in tourism planning and policy (Dredge, Jenkins & Whitford, 2011) with respect to DMOs to illustrate how changes in governance and the urban built environment go hand in hand in the shaping of what has been termed the hyperneoliberal tourist city in which tourism urbanisation “is linked to meta or hyper-neoliberal discourses; hegemonic, market driven and market led” (Bosman and Dredge, 2011: 1). Hyper-neoliberalism, also referred to as hyperliberalism (Booth 2006), exists in situations when neoliberalism is taken to extremes with respect to processes of marketization (Fusch 2011, 2013) and, what is of particular interest for the present paper, the ongoing corporatisation and privatisation of public services (Bosman, 2007; Ryner et al., 1998).

Theoretical framework

“A destination represents an amalgam of a diverse and eclectic range of businesses and people, who might have a vested interest in the prosperity of their destination community” (Pike and Page, 2014: p. 203). Although destination organizations, can have management, planning and/or marketing dimensions *marketing* organizations, for the purposes of this paper the DMO nomenclature is used to identify the authority with the mandate of promoting and/or managing the given destination on behalf of tourism stakeholders (Leiper et al., 2008; Wang, 2011). Therefore, the analysis considers both place branding and urban landscapes “as part of a broader continuum of consumption oriented human mobility by which individuals travel to consume products and services in specifically branded, designed, and commodified space” (Hall, 2008a: 234).

Over the last thirty years, states, regional authorities and cities have established DMOs “as the main vehicle to compete and attract visitors to their distinctive place or visitor space” (Pike and Page, 2014: p. 202). The role of the public sector in providing the resources “to market the region or nation as destination” (Britton, 1991: p. 458) is secondary to other public policy plans of economic growth and development. In fact, public policies at all scales

are “rarely exclusively devoted to tourism per se” (Hall 2008b: p. 14), especially in urban contexts following the urban institutional restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s (Fainstein 2014; Pike and Page, 2014).

Bramwell and Rawding (1994) identify up to four types of destination organizations based on a study of DMOs in former industrial cities in England. The authors eventually conclude that, although public-private “partnership organizations with an involvement in tourism are becoming increasingly common” (Bramwell and Rawding, 1994: p. 433), the interests of businesses tend to prevail over the instances of local democracy, resource management and planning. The flaws of such partnerships is also stressed in Hall (1999). The predominance of corporatist and public-private organization types in destination management results, in fact, in the handing of power authority to unelected institutions, thus missing the aims of inclusiveness and collaboration heralded in mainstream western governments development agendas (Lovelock, 2001).

More recently, empirical findings and academic debates advocate for alternative approaches and forms of DMO that underpin the collaborative planning paradigm of contemporary planning theorists (e.g. Healey, 2006). The call for more integrated approaches in tourism planning (Hall, 2008), in particular, has led to the conceptualization of integrated destination management (IDM) (Jamal and Jamrozky, 2006), which combines principles of communicative planning (Healey, 2006) with those of destination management (Harrill, 2009), social capital (Costa, 2013) and multi-scalar networked collaboration (Hall, 2008). However, “the politics of DMO decision making can make the best theories unworkable in practise” (Pike and Page, 2014: p. 211). This is further evident in light of the public sector reforms following the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, with the enactment of hierarchical modes of metagovernance (Jessop, 2011; Meuleman, 2008,) in spatial planning (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009; Olesen, 2014; Tewdwr-Jones, 2012, Olesen, 2014) and tourism policy and planning (Amore and Hall, 2016b).

For urban DMOs, a prevailing strategy to increase “the attractiveness of the city as place to work, live and play” (Pike and Page, 2014: p. 217) is that of cultural events. The competition between cities is particularly evident in the bidding for large scale events (Garcia, 2005; Hall, 2006; Smith, 2012; Spirou 2010, 2013). Notwithstanding long-standing critical appraisals with regards to such intra-urban competition for culture and tourism (e.g. Harvey 1989; Malecki 2004, 2007), the neoliberal rhetoric of market-led development agendas in tourism still predominate. Ironically, the response to the failure of neoliberal economic model following the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis seems to have been an intensification of the neoliberal project, leading to a dominant “hyperneoliberal” (Fuchs 2011, 2013) “public discourse of economists about austerity programs and government debts” (Pühringer and Hirte, 2013: 13).

