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Published

2013

Journal Title

Tourism Analysis

Version

Version of Record (VoR)

DOI

[10.3727/108354213X13613720283601](https://doi.org/10.3727/108354213X13613720283601)

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COMMUNITY CASE STUDY RESEARCH: RESEARCHER OPERACY, EMBEDDEDNESS, AND MAKING RESEARCH MATTER

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Research performance is increasingly measured in terms of the number of publications, the quality of the outlet, citations, and other key performance indicators. This performance-driven approach means that output is viewed as the object of research rather than the knowledge created and researchers adopting methodologies that do not easily fit within this neoliberal paradigm experience tensions and dilemmas. This article argues that researchers should be directly engaged, often embedded in the community, as a methodological necessity of social research: the researcher's positionality involves a critical self-reflexive stance towards knowledge production and transformative change—it enables an ethical stance on the politics of placemaking and the discursive constructions by self and other, and facilitates responsibility to social action (performative praxis). On a practical note, tourism community case study has rewards and benefits for research productivity over the long term. Deep engagement in the complexities of wicked problems closes the gap between research and practice; allows personal and professional growth through reflexive engagement; assists exploring alternative knowledge; and increases the capacity for knowledge sharing and coproduction of knowledge. Researchers' self-reflexive accounts of engaging in embedded tourism case study are offered to illustrate the politics of cknowledge production, performative action, and change.

Key words: Case study research; Performance; Researcher operacy; Embeddedness

Introduction

This article aims to explore community case studies as a research strategy in tourism and to expose the tensions and dilemmas that researchers face in the increasingly pressured university

research context when adopting this approach. The community case study is a research strategy that examines the way in which a community or multiple communities produce meanings about tourism and how individual, organizational and institutional responses are shaped by these social processes

(Beeton, 2005; Richards & Munsters, 2010). For the authors, community case study research is a powerful strategy to explore “messy” or “wicked” problems that communities often face when dealing with, for example, tourism development and management, resident–visitor conflicts, or local tourism governance. In this context, “wicked” problems are nonlinear, complex, contested, and persistent despite considerable efforts to solve them (Brown, Harris, & Russell, 2010; van Bueren, Klijn, & Koppenjan, 2003) while “messy” draws from the ideas of Ackoff (1974) and Law (2004) to suggest that social messes are interacting problem sets that are resistant to description, analysis, and resolution due to their dynamic, interdependent qualities.

Community case study is therefore a complex research approach; it is also time consuming and sits uneasily within the current performance-driven environment of the higher education sector. Moreover, the positionality of the researcher comes into question where the researcher is situated within multiple ethical, political, and ontological perspectives (Jamal & Menzel, 2009; Leopold, 2011). This type of social research involves “operacy”—embodied, self-reflexive engagement in knowledge production and change, action, and movement, “the skill of doing”, as de Bono (1985) describes it. It is not literature that is generated by meaningful social research, but performative action and *praxis*, through direct involvement in a research context (see Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). This in turn necessitates that researchers confront public interests issues/dilemmas in the public sphere. This article explores these tensions, arguing that, despite its time-consuming nature and the need for researchers to be deeply engaged and often embedded in the community, community case study has rewards and benefits for research productivity over the long term. These rewards include opportunities for quality research; deep engagement in the complexities of the *real* world and wicked problems; closing the gap between research and practice; personal and professional growth through self-reflexive engagement; exploring alternative knowledges and increased capacity for knowledge sharing and the coproduction of knowledge.

However, such pragmatic ends are not reached by “neutral” third-person, god’s-eye views but

rather by acknowledgement of the “worldmaking” role of social researchers in the politics of knowledge production, and the ethical responsibility of tourism academics towards social action and transformative change (Hollinshead, 2009). We argue in this article that direct engagement in situated contextual study (e.g., via embedded community case study) and self-reflexive positionality enables researchers to directly engage in public issues and to become agents of change, directly or indirectly. Additionally, we call for renewed attention to communicating and sharing narrative accounts and practice stories of researchers, planners, and policy makers. They facilitate the coconstruction of situated knowledges (Dredge, Jenkins, & Whitford, 2011; Sandercock, 2003), enrich our critical understandings, and “engage our emotions and passions, calling us to attention, and to ask: ‘Would or could I have done that? What should I have done?’” (Forester, 2001, p. 36). Our self-reflexive journeys through embedded case study in the field are situated below, within a discussion of the institutional structures that shape our participatory freedoms, enabling and constraining our abilities to be public intellectuals engaged in critically facilitating social justice, sustainability, and “public interest.”

Context of Research Performance

In the current university environment, research performance is increasingly measured in terms of number of publications, the quality of the outlet, citations, and a raft of other key performance indicators (Hazelkorn, 2011; Hicks, 2010; Marginson, 2001). Not surprisingly, universities are actively exploring ways to increase publication output and the industrialization of the research process has become a key strategy to achieve this (Gale & Wright, 2008; Marginson, 1999, 2006). The industrialization of the research process involves segmenting the research process and using research process workers (e.g., research assistants, administration assistants, quantitative and qualitative methodologists, editors, etc.) to undertake various components of the research and to produce outputs¹. This approach facilitates rapid production of research publications, and also allows sets of researchers to produce customized variations of the output for different journals. One unfortunate

impact of this industrialization process is that many academic workers are becoming removed from hands-on engagement in research. Successful academics spend little time doing the research, but in writing proposals so that they can employ research staff to produce the outputs on which they will put their names (Bazeley, 2010). As Steele (p. 67, cited in Bazeley, 2010) observes, the “publication is now viewed as the objective of research, rather than the dissemination of the knowledge contained within it.”

