

**TITLE:**

Politics and Tourism Destination Development: The Evolution of Power

**ABSTRACT**

This study takes a temporal perspective on the analysis of politics, power and tourism destination development. It analyses past and contemporary consequences of the power relationships among different stakeholders. A qualitative inquiry includes semi-structured in-depth interviews with stakeholders, from local islanders to national level politicians, complemented by secondary material. After identification of the key tourism stakeholders in the case study area, Maldives, the study details and analyzes, through consideration of contested policy formulation and implementation, why and how stakeholders have sought to gain, hold and cede power. Accordingly, the study develops theoretical understanding that recognizes and evaluates patterns of stakeholder power dominance, subservience and decline.

**Keywords:**

Politics, power, enclave tourism, destination development, Maldives

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The development and implementation of policy, policy outcomes and the position of tourism in political agendas are influenced by different interests at local, regional and national levels (Hall 1991). Tourism planning and development is a political process whereby decisions are made in order to implement policies and achieve goals (Veal 2002). Henderson (2003) states that tourism planning and development is a highly political phenomenon which extends beyond the sphere of formal structures. It is also about power relations among different stakeholders.

Power, defined as 'the interplay of individuals, organisations, and agencies influencing, or trying to influence the direction of policy' (Hall 1994, 13), has been the focus of studies investigating the politics and tourism interface. In particular, power determines 'who gets what, when and how' (Elliott 1983, 387). Sofield (2003) and Fallon (2001) found that the allocation of power influences the distribution of resources, decision-making processes and policy creation. Church and Coles (2007) state that the dynamics and impact of power in tourism are concealed within the political system and its ideologies and values. Elliott (1983) examining the political system in Thailand with particular attention to the location of power in the system found that power lies with the political leaders and the bureaucracy in the country. Scheyvens (2011) considering sustainable tourism development in Maldives found that tourism planning and development involves power struggle between different tourism stakeholders, with government being the dominant player. In a more recent study of politics of tourism on a small island (Cyprus), Farmaki et al (2015) found that sustainable tourism implementation continues to be problematic, given Cyprus's complex political context, which

is highly susceptible to external axes of power. The study concluded that as power struggles become more intense between global, national and local tourism stakeholders, discourse requires a more sophisticated consideration of the element of power.

In sum, these studies made important contributions to the tourism planning and development literature by demonstrating the need to connect policy making, structures, values and power while acknowledging the economic, environmental, social and political dimensions of tourism development. However, the studies did not explain the dynamics of power allocation among different stakeholders and the implications of such dynamics for tourism planning and development.

This paper takes a temporal perspective of power and tourism development with a particular consideration of a recent critical phase of contested tourism policy formulation and implementation: the relaxation of the strict policy of enclave resort tourism and the growth of guesthouse tourism in Maldives. By doing so, this paper deepens and extends existing discourse surrounding power, politics and tourism destination development by providing new insights into the patterns of stakeholder power dominance, subservience and decline in a tourism destination.

Following this introduction we begin with a brief overview of the study context in Maldives.

Two relevant areas of the literature are then reviewed: first, enclave tourism and, second, the role of politics and power in tourism destination development. The methodology adopted in the study is then described, followed by presentation of the study findings associated with the evolution of power among different stakeholders. The discussion section of the paper

evaluates power shaping and variants of power shifting in tourism destination development.

Finally, conclusions are drawn from the study.

## 2.0 CONTEXT OF STUDY

The Maldives is an archipelago state of 1190 low-lying islands in the Indian Ocean comprising 26 natural atolls administered as seven provinces. The archipelago extends north from the equator over seven degrees of latitude. The census of 2014 recorded a population of 341,256, of whom 35% live in the capital Malé (National Bureau of Statistics 2015). Islam is the official state religion and all citizens are required to be Muslim.

Tourism in the Maldives was initially developed in an unplanned laissez-faire manner by the private sector with the opening of two resorts in 1972 (Niyaz 2002). For logistical reasons tourism was concentrated close to Malé. Visitors typically arrived on a combination package holiday that offered a culturally orientated stay in neighboring Sri Lanka along with an island and diving experience in the Maldives. Growth has been continuous except for a short period following the 2004 tsunami. In 1980 visitor numbers totaled 42,000, in 2000 there were 500,000 visitors and in 2013, for the first time, one million visitors (GDP 28%). Moreover, it is projected that by 2020 1.5 million visitors will arrive (Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture 2012).