The rise of hyperneoliberalism and its impacts on DMO governance can be explained through three complementary perspectives. Firstly, the dominance of hegemonic neoliberal doctrine (Gallino, 2015; Harvey, 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002). This, in turn, has led to a post-political, ‘de-politicized’ environment (Swyngedouw 2010) “in which *potential issues* are kept out of politics” (Lukes 2005: p. 28, *italics* in the original). Tourism policy and planning, including urban DMOs, are no exception to this hegemonic trend (Britton, 1991; Hall, 2006, 2010) that has been shaping the urban environment and branded cities as exclusive spaces for

high-end leisure and recreation (Brabazon, 2014; Gotham, 2007; Spirou, 2010). Even the Global Financial Crisis seemed not to arrest the proliferation of tourist spaces and the efforts in destination marketing (Spirou, 2010), and if anything has accelerated some of these processes. In part, this process is related to the substantial use of public funding in place branding and place making and quartering leading to accelerated forms of urban change, elsewhere defined as hyper- or über-gentrification (Brahinsky, 2014; Rérat and Lees, 2011;).

A second explanation to the rise of hyperneoliberalism underpins the three-waves of the neoliberalization of urban policymaking identified by Olesen (2014). The final form of neoliberalisation, also known as “roll-with-it neoliberalisation” (Keil 2009: 232) is conceived as “as a period dominated by hegemonic neoliberal discourses across scales of governance” (Olesen, 2014: p. 293) that emerged following the dismantling and the rebuilding of the public sector between the 1980s and the 1990s. Again, the heightened neoliberal development agendas (Monaghan and O’Flynn, 2012) that led to the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis seem not to raise questions about the inner flaws of neoliberalism. Instead, the crisis has been used as leverage to further promote neoliberalism (i.e. hyperneoliberalism) as the one and only alternative to recover from economic recession rather than a return to more hierarchical governance approaches.

Finally, the third explanation to the rise of the hyperneoliberal paradigm is the shift from governance to metagovernance (Kooiman and Jentoft, 2009). While the concept of governance mainly refers to the changes in the public policy domain occurred in the 1990s (Kooiman, 2003; Rhodes, 1996, 1997) the concept of metagovernance has gained attention as “the governance of governance” (Jessop, 2011: p. 106), especially in the midst of the economic crisis affecting most of the western countries and the perceived failure of existing governance regimes. “Governance is prone to failure” (Jessop 2011 p. 113) and metagovernance is regarded as reflectively changing the mode of policymaking in accordance to the policy objectives (Offe, 1975, 2009). This is further evident with respect to financial and economic crisis scenarios and subsequent reform of the public sector under conditions of ‘austerity’ in many developed countries. Metagovernance emerges as a mixture of hierarchies, markets and networks in the wake of disasters (Meuleman, 2008) and consolidates throughout the recovery stage. However, metagovernance may simply displace governance flaws “into a more or less remote future” (Jessop, 2011: 117) and is similarly prone to failure in the long run (Jessop, 2011). Some of the imprinting of governance is also exacerbated in metagovernance policymaking and it is, therefore, no surprise that in the response to crisis in tourism the OECD stresses the importance “for governments to include private sector representatives in discussions” (OECD, 2012: p. 52).