While the industrialization process described above might increase research outputs and collaboration might result in greater “checks and balances” and oversight from multiple authors, mixed messages are emerging. Some critics argue that the social sciences have *lost their way* in emphasizing quantity of outputs over significance to society: the social sciences have failed to address the *big questions* of our time, and publication outputs are seen as less and less relevant to policy making and the aim of making a difference (Shergold, 2011). Moreover, the level of theoretical engagement and the choice of research approach and methods are inevitably affected by pressures to publish, resulting in a situation where researchers often have neither the time nor interest in disseminating their research back to the community of stakeholders (Tight, 2004).

In an examination of what research performance actually means, Bazeley (2010) argues that the operationalization of research metrics has taken place without proper theoretical conceptualization. In an attempt to better understand research performance, Bazeley (2010) analyzes the responses of 2,090 academics across different disciplines at three Australian universities representing different university types. She identifies six key dimensions of research performance: researcher engagement; task orientation; research practice; intellectual process, dissemination; and collegial environment. These dimensions stand in stark contrast to the metrics currently used to evaluate performance in Australian universities and offer a more expansive scope in which research performance could be judged.

While recognizing the current pressures on the university research environment (and which we do not seek to divorce from teaching and service pressures), this article explores community case study

research and its role, challenges, and implications in terms of research performance. Case studies are defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 13), and community case studies represent a particular subset of case study research. A community case study in tourism focuses research attention on the way social processes within a community or multiple communities produce meanings about tourism and shape individual, organizational, and institutional responses. We use the example of community case study here to explore the role, positionality, and reflexive engagement of the social researcher engaged in tackling wicked tourism problems in situ.

Used in this sense, “wicked problems” are multi-dimensional and characterized by a complex layering of stakeholder values and meanings over time and across space. Generally there is no single solution, stakeholder, or action that can “solve” the problem (Brown et al., 2010; Rittel & Webber, 1973). Most social problems fall into this realm and traditional social science case study research, inspired by positivism and postpositivism, has been unsuccessful in understanding such issues much less identify and take action to address them. We argue that embedded case study research provides an opportunity to better understand this wickedness, and for researchers to position themselves more closely to a community’s problems and become involved in discussion and actions with respect to potential solutions.

The complexity and transdisciplinary nature of most wicked tourism problems makes them inherently time consuming to investigate from an embedded case study perspective. Borrowing from Gramsci’s (1992) *Organic Intellectual* tradition, and Apple’s (2006) notion of critical scholar-activist, the researcher is positioned within and not separate to the community/public and uses a “commonsense,” reflexive approach in their research. In the embedded case study approach, the researcher is deeply engaged; the research can be unpredictable in how it unfolds; and the researcher is often called upon to make ethical decisions and take action in the field. Clearly this type of research requires attention to the little details in the field, and it requires deeply self-reflexive, fluid engagement with theory and practice in a “messy” context.

For Leonardo (2010), the emphasis is on effecting change:

it is important to build conceptual frameworks that are responsive to budding social movements and to take responsibility for the way the frameworks enter movements through discourses as forms of social practice. The goal is what I will call building a “down to earth” critical social theory. . . . These theories are powerful not because they have elite or even trendy status, but because, in their ability to intervene, theories confirm the power of language to expand our understanding of social . . . life rather than narrow it through reductive analysis. (pp. 161–162)

In the increasingly pressured research environment in the neoliberal university, there are important ramifications for this type of research (Jacoby, 1987). This article seeks to reassert the place community case study research as a meaningful research approach that can address the criticisms being leveled at social science academics and the social sciences in terms of addressing the *big questions* of society and making a difference to the problems that matter² (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Nussbaum, 1997, 2010; Shergold, 2011). But it does mean getting out of the office and becoming embedded in the community context. As Iris Murdoch (1970) put so well: “Where virtue is concerned, we often apprehend more than we understand and *we grow by looking*” (cited in Forester, 2001, p. 35). Looking through reflexive eyes as embodied researchers in the field enables engaging the other in performative acts that generate practical knowledge and *phronetic* wisdom through dialogue and practice. We recount further below our personal journeys through a community case study, and argue for greater attention to narratives and story-telling as powerful tools for knowledge coconstruction (between self and “other,” self and reader) and for communicating critical self-analysis and (self-)reflexivity.