Government involvement in tourism in the Maldives has revolved in large part around tourism master planning (Henderson 2008). This aims to align tourism planning with other planning processes and create an environment in which tourism can contribute more towards economic and social development (Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation 2007). In the 1980s, a First Tourism Master Plan (FTMP) 1983–1992 was developed with the help of the European

Union and this allowed the development of a new tourism zone in Ari Atoll, away from Malé, with the lease of fourteen islands for tourism. Following both a Second Master Plan (STMP) 1996– 2005 and a Third Master Plan (TTMP) 2007-2012 which was extended during a period of intense political turmoil, tourism development expanded into additional atolls so that development reached almost every corner of the Maldives (Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation 2007; Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture 2012).

The Government owns the land in the Maldives and periodically allows the lease of islands for tourism resort development. There are currently 111 tourism resorts in operation (Ministry of Tourism 2015) and each is an enclave resort, with one resort per island. These island resorts are autonomous units, totally self-contained, providing their own infrastructure of electric power, water supply, accommodation, restaurants, leisure facilities, sewage and solid waste disposal as well as housing and other facilities for employees (Zubair, Bowen and Elwin 2011). Over each year during the period 2010-2014, 55-60% of resorts were either foreign owned or joint-ventures (Ministry of Tourism 2015). The contribution of tourism to GDP remained constant at close to 25% over the same period although, in part due to changes in tax and the resort lease rent formula, the percentage share of tourism revenue in total government revenue rose from 27% in 2010 to 40% in 2014 (Ministry of Tourism 2015). Shakeela and Weaver (2013) characterized the Maldives economy as hyper-dependent on tourism.

The strict policy of enclave resort tourism, locally known as the one-island-one-resort (OIOR)

tourism, was modified in 2008 after a period of nearly twenty five years by the Maldivian parliament or *Majlis*. The second amendment of the Maldives Tourism Act 2/99 allowed the spread of tourism beyond the confines of otherwise uninhabited islands (Ministry of Tourism 2014). For the first time since 1984 the new alternative of ‘guesthouse tourism’ was allowed on inhabited islands. Although there is some lack of clarity regarding exactly what is meant by guesthouse tourism, it can be said that a guesthouse is not a home-stay; it must have a separate entrance from a main home; and includes what would otherwise be recognized as small/medium-sized hotels and small/medium-sized holiday apartment complexes. The change of policy brought about by the second amendment is not innocuous. It has become a key center of debate surrounding the benefits or otherwise that derive from enclave and non-enclave resort tourism. The spatial liberalization of tourism that is inherent in the second amendment has sparked resistance to change and a contested national debate related to the economic benefit or otherwise of enclave tourism; the positive or negative socio-cultural impact of enclave tourism; the effect on destination branding and other potential consequences. It seems that most of the requirements for stakeholder collaboration outlined by Gray (1989) and stressed 20 plus years ago in a tourism context by Jamal and Getz (1995) and more recently by Bregoli (2013) are not established in the Maldivian case.

The power struggle inherent in the emergence, development and (post 2008) relaxation of the strict policy of enclave resort tourism on uninhabited islands, through the new non-enclave guesthouse policy, is the policy focus of this study. The struggle is illustrated through secondary material, stakeholder recollection, and contested discourse and action surrounding the development and implementation of policy. However, the theoretical understanding that

emerges from the study regarding power dominance, subservience and decline makes it relevant and important beyond destination development in Maldives.



### **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Enclave tourism**

Enclave tourism resorts are frequently criticized in the academic literature. Freitag (1994, 551) notes that ‘the enclave resort is not designed to promote economic linkages at the community level’. Enclaves are dominated by what Shaw and Shaw (1999, 69) label ‘metropolitan control via transnational corporations’ and typically consist of an inclusive, controlled, social and spatial environment in which tourists are set apart from local people, other than those who serve their immediate needs and wants within the environs of the resort. Tourists are separated from economic and cultural interaction beyond the resort gate, and opportunity for interaction with the local population is fleeting. Enclave tourism is predicated on a fundamentally different rationale from that which considers the foundation of destination development and branding to be the sense of place as articulated by local residents (Campelo, Aitken, Thyne and Gnoth 2014). Moreover, Erisman (1983), in the West Indies, extends the notion of economic dependency to cultural dependency, in which the hosts perceive their own culture as subservient to the dominant tourist norms and values, and in which socio-cultural integrity is lost. This is clearly at odds with approaches toward sustainable tourism development whether mainstream or alternative (Sharpley 2009). Additionally, problems are compounded when enclave tourism resorts are located on small island developing states (SIDS) that are in any case often characterized as vulnerable, peripheral and isolated (Lim and Cooper 2009). Such potentially emotive economic, social and cultural consequences of enclave tourism resorts create, with some inevitability, a contested politics of tourism. This was not so evident for a long period in the Maldives, even though tourism development over the period 1983-2008 was dominated by its strict OIOR