Figure 1 illustrates the paradigm of hyperneoliberalism within the frame of crisis-prone capitalism. The figure partly reprises the logic of disaster capitalism and the dualism between sustainability and capitalism from (Klein 2007, 2014). It conceives public policy and the dedicate sphere of tourism policy-making as covert manifestations of the contemporary depoliticized environment in which policy interventions are limited by the ‘rationality’ of a narrow range of economic thinking (Hall, 2011, 2013). In such a situation hyperneoliberalism dominates the socio-technical system and frames the policy agenda that affect directly and indirectly impact tourism destinations and DMOs and sets destinations on particular development trajectories (Hall, 2015). Moreover, the figure acknowledges the exogenous pressures that events such as crises and disasters can have in the public policy sphere

including tourism. Lastly, the figure regards hyperneoliberalism as being reinforced by, if not a direct consequence of, crisis-prone capitalism and argues that because socio-technical systems and institutions are already set on certain economic and policy trajectories the hyperneoliberal doctrine will only further exacerbate the propensity to further crises and failures of the capitalist system.

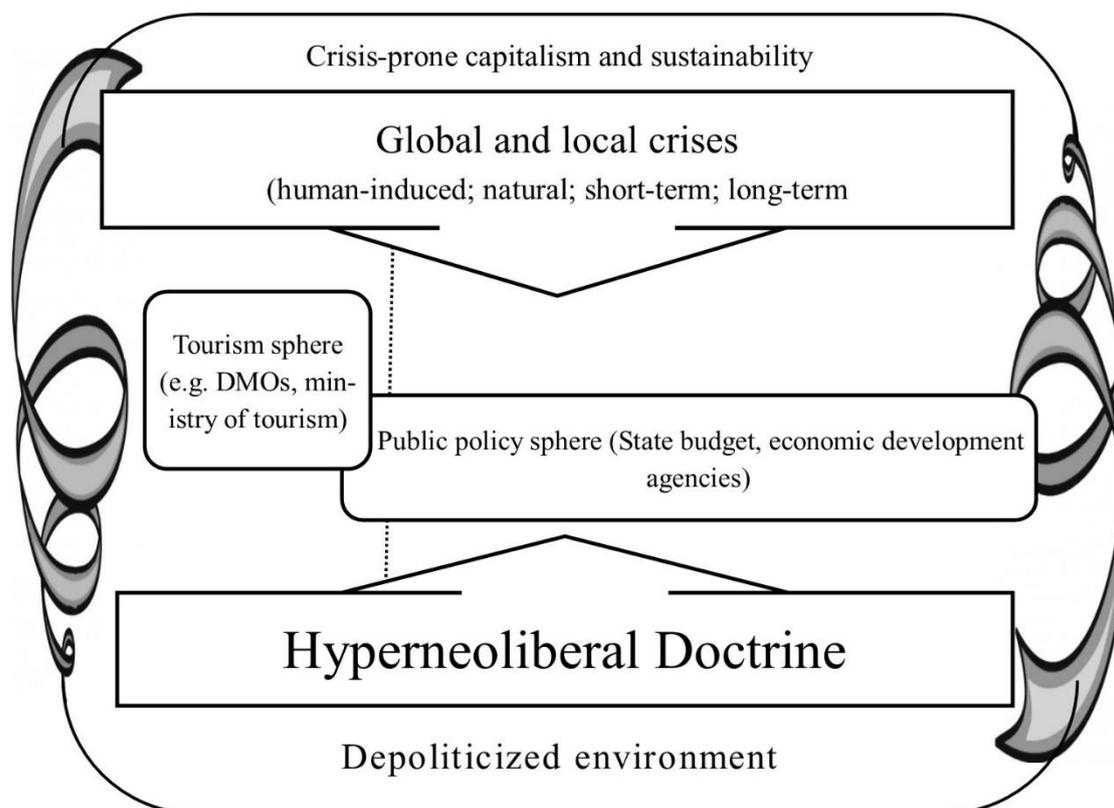


Figure 1 Political and ecological constraints in public policy and tourism policy agendas

Crises, public sector reforms and their impacts in tourism policy and planning: a multi-scalar overview