Tourism Community Case Studies

Defining Community

Community is a very difficult term to define and even the best attempts can be ambiguous (Beeton, 2006; Murphy, 1988). It is often taken for granted that community denotes a group of people who share some common features (i.e., they share the

same ethnic background, are domiciled in proximity to each other, or they possess the same values). However, communities are far from homogeneous, which for many community case study researchers is both a source of fascination and frustration (Joppe, 1996; Reid, Mair, & George, 2004). To illustrate, community may be defined in a variety of ways including:

- *A spatially coherent group of people.* However, ambiguity emerges when the notion of scale is introduced (e.g., the local community and the global community).
- *A group of people sharing ethnic, cultural, professional, or other characteristics.* However, that people share one or a number of common values and beliefs does not mean they are a homogenous community. People can share some common characteristics in one domain (e.g., ethnic background) and at the same time exhibit opposing values in another domain (e.g., adherence to cultural traditions, educational attainment, or voting behavior).
- *A group of people sharing of common beliefs, attitudes, interests, and identities.* As in the above example, ambiguity emerges where some people share common beliefs in one domain (e.g., attitudes to tourism) but vary in other ways (e.g., level of involvement in tourism).

In essence then, the notion of community is inherently vague and dependent upon the context and the purpose for which it is defined. Individuals can belong to more than one community and communities can overlap and intersect depending upon the issues under investigation. In this sense, good community case study research does not allow the problem of definition to get in the way, but accepts that community is dynamic, socially constructed, and ambiguous. It is also, quite often, unbounded in that the researcher tends to determine the number of participants in a case study by making value judgments about the minimum threshold needed to understand the social processes within that community context. In essence, then, the focus of the research is on the interactions between community members (i.e., the individuals that have direct or indirect relational ties) and between the community and *the other*. In this way community case studies

are distinguished from other types of case studies that focus on objects such as policies or decisions (Beeton, 2005).

Characteristics of Community Case Studies

As a research approach, community case studies are inspired by social constructionism, a particular worldview and methodological slant that takes the view knowledge and understandings of a particular situation, event, or circumstance are socially constructed and dependent upon the way in which participants interact with each other and are influenced by the external context. Community case studies are therefore empirical and context dependent, and cannot be abstracted from the situated interactions and practices of community members. They are also dependent upon the way in which community is defined. They will also be influenced by the particular theoretical explanations and frameworks that a researcher may choose to adopt, and which will be discussed later in the article.

Notwithstanding this diversity in the way community can be defined, in our view, community case studies share a number of common characteristics:

- Tourism community case study research commonly seeks to describe, explore, and/or explain tourism or an aspect of tourism within the social context of a community or set of communities.
- Tourism community case study research focuses on the social interactions around, and the processing of, a particular phenomenon in one (single case study) or multiple (comparative case studies) settings.
- Tourism community case study research is undertaken in situ, exploring the phenomenon or a particular dimension of tourism in its natural setting.
- Tourism community case study research is undertaken over a period of time (e.g., a longitudinal case study).
- Tourism community case study research focuses on the relationships between participants some of whom may be active or inactive, and directly or indirectly involved in tourism or affected by it.
- Tourism community case studies draw from several data sources and employ different methods; processes of triangulation and crystallization are often used in generating understandings. Data are

not conceived as being *out there* and reflexive approaches to the research process acknowledges the embedded position of the researcher (Feighery, 2006).

- Tourism community study research commonly (but not always) includes learning and reflection on the part of the researcher, and which may be shared with community members (Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2009, 2011).
- Community case study entails self-reflexive engagement with one's own positionality and role with respect to the "other" and to the ethical responsibilities of a social science academic (see below).

These characteristics find their origins in rich historical debates about the character, role and value of social sciences research in general, and the detailed argumentation of methods and approaches in particular. This background is now discussed.

Tourism Case Studies as Messy Research

Community case study research has evolved considerably in recent years. Previously, researchers under pressure to publish were bounded by the expectations and protocols of their disciplinary-based research communities and the academic tribes to which they belonged (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler, 1988). In those study areas where the complex and messy character of case studies were less recognized, researchers often found themselves trying to create the illusion of a rational scientific approach, when in fact their research was much more organic and creative, drawing fluidly and simultaneously from a variety of theoretical and practical understandings. It wasn't until the latter part of the 20th century that this began to change and social research came to be viewed as complex, messy, and dynamic. Horn (2001) has identified mess as a fundamental part of complex social systems. Messes do not have straightforward solutions and may not have solutions at all. Social messes are characterized by complication, complexity, and ambiguity; they contain considerable uncertainty—in terms of conditions and potential actions; have large constraints and are tightly interconnected, economically, socially, politically, technologically; are seen differently from different points of views and worldviews; thus they have many value conflicts;

and finally they are quite often a-logical or illogical (Horn, 2001). Such a view suggests that tourism community case study research methods will need to account for social messes.

In the case of tourism research then, scientific approaches alone are inadequate in understanding complex problems and calls have been made for an extended range of approaches and methods (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Tribe, 2004). Law (2004) argues that, in trying to describe and analyze things in a coherent way, the social sciences have made a mess of trying to make sense of things that are inevitably messy, diffuse, and complex; the methods, rules, and frameworks that we employ (and derived from disciplinary foundations) have in fact helped to produce the reality that we understand, but this is not necessarily helping us understand any better.