policy. Shakeela and Weaver (2013,1353) surmise that this may be due in part to the effect they dub the ‘enclave paradox’ whereby residents, set apart from the enclave, are less alienated than enclave workers and more supportive of perceived benefits of enclave (OIOR) tourism than would otherwise be the case. However, the Maldives Tourism Act 2/99 and the resultant changes brought about by the spread of guesthouses have generated an overt, sharp, ongoing power struggle with multiple consequences as developed in the findings and discussion.

### **3.2 Politics, power and tourism**

A review of the literature reveals three distinct streams of research on tourism and politics. First, public policy and planning analyses (Hall and Rusher 2004; Kerr et al. 2001; Krutwyscho and Bramwell 2010; Pechlaner and Tschurtschenthaler 2003; Stevenson et al, 2008). Second, political economy and development studies (Bramwell 2011; Dieke 2000; Nelson 2012; Nunkoo and Smith 2013; Williams 2004). Third, research on political stability and tourism (Saha and Yap 2014); Causevic and Lynch 2013; Fuchs, Uriely, Reichel and Maoz 2013; Issa and Altinay 2006; O’Brien 2012). Each stream can be the focus of research within tourism destinations but it is power relations connected to public policy (specifically related to OIOR policy and guesthouse policy) which is most central to this study in Maldives. Tourism politics has sometimes offered insights into public policy within specific destination contexts and this research extends such a tradition (Altinay and Bowen 2006; Chheang 2008; Henderson 2002; 2003; 2008; Kim, Timothy and Han 2007; McLeod and Airey 2007; Su and Teo 2009; Yasarata et al 2010). According to Henderson (2003, 98) “tourism is, without doubt, a highly political phenomenon which extends beyond the sphere of formal government

structures and processes... and it (politics) is thus an underlying and indirect theme in much tourism research”.

There is no agreed definition of power but there are some reoccurring themes. On the one hand, Lasswell (1936) states that power is the capacity to overcome resistance through changing the behaviors of others or stop them doing something they want. Haugaard (2002) states that power does not just exist but is a product of social interaction and can contribute positively to social order. The view that power is a relational effect which is constantly changing, rather than a possession, is a shared view among several researchers (Beritelli and Laesser 2011; Cheong and Miller 2000; Foucault 1980; Latour 1986). Barnett and Duval (2005, 39) acknowledge what they term the privileged concept of power (compulsory power - direct control over another) but also recognize three other types: institutional power (indirect control over another); structural power (capital / labor) and productive power (produced through discursive practices (dialogue) and networks). Moreover, Hall and Jenkins (1995) suggest that power requires a specific analysis of the context in which it operates: place, people, values, culture and government philosophy interact differently to shape the decision-making process.

Power has featured as a theme in tourism studies. Researchers have investigated the asymmetry of power between residents and tourists (Shaw and Williams 2004); power relations at the local and global level (Bianchi 2004; Judd and Simpson 2003); and power within a public sector policy context (Elliott 1983; Hall 1994, 2000). Overall, two main threads

from the literature on power and tourism can be drawn: firstly, social network analyses investigating power relations (Beritelli and Laesser 2011; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012; Scott et al, 2008; Wang and Fesenmaier 2007; Wang and Krakover 2008) and, secondly, research viewing power within a tourism policy domain (Airey and Chong 2010; Pforr 2006).

It is clearly important in a study of politics and tourism to evaluate power and power relations between different stakeholder groups. Church and Cole's (2007) pragmatic consideration of power as the interplay of individuals, organizations and agencies influencing or trying to influence the direction of policy, directs attention to relations among both individuals and stakeholder groups as they strive to change behaviors in the decision-making process.