New Zealand

Similarly to many small countries around the world, the New Zealand economy was particularly affected by the 2007-2009 Global Financial Crisis. As the New Zealand Treasury reports, “business and consumer confidence plummeted as uncertainty dominated the global financial and economic environment” (New Zealand Treasury, 2010: N.P.), exchange rates shifted, and key export-led sectors such as manufacturing, agribusiness and tourism considerably weakened between 2008 and 2012. Along with international marketing campaigns to position New Zealand as a place to visit live and invest (Hall, 2016), the New Zealand central government underwent a series of important changes in the national legislation to ease the attraction of inward capitals and corporate investments (Kelsey, 2015). Between 2008 and 2013, the national government gradually eroded the autonomy of regional

and local authorities by increasingly centralising power and control at the central level (Kelsey, 2014, 2015; Nel, 2015), thus turning New Zealand into one of the most centralized governments in the Western world (OECD, 2013). This process has been complimented by public funding for even greater levels of internationalisation, in 2014, the government launched the *Regional Investment Attraction Programme* “to encourage more international firms to invest in New Zealand’s regional economies to increase growth and jobs” (New Zealand Government 2014: n.p.).

The reforms of the public sector in New Zealand over the last years has increasingly exposed regions and local authorities to global market forces (Kelsey 2015). This particularly affects the mission of economic development agencies (EDAs) in small communities as they struggle to develop economic development strategies for the local businesses and communities. Conversely, EDAs such as the Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED) have had much greater resources to outline an articulated development strategy addressed to businesses, the tourism economy, higher education and attraction of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs). The amalgamation of Auckland City Council with the nearby authorities and the disestablishment of the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) in 2010 further concentrated trade and visitor economy shares within the borders of the new Auckland Super City (Gattung, 2015), with 35% of the national GDP (ATEED, 2015a), more than NZD\$ 14 billion in imports and exports via air (NZSTATS, 2014) and NZD\$ 6.5 billion total tourism expenditure (ATEED, 2015b).

The market-obeying imprint of current legislation in New Zealand is also reflected in the promulgation of amended acts such as the *Historic Places Act 2014* (the streamlining of the building consent process, the recommendations in the change of Sections 6 and 7 of the *Resource Management Act 1991* and the amendments to the *Local Government Act 2002* (Kelsey 2014; Amore and Hall 2016a). In particular, the promulgation of a new act for historic sites underpins a predominant market-led approach to heritage appraisal and management. This is particularly evident in major urban areas of New Zealand that leaves owners of historic sites with the liabilities and very narrow financial schemes for the retention of legally listed historic sites (Amore, 2016). As Auckland-based barrister Nicola Jane Brazendale (2013: p. 245) stated, the conservation of heritage in New Zealand has turned, *de facto* into “a matter of market economics”. Similarly, the recommendations to the *Resource Management Act 1991* include a legislation that allows responsive tools that advantage economic and social development drivers (NZMFE, 2012) at the expenses of environmental factors. The amendments promulgated in 2013, in particular, seek to “improve the resource consent regime” (NZMFE, 2015) in favour of large scale development projects in urban areas. As the following section indicates, the orientation towards pro-growth development measures is particularly evident in the Greater Christchurch area, where the national government replaced local bodies in planning decision-making, particularly after the earthquakes of 2011 (Amore and Hall, 2016b). Lastly, the amendments to the *Local Government Act 2002* promulgated between 2010 and 2014 encouraged the amalgamation of major urban councils into new unitary authorities to reprise the Super City example of Auckland (Kelsey 2015). Most importantly, the amendments’ aim is to encourage greater private involvement in public services through the establishment of development agreements and provide councils with the legislative authority to propose reorganization and a more ‘efficient’ use of resources (Kelsey 2015).