Law (2004) calls upon researchers to explore other realities and understandings by drawing upon the rich hinterland of preexisting social and material realities to bundle and reassemble it in different ways. These views have been increasingly supported by those seeking a postdisciplinary tourism research agenda; an approach that adopts a creative and flexible approach to investigating problems and that embodies greater scholarly tolerance for different views and methods (Coles, Hall, & Duval, 2006; Etchner & Jamal, 1997; Hollinshead & Jamal, 2007). New understandings of ontological politics of knowledge construction ["worldmaking" in Hollinshead's (2009) concern], the intimate relationship of truth-knowledge (Foucault, 1980), and critical deconstruction of modernist, reductionist, and universalist discourses have stimulated a surge in empirical, contextualized research, and a focus on demonstrating the practical relevance of theory (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Ruddin, 2006) and how things work in a complex world. Seidman and Alexander (2001) liken this to a kind of *up-shifting* in the relevance and legitimacy of contextualized, grounded, empirical research such as case studies.

Flyvbjerg (2006) argues for the phronetic researcher, and the importance of case study closeness to real-life situations, as they enable (i) a nuanced view of reality rather an impoverished understanding of human behavior as simply the "rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process, and in much theory," and facilitate (ii) the researcher's own learning process "in developing the skills to do good research" (p.

72). He is also cognizant of the performative act of interpretation and knowledge construction, and draws on Foucault views of "rationality and power, knowledge and power, reason and power, truth and power" (p. 124) to better situate *phronesis* and practical wisdom as integrally interwoven with situated social research, research in context, as through case study. Such a phronetic, performative approach to social research, however, also requires critical self-reflexive analysis.

Critical self-analysis involves critically reflecting on the discourses influencing one's own knowledge, and hence how these shape interpretation of the "other." Methods incorporating critical self-analysis include, for instance, self-reflexive autoethnography and social action research. Saukko (2003) conceptualizes self-reflexive autoethnography in terms of Foucault's technology of the self, as one always needs to govern oneself. One must do an inventory of the discourses that have constituted one's self, which then enables reflection on the way in which one relates an experience and constitutes the "other." Put differently, the twofold goal of self-reflexive autoethnography is to relate an experience and to "critically investigate the discourses that have constituted that experience" (Saukko 2003, p. 85). We argue there is a third turn in self-reflexive autoethnography, where understanding one's positionality in relation to the other through critical self-analysis opens up spaces for phronetic, performative action [note here the phronetic aspects of De Bono's (1985) notion of "operacy," where action and movement is a skill that is enhanced when practiced regularly, and where the relationship between knowledge and its value in the practice sense is enhanced]. The ability to characterize, for instance, domination and oppression in the lived experience of others is not adequate—Foucauldian analysis argues for understanding the historically sedimented discourses that shape one's own (i.e., the researcher's) fears and (performative) acts in relation to that lived experience. So, for instance, one might feel disempowered or reluctant to engage in projects that require careful, long-term monitoring over their impacts on disadvantaged populations (homeless youth for instance). Critical self-analysis might lead one to better recognize one's own positionality, subjection, and complicity in enabling an academic institution whose performance review indicators are based on modernity's

promise of “growth” and “progress” and support quick turnaround and little acknowledgement for activism and social justice. But does one then have an obligation to engage in critical political or cultural *praxis*? Does the academic researcher living on public funds have a responsibility towards ensuring environmental and social well-being of the communities being researched? Or of students being taught or supervised?

Aristotle’s answer might simply be “yes.” The *phronesis* that develops through engagement with the other and with the self, and the situated context in which both are embedded, is inextricably interwoven with performative action. Aristotle’s (1980) aim in the *Nicomachean Ethics* was not merely to engage with the task of individual flourishing or well-being, and the development of requisite virtues (including prudence and *phronesis*) through learning and practice. The virtues one developed had to be engaged performatively in political practice and governance of the *polis*—the acquisition of *phronesis* and other virtues were not ends in themselves, the end was a well-functioning polis and social world that facilitated individual well-being and happiness. Critical self-analysis and reflexive methodologies task the researcher, then, to engage *phronesis* towards the end of praxis and performative action. So, what does (can?) the harried researcher in a neoliberal university do then? What constitutes “operacy” in the context of wicked problems that the self-reflexive researcher is embedded in through direct engagement in the field/community?

In the context of this overview of community case study research, which is messy, complex, and dynamic, critical reflection and reflexive engagement resulting in creative problem solving and change in situ lays a significant burden of responsibility on the social researcher. Early career researchers and graduate students are confronted quickly with ethical dilemmas as they address “wicked” or messy problems and attempt to engage meaningfully in community case study research (Horn, 2001). What institutional structures might inhibit or enable them to not only describe reflexively the what, how, why like questions, but also take a deeply self-reflexive stance on their own positionality and responsibility towards the “other,” critically examining injustice and oppression, and advocating transformative change (being praxis

oriented researchers)? And why would any university eager to improve its research publication rates support this type of research that engages in reflexive praxis and questions the rationalization of academic space and colonization of the researcher’s lifeworld? (see Jamal & Everett, 2004). To answer these questions, it is first useful to consider, through stories of practice, what phronetic embedded case study research might entail.