Individuals capable of influence are necessarily specific to a particular destination but it is possible to identify some general stakeholder groups that are important in evaluating tourism and power. First, government in the widest sense (so including its machinery in the form of ministries) is often presumed to be the most powerful stakeholder group in tourism planning and development. Scheyvens (2011) argues that it is government that has the power to establish policies and consequently influence the utilization of economic gain from local communities as well as the preservation of social, cultural and environmental resources. Through legislation the government exerts influence on the tourism industry, directly and indirectly. For example, the successful implementation of sustainable tourism depends greatly on the government's ability to coordinate and balance roles and interests of stakeholder groups and to protect resources through appropriate developmental strategies. Second,

tourism entrepreneurs are also identified as one of the most influential stakeholder groups. The notion that tourism is simply a private sector activity is flawed (Sofield 2003) but the private sector is often dominant in terms of tourism ownership and financial resources (Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins 2013). Entrepreneurs are principally profit driven as the private sector seeks a return on investment (Dodds 2007; O'Brien 2012). Third, the local community can also be important as a stakeholder group. Murphy (1985) argues that tourism relies on the goodwill and cooperation of local people because they are part of the product. Where development and planning do not fit with local aspirations and capacity, resistance and hostility can reduce the industry's potential (Jamal and Getz 1995). According to Byrd (2003) stakeholders in the host community need to be actively involved in planning and development and not merely recipients of tourism plans. Fourth, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also have a stake in the tourism industry. Their role is frequently important in the formulation and implementation of policies as NGOs often act as consultants to the government and private sector (Kennedy and Dorman 2009). Special interest or pressure groups also put pressure on government, industry and communities on issues such as environmental protection, education and social aspects of tourism development. In recent years, the importance of NGOs and pressure groups as well as the local community are often highlighted (Choi and Sirakaya 2005; Kennedy and Dorman 2009).

Whilst not neglecting or ignoring the evidence that each stakeholder group is somewhat porous when stripped down to the level of its constituent individuals (e.g. a politician may also be an entrepreneur, or a Maldivian resort entrepreneur may also be part of a local community) discrete stakeholder groupings provide a framework for discussion, an approach that is

applied in the findings section of this study. Overall, it is often argued that whilst each stakeholder group has different responsibilities and *raison d'être*s, cooperation between them is necessary for the balance of supply and demand, management of tourism impacts, and resource allocation (Bregoli 2013). Yet, Hall and Jenkins (2005, 77) argue that “in tourism planning and policymaking it is inequality rather than equality that is the order of the day”. The power allocation between the various stakeholder groups has the consequence that those with less power and influence have to accept less than they would like to (Beritelli, Bieger and Laesser 2014; Erkus-Ozturk and Erayin 2010; Krutwasho and Bramwell 2010). Some stakeholder groups are regularly not integrated or are even totally ignored by others. Some sub-stakeholder groups, too, are marginalized within a larger stakeholder grouping. Decisions may not be made in favor of an affected community, and economic aspects often take higher priority than social and environmental concerns (Zubair et al 2011). Disagreement occurs between the private and public sectors which impact on economic, social and environmental issues (Harrison et al. 2003; Dodds 2007).

Even twenty years ago, Richter (1999) argued that the scale, issues and number of participants in tourism politics had changed and that, as a result, the struggle for power had become fiercer. With year on year development of the industry since then the struggle has not abated. As tourism is a complex sector, consisting of multiple stakeholder groups and individuals with diverse interests, the process of formulation and implementation of tourism policies is bound to face certain challenges. While governments represent the formal power authority in a destination, cases indicate that power can be exerted on governments by private sector elites, including external investors, strong industrial associations and other

lobbies (Bramwell and Meyer 2007; O' Brien 2012). Scholars have emphasized the dominance of business-government ties and the control exerted by power blocs over tourism policymaking (Dodds and Butler 2010; Novelli et al 2012; Yasarata et al. 2010).

Evaluation of the literature shows that politics and power are the focus of many studies in tourism that can be categorized in distinct streams. What has not been thoroughly investigated within the realm of tourism public policy is the evolution of power relations, with the shifting and shaping of power, in the form of power dominance, subservience and decline. Given this research gap, this paper responds to the following research questions:

- Why and how have different stakeholders sought to gain, hold and cede power in the tourism planning and development process?
- How does power evolve, shape and shift?