With respect to tourism legislation, New Zealand has been a pioneer in tourism and destination management and marketing. New Zealand was one of the first countries in the world to establish a national tourism office and one of the first countries to reform the national agency into a more corporate structure with members from the private sector being appointed by the Minister of Tourism (Hall and Jenkins 1995). In 1991, the *New Zealand Tourism Board Act* abolished the New Zealand Tourism Department (NZTD) and established a new entity, Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) “to ensure that New Zealand is so marketed as a visitor destination as to maximise long-term benefits to New Zealand” (Cited in Treloar and Hall, 2004: p. 117). The *New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010* (Tourism Strategy Group, 2001), advocated the reform of the existing regional tourism organizations (RTOs) and the establishment of the Regional Tourism Organisations of New Zealand (RTONZ) to represent the interests of the regional tourism bodies throughout the country (Shone, 2013). RTOs, moreover, were expected to be accountable towards the local council and the community with respect to budgeting of place marketing initiatives. Finally, the regional governance scheme encouraged RTOs to collaborate with local authorities, the local EDAs and the private sector in the development of destination strategies (Shone, 2013).

Following the Global Financial Crisis, there have been further gradual changes with respect to the governance of tourism between 2008 and 2013. The incumbent Prime Minister, Hon. John Key, was appointed as Minister of Tourism and the Ministry of Tourism was integrated into the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) (OECD, 2012), which was then eventually merged under the portfolio of the Minister for Business, Innovation and the Employment (NZMBIE) in 2012. The government increased the funding to tourism for the branding and promotion of New Zealand regions and key destinations to overseas markets from NZD\$ 73 million in 2008 to NZD\$ 115.8 million in 2015 (New Zealand Treasury, 2008, 2015) the Major Events Development Fund under the MED portfolio (OECD, 2012) and Tourism Growth Partnerships (TGPs) were launched “to overcome constraints to growth and lift the value that international tourism delivers to New Zealand” (NZMBIE, 2015). Most importantly, it promoted a development agenda to attract business tourism in New Zealand and develop a national convention centre in Auckland in a public-private partnership arranged (OECD, 2012), with the Sky City casino which, as a result of the agreement to build the national convention centre was able to gain a change in its operating conditions. This approach underpinned the Tourism Strategy up to 2015, which foresaw the implementation of a pro-growth strategy that would have increased the flow of international tourist arrivals and the return of investment from the private sector (TNZ, 2007). It should therefore not be a surprise that the current Tourism Strategy (to 2025) (TIANZ, 2015) seeks to improve the competitiveness of New Zealand’s tourism economy by further increasing the investment on business events and attracting the lucrative Chinese inbound tourism market.

Christchurch

Christchurch is the second city of New Zealand after Auckland and the main metropolitan area of the South Island (Hall et al., 2016). The tourism economy represents one of the region’s core exports to overseas markets but has struggled over recent years (Orchiston et al., 2016). The sector was particularly affected by the repercussions of the Global Financial Crisis with respect to inbound tourism flows from key origin destinations such as Australia, the UK and the USA and, most importantly, the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 (Orchiston et al., 2016; Potter et al., 2015). The latter associated with substantial infrastructural and

building damage, the slow pace of planning the recovery of the Christchurch CBD and delays in settlement claims that all made the recovery process very painful to the tourist industry (Orchiston et al., 2016; Prayag & Orchiston, 2016).

The response of the authorities following the major February 22nd 2011 earthquake sought to support businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector, in a phase of increasing uncertainty and a steady drop of visitors to the city (Potter et al., 2015). The national government established a competent public authority (the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA)) to rebuild the city and oversee the delivery of anchor projects that sought to increase the appeal of the city to major hospitality and tourism stakeholders from New Zealand and overseas (Amore & Hall, 2016). Projects such as the new Convention Centre Precinct and the Performing Arts Precinct were launched in 2014 to attract tourists from New Zealand and overseas (CCDU 2014a, 2014b). The local DMO the Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism (C&CT), a CCC funded body that operates as a private company, issued a Visitor Recovery Strategy (VRS) to “assist accelerating the recovery of visitor flows to the city” (C&CT, 2012:1). The strategy is one of the many recovery projects under the constant supervision of the local EDA, the Canterbury Development Corporation, whose Christchurch Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) foresees a number of projects led by 26 leading stakeholders as well as a strategy to increase the competitiveness of the Greater Christchurch region for the next 25 years (CDC, 2013).