Research Performance and Community Case Study Research

Research and Performance in Tourism Community Case Studies: Two Case Studies

The following two case studies illustrate *phronesis* and performative *praxis* through critical self-analysis and engagement with the other. These cases are intended to illustrate the deeply personal, reflexive praxis-oriented approaches of the researchers, and the results of the research are presented elsewhere (e.g., see Dredge, Ford, & Whitford, 2010; Hales, 2011; Hales, Rynne, Howlett, Devine, & Hauser, 2010). The first case involves the preparation of a tourism strategy for the Scenic Rim Regional Council, Queensland that I (first author) first became involved in the project after being contacted by the Council and asked to put in a tender. What appeared at first as a simple consulting exercise became a challenging project as I confronted not only the expectations of a very diverse community but my own contradictory expectations as both a consultant and an academic. The second case examines the researcher’s (second author) reflexive account of a research project on developing an indigenous consultation process for the potential nomination of certain areas of Cape York Peninsula for World Heritage. What becomes clear in the accounts that follow is that community case studies are not straightforward; they bring various personal and professional challenges that are not recognized in the current industrialized world of research characterized by neoliberal performance measures or academic workload allocations.

Scenic Rim Regional Tourism Strategy

The Scenic Rim Region is located approximately 1 hour’s drive southwest of Brisbane, the State capital of Queensland, and 1 hour west of Gold Coast

City, Australia. Brisbane and the Gold Coast are the two of the three largest destinations in Queensland based on visitor numbers, nights, and expenditure indicators. As a result of State-wide amalgamation processes in 2008, the Scenic Rim Regional Council was created out of the former Boonah and Beaudesert Shires and part of Ipswich City. The Scenic Rim region has long been considered the agricultural production zone and rural hinterland of the Brisbane metropolitan area. The region includes World Heritage Rainforests and a spectacular scenic landscape characterized by a rim of extinct volcanic peaks and ridges. These landscapes provide a range of active and passive recreation experiences for Brisbane residents and visitors. The Scenic Rim Region also has a growing agritourism product base, which is supplemented by ecotourism and nature-based tourism pursuits, and an increasing variety of arts and cultural attractions, food and wine experiences.

In 2009, the Council's Development Services division undertook to prepare a regional tourism strategy. Prior to amalgamation, there were three official local tourism organizations and a number of place-based and product-based associations representing the diverse tourism interests within the region. The amalgamation and acquisition of a new name for the local government area (although the name had been coined by early settlers some 150 years before) stimulated interest in developing a new destination brand for the region. Council officers believed the region had considerable potential to become the destination of choice for the growing population of South East Queensland and Northern New South Wales. The increased size and diversity of the product as a result of amalgamation was a valuable asset in this new project. Developing the region principally as a short break destination on the doorstep of the fastest growing metropolitan region in Australia and to support local economic development appeared a logical step forward.

As a result of an invitation by the tourism officer to tender for the project, I became involved in the preparation of the Council's tourism strategy. The original proposal submitted to Council outlined a framework and a process to prepare the strategy that can best be described as a rational comprehensive approach with some added data collection features to ensure that the activity could be classified

as research within the university context. These additional features not normally included in consulting projects included an online survey, semistructured interviews with internal and external stakeholders, and focus groups workshops associated with key milestones in the process. Initial feedback from Council was that the framework was clear and aligned closely with the values and process that they wished to pursue within the new strategy. It was clear that the articulation of a clear *rational scientific approach* was important to council officers who were, in the end, subject to rules concerning public expenditure and accountability. The recent local government amalgamation had left embedded tensions in the local community, and had resulted in each of the three key local tourism organizations claiming to be the most appropriate organization to represent tourism interests in the newly created local government area. An innovative community engagement approach called a "community tourism master class" was developed that sought to engage stakeholders in Mode-2 knowledge production about the future of tourism in the region (Dredge et al., 2011). In doing so, the notion that tourism was indeed a messy problem set involving the balancing of social, environmental, economic, and political aspirations and issues was introduced and collectively confronted by both the researcher and case study community.

What followed was a range of public engagement and consultation activities and data collection tasks that snowballed as issues and problems emerged (see Dredge et al., 2011). Instead of being a finite stage in the execution of a planning process, the process of data collection (semistructured interviews and on-line survey) became a means to engage with and develop trust and respect within the local community. Some industry representatives who were initially distrustful of the process, Council's objectives, and in the award of the contract indicated their support for the project after meeting me and discussing their issues. It became clear that getting the community on side required extensive direct engagement and that this engagement was essential in coconstructing a shared understanding of the issues. The planned 30 semistructured interviews ballooned to over 100 in an effort to establish credibility, capture silent voices, and share information with stakeholders grappling

with uncertain economic conditions and local political tensions and uncertainties. Coproduction of the strategy occurred in these meetings and consultation processes, and not as part of a rational scientific process conducted in an external office.

The method-driven proposal originally submitted to Council rapidly gave way to a performative and self-reflexive process aimed at managing stakeholder relationships and expectations while at the same time producing a document that would be meaningful to the full range of stakeholders. The complexity of the issues faced in the region meant that identifying the problems and making sense of them from the perspectives of stakeholders quickly became a priority. As a practitioner, I found myself engaging in the political performance of plan making, acutely aware that the strategy could not simply be a static object. The strategy needed to be accepted, adopted, and performed in the hearts and minds of the stakeholders in their daily practices in order to make a difference (see Flyvbjerg, 2002). Furthermore, as a researcher, I was confronted with a messy research environment—some data could be collected and collated using traditional scientific protocols—but more crucial in building deep understandings were reflections on the dialogue and communications that took place, power relations and issues of inclusion/exclusion that were built through informal engagement and discussion with key informants (May & Perry, 2011). At times, the values underpinning stakeholders' rationality was not clearly evident but were cloaked in emotive language and/or passive resistance, making it difficult to capture *data* in a traditional manner. This required reflexive engagement and ingenuity in seeking out spaces for productive dialogue and in framing and conducting interviews and focus groups carefully with due diligence placed on preparing for these meetings.