## 4.0 METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted by a team of three researchers: one Maldivian with over twenty five years of experience in a number of tourism sectors in Maldives (private and public) and two non-Maldivian academics with practical and academic experience of tourism destination management and development in a variety of locations. The Maldivian was working outside the tourism industry at the time of the research which allowed a detached perspective. In any case perspective was also provided by the non-Maldivian academics. This study followed an interpretivist epistemological perspective as it involved studying people's perceptions and other phenomena in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). The ontology of subjectivism was used in order to garner 'the details of the situation to understand the reality' (Remenyi et al 1998, 35). An exploratory research strategy was adopted because it is an established approach to develop theories and/or generate new insights and knowledge about contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts (Stebbins 2008).

Twenty seven semi-structured in depth interviews were conducted in Malé, the capital of the Maldives, and on two atolls (Laamu and Baa) chosen to provide a range of stakeholder experience with both enclave resort tourism and guesthouse tourism. Laamu atoll is in the south of Maldives about 50 minutes flight from Malé. Baa is in the center-north about 30 minutes flight from Malé. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select the informants for the investigation. Purposive sampling allows researchers to use their judgement to select people that will best enable them to answer their research questions and to meet their objectives (Altinay et al. 2015). Informants were chosen based on their experience, role and



influence in policymaking and implementation of policies in the tourism industry in Maldives.

The Maldivian researcher worked during the 1990s for the Ministry of Tourism. This enabled access from different stakeholder groups that would otherwise have been difficult to engage. Interviewees included islanders (e.g. boat-man, fisherman, dive manager, school manager, local artist) on Laamu atoll from an island with very recently developed guesthouses, and on Baa atoll from an island with no guesthouse development; guesthouse employees (Laamu atoll); tourism resort managers (Baa atoll); resort entrepreneurs (Malé) ; very senior public sector directors in Malé (including Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC); local councilors (Laamu atoll); senior military; and, finally, national level politicians both from government and the Maldives Democratic Party (MDP) opposition in Malé. The MDP was chosen in lieu of other opposition because at the time of the field research it was the largest opposition party by a considerable margin with four times as many seats as the next largest opposition party and more seats than all the other opposition parties combined (People's Alliance, Dhivehi Qaumeey Party, Republican Party, Independents). In October 2014 MDP had more members than any other party in Maldivian history (Aruma 2014; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014). Beritelli and Laesser (2011) suggest that there can be a surprisingly small number of prominent actors within a tourism system. This became apparent in this study: comments on the role and power of individuals from later interviewees cross-referenced those of earlier interviewees.

We have already commented on the porosity of stakeholder groupings. Maldivian resort

entrepreneurs were often freely named and to a degree embraced by other stakeholders (e.g. local community / islanders). From that point of view they were not distant figures and, moreover, they undoubtedly engaged in philanthropic endeavour. However, their accumulated wealth and sometimes sceptical views regarding the knowledge and ability of those outside their elite circle (5.1.3) also set them apart from the local community / islanders. This helps to justify the stakeholder division adopted in the findings.

Interviews in Malé, on Laamu and on Baa were carried out by either two or three of the researchers in tandem although the Maldivian researcher was always present. That allowed for quick translation on the very few occasions that interviewees opted to speak partially in *Dhivehi* rather than English. Interviews followed a consistent, planned interview schedule of open-ended questions to allow full expression of the interviewee voice and the construction of a dialogue (Kvale 1996; Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan 2007). The preparatory schedule covered broad themes but it was sharpened very quickly to more overtly concentrate on the role of politics and power with regard to tourism destination development and tourism public policy (past and present) when it became apparent that such matters permeated all other themes.

The interviews typically lasted from 60-90 minutes and were conducted, recorded and transcribed. One of the transcribers was completely bilingual (*Dhivehi* and English) and this allowed a cross-check of the few interviews that were conducted partially in *Dhivehi*. The ethical agreement with all interviewees stated that they would not be directly identified in

research outcomes (including academic journal articles). Maldives is a new democracy and freedom of speech is not established by a long tradition. Gathering comments, particularly on relevant religious matters and the contested 2012 *coup* was highly sensitive and trust based.

Interviews were conducted in May 2013. This was a critical period in the run-up to the national election that occurred in November 2013 and the parliamentary elections in March 2014. The relative merits of OIOR tourism and guesthouse tourism lay towards the center of public debate surrounding the elections. That might be expected in a tourism destination that has seemingly prospered from the OIOR model and is reliant on the tourism sector. The relevance of the research led to very good access and consequently a very good data base of transcribed interviews. Primary research was complemented with secondary material from both government and other sources, noticeably tourism master plans and other government publications that ranged across initial declarations on tourism in the 1970s through to the latest press releases; newspapers and other print in *Dhivehi* and English; and also both mainstream and social media.