As a destination marketing organization, the C&CT mainly focused its efforts on marketing initiatives to key international markets such as Australia and China (C&CT, 2013a) and collaborated with the Christchurch International Airport Limited (CIAL) to strengthen the role of Christchurch as main gateway to the South Island and thus reduce the loss of passenger flow experienced in the aftermath of the earthquakes to the advantage of Queenstown Airport (interview with ‘Jeb’). Parallel to the VRS, the C&CT also released a Sports Tourism Strategy in collaboration with a local destination consulting company and the Christchurch City Council (CCC) to increase the appeal of Christchurch as international sports event destination (C&CT, 2013b). Finally, it submitted proposals to CERA, the CCC and the national government to support the delivery of the new Convention Centre (C&CT, 2011) and the Avon River Park to re-position Christchurch as a key international destination and thus reduce the loss of visitors following the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 (informal meeting with ‘Joseph’). Notwithstanding such initiatives and engagement with the redevelopment of Christchurch, the visitor economy figures show that the recovery of the city as destination between 2010 and 2013 lagged behind the forecasted worst scenario of the VRS (informal meeting with ‘Elton’).

The C&CT and major regional tourism stakeholders also launched three partnership projects under the TGPs funding programme to attract visitors from Australia and China (NZMBIE, 2015b, 2015c) and the Christchurch Adventure Park (NZMBIE, 2015d). In light of the problems encountered with long-term recovery, in 2014 C&CT released a 5-year strategic plan to reposition Christchurch as major destination for business tourism, sports tourism and education tourism (C&CT, 2014). In addition, C&CT collaborated with council-controlled authorities such as the Canterbury Development Corporation (CDC) and local event management stakeholders (i.e. Vbase and the Events Management Unit of the CCC) for the release of the report *Christchurch City of Opportunity* (CDC, 2015), which reviews the current CEDS with new key objectives (informal meeting with ‘Ted’) to complement the new

CCC-led regeneration authority (Regenerate Christchurch) in partnership with the National Government that will replace CERA in mid-2016. In particular, the collaboration between C&CT and CDC is expected to lead many of the economic development activities identified in the CCC Long Term Plan 2015-2025.

At the time of writing, the C&CT, which operates as a private business with only two members of the board appointed by the CCC, is likely to merge with the CCC Events Management Unit CDC and Vbase into a single public-private organization (Fulton, 2015b). The new agency is meant to maximise the benefits of combining place branding with urban development and minimise the inefficiencies that had risen through duplication (CCC, 2015b). This amalgamation is part of the extensive CCC cost-saving restructuring (Law, 2015) that began in mid-2013 with the resignation of the CCC CEO Tony Marryatt and the appointment in May 2014 of Dr. Karleen Edwards as new Chief Executive. Following the advice of a Wellington-based consulting agency with expertise in Public Management (Cameron Partners), the CCC commercial architecture is likely to incorporate rebuilding, commercial investment tourism and development under the umbrella of a new CCC-controlled company (Cameron Partners, 2014).

Traits of hyperneoliberalism in the re-organization of the CCC and C&CT

In light of the events that led to the decision, in November 2015, to restructure the C&CT and merge it with other CCC controlled companies (i.e. CDC, Vbase and the Events Management Unit of the CCC) it can be argued that the re-organization of the public sector in New Zealand and, particularly, in Christchurch, demonstrates the traits of hyperneoliberalism. In such a regime, the centralization of powers steadily superseded the devolution scheme that characterized the reforms of the public authorities in New Zealand as foreseen in the original *Local Government Act 2002* (Kelsey, 2015). Democratically elected authorities were either commissioned or superseded by unelected commissioners and authorities such as CERA and the CCDU that directly responded to the central National Party led government. Similarly, the legislation that was originally put in place for the conservation of historic sites and natural resources has been progressively dismantled in order to further embed the New Zealand economy to the influences of international (Amore, 2016). The unicameral political system and the absence of an entrenched, constitutional-ranked law in New Zealand eased the process of reforms promulgated under the National Government from 2008 onwards, with local authorities simply implementing the legislation that emanated from Wellington (Kelsey, 2014, 2015).