It also took considerable time and embeddedness within the setting to develop an appreciation for both present and absent voices within the plan-making process. In particular, from time to time, communications were received from interested community members wishing to engage in a broad discussion about whether tourism was desirable (or not) in their community, but the singular objective of preparing a tourism strategy did not provide an opportunity for such debate since there was already

an a priori assumption that tourism could produce benefits and it was desirable. In fact, the strategy was being prepared within the economic development section of Council's Development Services, and this institutional setting produced an ensemble of structures, processes, values, and discourses that reproduced a dominant form of governmentality that promoted tourism as a tool for economic and social growth. It was deemed by council officers that the concerns of these actors were best handled within the preparation of the Community Plan, another council strategy that was being prepared simultaneously. Here, aspects of Foucault's description of governmentality resonated (see Foucault, 1991) (i.e., the council apparatus functioned to promote certain progrowth discourses of tourism and the preparation of the plan within the section of council reinforced these values). A wider discourse about tourism's role in promoting social and economic benefits of tourism was conspicuously absent as was any discussion of the environmental implications and management of tourism in those parts of the region deemed to be environmentally sensitive. These issues were deemed by council officers to be outside the role of that section of Council in its plan making. Although I felt it important to continuously raise these issues based on my engagement and understanding of stakeholders' concerns, the process and the narrow positioning of the plan as an economic development tool meant that these concerns were recognized but, in my own mind, inadequately explored in the plan vetted by council officers and presented to Council's elected representatives for approval. Here, not only did the structures and processes produce a form of governmentality that promoted and reinforced certain (principally economic development) interests, but also my role was constrained to some extent by the finitude of the consulting contract.

Returning to Bazeley's (2010) six key dimensions of research performance—researcher engagement; task orientation; research practice; intellectual process, dissemination; and collegial environment—all these dimensions were present within the project although few if any are measurable under the present rubric of research performance. As described above, my engagement was not only extensive in terms of stakeholder and council engagement over a period of 1 year, but it was also

strongly task oriented. The research itself was subject to ethical clearance and data were collected in a systematic manner, although participant observation within the community setting often yielded unanticipated insights and challenges. Throughout the process a reflective, intellectual process was adhered to and dissemination was undertaken at multiple points in the research journey. A collegial environment was established between myself, council officers, elected representatives, the community, and industry stakeholders. That said, the research was very time consuming and publications had to wait until a critical mass of data had been collected and sufficient time had been spent embedded in the community for coherent understandings to emerge. Nowotny (2003) identifies this as Mode-2 knowledge or knowledge that is derived from dialogue with a large number of actors, where the problem is formulated from within (and not outside the community), and which is transdisciplinary in nature. Universities, she argues, are not geared for this type of research and knowledge production, which is demanding in terms of time and focus. Nevertheless, I found this community case study rewarding because it contributed significantly to furthering my understandings about how the world works and developing practical wisdom—*phronesis*—which has enriched my classroom teaching. Working through messy problems, the insights gained from heterogeneous communities of actors, and the professional development and understanding that could be shared with council officers and the community are worldmaking experiences that set apart community case studies from industrialized, mass-produced research. Research publications are possible, but only after heavy investment in the research process and, often, resistance to the hegemony of performance evaluations that privilege measurable, quantitative outputs at the cost of social action and *real-world* engagement. Furthermore, my link to the case, the people, and the problems is ongoing, and although the contract is now complete, the need to continue on the performance-driven research treadmill and seek out grant funding sources results in an enforced closure that is untimely for both researcher and community.

Indigenous Consultation, Cape York Peninsula

In the following case I (second author) will provide an example that illustrates researchers need to

be flexible, adaptive, and creative—*phronetic*—in community case study research to deal with the mess that usually arises in the research process. This is a process that takes time. The story will also demonstrate that each of Bazeley's six dimensions is influenced by the conditions needed for research performance. These conditions include the background and skills of the researcher as well as the time, equipment, and funding, which is linked to their institutional environment (Bazeley, 2010). These conditions, although not necessary, enable the performance of the research to occur at a higher standard.

The Cape York Peninsula context is complex and contested (Hales et al., 2010; Holmes, 2011). There are over 100 Traditional Owner clan groups on Cape York Peninsula, located within 17 indigenous communities and represented by 11 Shire Councils. The Cape York Land Council is the peak representative body that represents indigenous people in their land rights claims and other indigenous matters. To date, over 70 Land Trusts and Prescribed Body Corporate organizations have been established. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up over 60% of the total population of 18,000 people. Aboriginal people's language, dance, song, art, and customs are still very much alive and practiced and vary from community to community (Talbot & Batzke, 2010).