There is no one correct way to analyze voluminous qualitative data (Miles & Huberman 1994; Silverman 1993). Researchers can employ a tight, more theoretically driven approach, and/or a looser inductively oriented approach in order to benefit from the interpretative and eclectic nature of the qualitative inquiry (Miles and Huberman 1994). For the present study, both inductive and deductive data analysis approaches were employed. Initially, in line with the data analysis strategy of Farmaki et al (2015) a framework was developed to guide the

analysis based on the review of the literature (Figure 1).

[INSERT ABOUT HERE FIGURE 1: DATA - ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK].

This framework informed the development of an initial coding scheme that enabled the researchers to break down the interview transcripts and the secondary data into manageable blocks and classify them under headings and groups. Overall, this deductive approach to the analysis informed an understanding of the key stakeholders and particularly their roles, views and power levels in the development of tourism within Maldives.

Alongside the deductive approach, an inductive mode of analysis was also employed which helped the researchers analyse the data freely without following a framework. The analysis was undertaken by re-reading transcripts and collected documents and analysing the data by following the approach recommended by Corley and Gioia (2004). First, open coding was used in order to group the emerging concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Second, following Corley and Gioia (2004), first-order concepts were categorised into broader second-order themes by using axial coding. Third, the second-order themes were gathered into a series of higher level aggregate dimensions taking due care to back-check interpretations against original data. For example, open coding yielded that there was long standing equilibrium/status quo during the period 1983-2008 when the OIOR policy was dominant, and largely unchallenged, and guesthouse development was forbidden. Similarly, open coding demonstrated that there was a partial power shift towards the ideas of the MDP prior to and during their short period in government (2008-2012) and the passage of the second

amendment of the Maldives Tourism Act 2/99. During axial coding, additional conceptualisation occurred on tourism development, particularly in relation to guest house policy, through power shifting and shaping. The first order concepts and the axial codes were compared by the three researchers. This enabled the researchers to discuss and cross-check the themes emerging from each researcher's independent analysis of the transcripts. The outcome of this analysis procedure provided the basis for an overarching higher level evaluative framework of power shaping/power shift variants (See Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4).

All three researchers of the study were involved in data analysis in order to cross-check the process and ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Memos, which are defined as the theorising write-up of ideas about the themes and their relationships (Corbin and Strauss 2008) were also kept by the researchers throughout the analysis process. These memos ensured that each researcher's interpretations, thoughts and insights regarding the links between themes were recorded and updated as the analysis progressed. In addition, the researchers made productive use of diagrams to represent the overlapping issues or relationships between emerging themes. In order to improve internal validity the final stage of the analysis involved both back checking the interpretations against the original data and also comparing and contrasting the evaluative framework with the extant literature on the factors influencing power relationships among different stakeholders.

## 5.0 FINDINGS

The literature recognizes the importance of tourism stakeholder groups and relations among them in investigations of the paradigm of power. The study of the evolution of power clearly involves a temporal element. Accordingly, the findings section below is organized around a description and analysis of stakeholders and power over specific, critical time periods. In the first instance, the findings concentrate on a temporal analysis of power and stakeholders from 1972-1983 and 1983-2008. Thereafter the emphasis moves to a focus on the 2008-2015 power struggle surrounding advocates of OIOR tourism and guesthouse tourism. Wherever relevant the voice of the stakeholders is emphasized.

### 5.1 Stakeholders and power: temporal perspective 1972-1983, 1983-2008.

#### 5.1.1 Government and power

Following the initial *laissez-faire* period of tourism development, 1972-1983, four tourism master plans (TMPs) have covered the periods 1983-1992, 1996-2005, 2007-2011, 2013-2017, effectively a timeframe during which the industry has become formalized within the Maldives. In terms of an over-riding summary of events 1983-1992 is marked in the First Tourism Master Plan (FTMP) as the start of a period of Government power. This is evident in the development of a lease process for resort islands (the allocation of uninhabited islands for OIOR tourism); planned requirements regarding physical infrastructure; the creation of financial institutions and a legal framework for foreign investment; and the attempted development of regional growth poles and centralization of marketing. All of these elements helped establish early regulation and influence by Government, if not dominance, as made

operational by the Ministry of Tourism. This contrasts with the period of the Second Tourism Master Plan (STMP) characterized by more private sector enablement through, for example, the formation of the Maldives Tourism Promotion Board, a private/public marketing partnership; and the Government as facilitator of infrastructure investment (e.g. two build-and-operate airports) (Ministry of Tourism 2003; Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation 2007).