Following the Global Financial Crisis and the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 and 2011, the CCC has undergone substantial changes in re-organizing its resources to increase 'efficiency' and 'competitiveness' while reducing costs. It may be argued that the National Government proactively subsidized businesses to cope with the aftermath of the earthquake or that the government contribution to the rebuild of Christchurch is on the range of many billions of dollars (New Zealand Government, 2011). However, the actual contribution of the National Government to the rebuild of Christchurch is approximately of NZD\$ 2 billion (McCrone, 2015) and most of the funds redirected to the city recovery come from the Earthquake Commission (EQC) reserves that accumulated over the years. Conversely, the CCC has to allocate up to NZD\$ 1.9 billion for infrastructure and anchor projects under a binding cost-

sharing agreement (CERA, 2013) that can only be re-negotiated under ministerial approval (informal meeting with ‘Jack’). Given the financial exposure of the CCC due to underinsured assets following the earthquakes and issues with its major insurer (Civic Assurance), the CCC only had two options to comply with the rebuilding agenda, i.e. selling part of the shares from its local public companies (McCrone, 2015) or increasing the council taxation (The Press, 2012). With any direct money injection from the National Government, the CCC eventually voted in June 2015 to propose the selling of shares from strategic assets such as Orion Energy, CIAL and the Lyttelton Port of Christchurch (LPC) (Cairns and Law, 2015).

Similarly, we can identify traits of the hyperneoliberal doctrine in the reorganization of the CCC internal organization and of its key commercial agencies, namely, C&CT and CDC. Following the resign of Tony Marryatt as CEO of the CCC in 2013, the CCC appointed an internal senior manager (Jane Parfitt) as interim CEO. Ms. Parfitt started a series of organizational rationalizations that began with the disestablishment of top management positions to streamline the council’s building control authority (Cairns, 2013a). The restructuring followed the inputs of Doug Martin from Wellington-based consultants MartinJenkins, who was one of the main contributors of the *State Sector Act 1988* (Easton, 1997) during the neoliberal shift in public management in New Zealand , as well as producing the report leading to the replacement of the democratically elected councillors for Environment Canterbury by central government appointees. This represents the first major restructuring of the CCC internal structure since 2003 (Cairns, 2013b), when the CCC implemented changes at the top-management level to support the council’s objectives identified in the original *Local Government Act 2002* (CCC, 2003). The reorganization of the CCC further continued after the appointment of Dr. Edwards as new CEO in May 2014 and culminated in 2015 with a substantial downsizing of the CCC bureaucratic structure (Cairns and Sherwood, 2015).

Elements of the hyperneoliberal agenda in public policy can be also seen with the recent decision, in mid-November 2015, to elaborate a business case study to address the merging of the C&CT with CDC, Vbase and the Event Management Unit of the CCC. The proposal follows the input of consultants Cameron & Partners that recommended to establish a public-funded company to oversee the rebuild of the city, the attraction of businesses, the development of a strategic plan and the branding of the city as place to visit, work and live. The CCC partly followed the recommendation by establishing Development Christchurch Limited under the CCC holdings in April 2015 (CCC, 2015a) and reprised the Auckland experience with ATEED to incorporate tourism, events and development under a single authority. At the time of writing, C&CT Chief Executive, Tim Hunter, resigned before the end of his term as part of the reform (Fulton, 2015b). In the view of the CCC “tourism, events, economic development and city promotion are inextricably linked and must be approached in a more joined up manner” (Fulton, 2015a). Given the financial struggles of the C&CT following the earthquakes and the need for the CCC to maximise its re-capitalization and minimize its costs, the decision to merge organizations under a single authority is framed in neoliberal terms as the only alternative left to coalesce resources to redevelop and re-brand the city of Christchurch to overseas markets. The establishment of such a body as a public-private company also serves to further distance tourism policy making from the wider community that is being branded.