Indigenous consent to World Heritage has become a political prerequisite for the nomination to proceed. The Queensland Government and the Australian Federal Government have indicated the importance of the consent of indigenous people and have stated that a nomination will not proceed without the consent of Traditional Owners (Burke, 2011). The current Australian Government has promised by the end of their term that they will gain consent from indigenous people and nominate certain areas of Cape York Peninsula for World Heritage listing. This gives the Government a short time period to negotiate indigenous consent.

A team of researchers including myself was contracted by the Queensland Government to advise on the development of a framework to negotiate the *free prior informed consent* of indigenous people to the potential nomination of World Heritage areas on Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. The project that I was engaged with was a review of literature

with the task of offering advice on a potential framework for indigenous consent to World Heritage nomination. Importantly, the review and development of the framework would have sought the informal input from a range of indigenous representative organizations. Having input and engagement from indigenous people in any research process is a vital ethical component of researching with Indigenous people (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS], 2011).

However, after starting the project the representative bodies did not want to engage with the research project because they used the tactic of self-exclusion with the project as leverage for resolving issues surrounding Wild Rivers legislation. The tactic of self-exclusion has been used by stakeholder groups as a way to seek power in consultation (Dryzek, 2002). For example, the Cape York Land Council have indicated that they do not support World Heritage nomination and any process of developing methods of negotiating indigenous consent, until issues pertaining to Wild Rivers legislation are resolved to their satisfaction (Ah Mat, 2011).

This is not to say that engagement in the case study has been limited. The researchers engaged with the project for over 1 year in order to gain intimate knowledge of all aspects of the case. The effect of nonparticipation of key representative bodies placed more intellectual pressure on the researchers to exercise prudence (*phronesis*) in achieving the outcomes in a way that stayed true to the ethical position and intent of free prior informed consent. However, a downside in my opinion was that the self-exclusion of representative bodies meant that the engagement has leaned towards a more institutional approach to community engagement compared to previously planned ground up or participatory approach. Thus, communication with the stakeholders was limited mostly to Government officials. The report and its recommendations took into consideration the nonparticipation of representative bodies and left open the space for future negotiations with these bodies.

Future outcomes include a number of peer-reviewed publications (including the present paper) where the lessons learned from the case study are designed to have an impact on the community engagement processes that are still in flux. Writing

these papers has taken considerable time because I have had to negotiate between contractual agreements with the Queensland Government and being cognizant of the political sensitivities of the case. Waiting until the release of the Queensland Government's strategy for negotiating indigenous consent was the key point in allowing me to develop publications on the issues surrounding free prior informed consent. In any case the publications aim not to take issue with the Queensland Government but rather illuminate the issues that UNESCO has failed to resolve in terms of guidelines for indigenous consent and World Heritage nomination processes.

The case study is not over. Community engagement is being undertaken by the Queensland Government at the time of writing. Traditional Owners are being contacted and informed of the process of negotiating consent for World Heritage nomination. I envisage further involvement with this case. Tourism benefits and impacts are an area in need of future research as this is one of the purported key benefits of World Heritage listing to Indigenous people (Queensland Government, 2012).

This case has taken time to research and write up. I have been conscious of the imperative for me to publish in the new industrial regime I now find myself in. The fact that this project took 2 years from the start to a point where it was possible to think about publishing has caused some stress. I have chosen to undertake this type of research because I seek to explore significant social issues that do not have easy answers. Secondly, I wish to undertake community-based research because of my orientation towards social justice and this informs my motivation and purpose for research. However, this case study on the surface seems to contradict the phronetic approach that I prefer to adhere to in most of my research. Considering the self-exclusion of some key representative bodies in the research I chose not to hold further engagement with the research because I was fearful of becoming embroiled in a public sphere dispute. This fear was not simply a fear of "facing up" to one's position of the topic of the research in the public sphere as I have no problem with doing so but rather that I questioned my own ethical involvement in the process itself. On top of the problems of representation, the fact that I am white, middle class, and come from a place far from the site where the research was being applied also played on my

mind. As a result of this I could not face up to the “public” as I could well imagine the arguments of lack of community consultation in developing our consent model and I would quite possibly agree with these critiques. So this example may not be the best example for a tourism community case study in terms of what I “did.” It is more of an example of what I did not do which in the end has allowed for future opportunities to engage in critical analysis of the process and more phronetic and performative research. Publishing an academic article that problematized the process of developing an indigenous consent model allowed me to disengage with the process of the research consultancy but still respect the stakeholders (people) in the process and thus position myself for future community consultation where I can face up to all stakeholders: indigenous and government. At the time I did not consciously realize I was doing this. Something just did not feel right about what I was doing during the research consultancy for the Queensland Government.

Upon reflection, I can see that the position I have taken has opened up possibilities of future engagement in this research topic that will be more engaged and embedded as well as performative in the public sphere; whereas at the time I was feeling that I would not be able to continue and thus had failed my personal values of being social researcher engaged in performative action and change. Given that I was conscious that my research was funded by the public, I felt I had a responsibility towards ensuring environmental and social well-being of the communities being researched despite the ethical dilemmas I was embedded in. Not giving up on the project has been deeply rewarding from professional level and fits with my ethical beliefs with regard to researching with indigenous people. However, this process of understanding, self-reflexivity, and pausing do not fit easily the current performance-driven environment of the higher education sector.

The case study presented here illustrates that the knowledge-making or world-changing potential of tourism community case studies lies in confronting the issues arising from doing research that incorporates Bazeley’s (2010) six dimensions of research performance. From a theoretical perspective the tourism community case study illustrated that the positionality of the researcher has led

a comprehension of the messiness of the “field,” an analysis of the wicked multidimensional nature of stakeholder aspirations, and the development of *phronetic* understanding of how the process and outcomes of the research facilitates a greater purpose of upholding the rights of indigenous people in protected area management processes.

Discussion and Conclusions

This article set out to explore community case studies as a research strategy in tourism and to expose the tensions and dilemmas that researchers face in the increasingly pressured university research context. We demonstrated that community case study research is a powerful strategy to explore wicked, multisectoral problems. Moreover, community research displays elements of good research performance because it involves deep engagement in the research task and community; it is task oriented, seeking to address real problems in situ; it involves research practice that requires the researcher have substantial knowledge of research methods and must be able to move fluidly across different research approaches and methods if required; it requires a creative intellectual process and analytical thinking, self-reflexive engagement with the ethics of “operacy” and embeddedness in the research context (community in this instance); it involves dissemination of the research in various ways, not just to an academic audience but to a wider and more diverse audience; and it requires collegial engagement with research team members and interpretive engagement with the community in processes of knowledge cocreation and transformative change, performative action, and praxis.

The authors found that community case studies are time consuming and that, as a research strategy, they fit uneasily against the current performance-driven environment characterizing the university sector. This is because, in both examples discussed, the community case studies were driven by the problem or problems that each researcher encountered as opposed to being driven by a predetermined method, such as in the case of postpositivist research. In both cases, the community case studies displayed an organic dimension: they developed in unintended ways and presented problems not anticipated in the initial planning of the research. As a

result, in both cases, the time it took to conduct and reflect on the research was well over 2 years. The length of time it took to become embedded, to engage, and to reflect on the multiple (wicked) problems that confront the community (or communities) provided a fertile and powerful landscape for intellectual growth. However, both researchers also agree that the time it takes can also potentially be a researcher's undoing in a performance-based research culture where number of publications is the key performance indicator.

Returning to Bazeley's (2010) dimensions of research performance, these were found useful in helping to understand our experience in tourism community case study research and to reinforce that good research can result from these messy community case study contexts. Furthermore, the gap between research and practice, of increasing concern to both policy makers and the academy, can be decreased through the use of the community case study approach. This engaged approach shifts the role of the academic to one of knowledge sharing, and even cocreation (or at least in their intent), as opposed to the top-down traditional approach of knowledge transfer from academy. To us, it would seem that community case studies have enormous potential to address the phronetic and performative dimensions embedded in the term *research performance* better than many other forms of social science research (see Bazeley, 2010).

The long-term benefits of community case studies should also not be dismissed. Despite the time-consuming nature of being deeply engaged in this type of research, community case studies can also bring long-term rewards and benefits for research productivity. These rewards include deep engagement in the complexities of real-world research based on a personal involvement in the research process itself. Motivation based on a personal/professional interest in the topic and the dynamic processes characterizing the phenomenon under study allowed for high level of engagement in the research process. Considerable personal and professional growth through reflexive engagement was also a feature noted by both authors of the above stories.

Finally, what has not been discussed in great detail in this article is the institutional environment that influences the time, equipment, and funding for tourism community case study research. These

institutional conditions enable the researcher to perform at a higher standard. In the case of the Scenic Rim Regional Tourism Strategy, for example, embeddedness meant that the researcher had to be available to attend industry and council meetings, drive long distances between interviews, and have the time to become familiar with the tourism product. I (first author) was fortunate to have the flexibility and workload allocation to undertake these tasks, but often the tardiness of workload allocations and resourcing (often worked out 6 months in advance) negates the possibility of becoming deeply embedded and researching from the inside. On this note we return to the observations made by Bazeley in the introduction to this article: "publication is now viewed as the objective of research, rather than the dissemination of the knowledge contained within it." We must toll the warning bell and point out that performance-based research measures are complex beasts; the powerful financial and reputational incentives embedded within them will likely draw researchers away from community case studies and inhibit deeply engaged, creative, problem-solving research in the social sciences, including tourism. We ask then, what does the New Age of neoliberal public management higher education mean for the "operacy" of researchers in community case study research in tourism? If this type of research is to be valued as contributing to community well-being, public interest, and social good, the *big questions* of society, then surely it is worth fighting for. But strategies will be needed to mentor early career and Ph.D. researchers to subvert/resist/challenge the institutional structures that constrain academic freedom within a shrinking public sphere.

Notes

¹This view draws from theories of industrialization including the differentiation of labor, the fragmentation of process, and increased organizational structures and processes to control for quality, timeliness, and so on (see Walton, 1987).

²It is beyond the scope of this article to detail the *big questions* except to mention that these questions involve the researcher making choices regarding the research questions and purpose of that research with an understanding of how power in the world is exercised and how the performance of the research is part of that process.

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