Finally, traits of the hyperneoliberal agenda are seen in the recent debates about a Super-City for Christchurch that would amalgamate the CCC with the nearby district councils of Selwyn and Waimakariri (Ching et al., 2013). The proposed boundaries reprise the Greater Christchurch area identified in the *Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011* and underpin the Super City example of Auckland. However, rumours in 2014 about a unitary authority for Greater Christchurch did not meet strong support among local politicians (interview with ‘Adam’). Concerns were similarly stressed by local political analysts, which highlighted the increasing democratic vacuum that has characterized the Christchurch and the Canterbury Region since 2010 with the suspension of elected representation in Environment Canterbury regional council (ECan) and the overpowering control of CERA in Greater Christchurch (McCrone, 2014).

Conclusions

This paper sought to address a gap in the literature with respect to the governance of urban DMOs with findings from Christchurch’s based C&CT. In particular, it introduced a context of large-scale reforms in the public sector and its repercussions on the local DMOs with findings from a major urban destination in New Zealand that has been struggling to fully recover following the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. Unlike with other works focusing on the governance of tourism in times of financial crisis, austerity and public sector reforms, this paper interprets the overall context as profoundly rooted into a neoliberal doctrine that shows traits of hyperneoliberalism and increasing democracy vacuum at the expenses of the local community.

This paper provided an insight on the public policy reforms that were promulgated in New Zealand since the outbreak of the Global Financial Crisis and illustrated their impacts on the reform of local bureaucracies and controlled companies with findings from Christchurch. The paper identified a hyperneoliberal trait in the public policy agenda emanated from the national government that reformed the governance of tourism and of local authorities. In particular, with respect to DMOs, the Government maintained the business-like imprint of TNZ while injecting more funds for the promotion of the country to overseas markets. Conversely, the policy for local DMOs does not foresee the injection of funds to the 29 Regional Tourism Authorities, which can only rely on local councils as a main source for public funding. Findings from Christchurch suggest that the CCC is looking for a renewed rationalization of its resources in which the local DMO is most likely going to merge with the local EDA. This solution also underpins the model adopted in Auckland with the establishment of the ATEED as well as recommendations from the public management consultants that have been involved with major neoliberal reforms in New Zealand since the end of the 1980s.

The context in which the C&CT is being reformed reprises the several examples of suspended democracy illustrated in the *Shock Doctrine* (Klein, 2007). The introduction of austerity measures to tighten public expenditure was coupled with market-oriented politics for the attraction of international funds and corporate. Along with a merely marginal role in the recovery decision-making debate, C&CT faced, as C&CT board chairman Dave Hawkey stated, “a time of unprecedented challenges” (in Fulton, 2015a) along with the regional tourism economy at large. The downsizing of the C&CT staff following the earthquakes, (informal meeting with ‘Joseph’) and the closure of several hospitality and cultural facilities

between 2011 and 2013 severely affected tourism in Christchurch (C&CT, 2013). At the same time, the financial struggles of the CCC, i.e. the main public funding body of C&CT and the delay in projects like the new Convention Centre Precinct (Weekes, 2015) negatively impacted on the implementation of the VRS and the re-branding of the city as a business tourism destination for the years to come (informal meeting with 'Joseph').

Further research will be required to address the reform of C&CT and its merging with CDC, Vbase and the Events Management Unit of CCC following the release of the business case in mid-2016. Similarly, it would be interesting to compare the local tourism development agenda of Christchurch with those of the two other major urban destinations of New Zealand (Auckland and Wellington) from a theoretically informed perspective. Finally, the hyperneoliberal urban redevelopment agenda set in place in Christchurch following the earthquakes has yet to be fully implemented. The forthcoming Regenerate Christchurch authority that will replace CERA in April 2016 and the role of the reformed tourism development agency in the decision-making process can potentially be objects for research in the future.

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