The narrative of the TMPs suggests an early thrust in 1983 for a concentration of power in the hands of Government, as made operational by the Ministry of Tourism. That is followed by a period of retrenchment as power is ceded to private entrepreneurial activity. With little doubt the role of Government was overt during the FTMP 1983-1992 compared to the very earliest *laissez-faire* beginnings of tourism in the Maldives in the 1970s.

#### 5.1.2 Entrepreneurs and power

Some interviews suggest that the narrative of Government / Ministry of Tourism power, evident from a reading of the FTMP and STMP, seriously under-represents the influence of entrepreneurs. There is always a problem of distinguishing between what is stated in formal documents and what is actually happening on the ground (Nelson 2012). However, one early Maldivian entrepreneur reflected during interviews on the early days of tourism development both prior and subsequent to the FTMP:

*Entrepreneur: Just to go back a little bit. In 1972 when we started tourism here, there were maybe about six, seven motorized boats in the country, 'dhonis' (service boats), and we had one aircraft in the airport. We communicated to the outside world on morse-code; we had a ship coming here once in two months. From that to this: you could say it (tourism) was 100%*

*driven by the private sector... The good thing was that the Government never interfered. We got all the co-operation we wanted from the Government. They saw what we were doing and they gave us the cooperation to do it, and that's the basis of the success of the industry in this country.*

Despite this perception, the overt effort of the Government and Ministry of Tourism (later rebadged as MOTAC) to hold power over resort leases and the spatial spread of resorts was strong, prolonged and unchallenged until 2008. A high-level executive in MOTAC, whose professional work extended from the early 1980s, provided clear evidence that a fear of negative social impact was one reason why power was sought and held by Government: MOTAC executive: *It was very soon realized that tourists do not lead a normal pattern or form of behavior when they are on holiday. And Maldives being a dominantly Muslim society, the Government felt that there should be some amount of segregation from tourists... This has been the overall development policy for a long time, and the main reason is that we want to keep the negative social impacts to a minimum.*

As well as the perceived need to limit social impacts, the allocation of each resort island offered a chance for the Government to reap a financial return on the lease. In a country that has only comparatively recently instituted a system of T-GST (2010) and business profit tax (2011), the near \$2bn. financial return from lease rent (Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture 2013) is vital for the provision of state services and offers an obvious rationale for Government interest in gaining and holding power. In 1983 there were 14 resort islands, but in



2007 there were 89, and in 2015 there were 111 (Ministry of Tourism 2015).

Overall, it can be stated that over the period 1983-2008 the Government, MOTAC as well as Maldivian resort entrepreneurs engaged in a long-running power *shaping* exercise that was mutually beneficial to those stakeholders. However, the power of the local community as a stakeholder was far more limited.

### 5.1.3 Local community / islanders and power

Weak non-engagement of the local community with tourism was acknowledged in successive TMPs (FTMP 1983; STMP 1996; TTMP 2007) albeit allied to calls for increasing employment opportunities and the opening up of gainful public and community participation in the tourism industry.

According to the 2006 census only 10% of tourism employees were female and less than one third of those were Maldivian. International comparisons reveal Maldives as seriously lagging with regard to female adult employment and other gender gap indices, as well as political empowerment, although not educational attainment (World Economic Forum 2015). On the other hand, reflections by some interviewees revealed frustration that local communities and/or sub-sections of communities did not empower themselves. The management of an established 4\* resort on Baa Atoll recounted a level of islander disengagement, particularly among women, that retarded local community power:

Resort manager 1: *Unfortunately we do not have a single woman, Maldivian woman, with us*

*(in employee accommodation)... we do have the ladies who come on a daily basis to sweep the island, but apart from that we do not have anyone, because for them it is preferable to stay with their family. Sometimes, I believe, it is also desired by the parents that the daughters stay at home, supervised...*

Resort manager 2: *And there it is again, the social component. There is also a stigma. Here (on the resort) are places where people supposedly walk around naked, and drink alcohol. And so you don't want your daughter to come here...*

The model of OIOR largely set women apart from working on resorts. That was hardly contingent with the emergence of a strong tourism-oriented power base centered on the local community. To compound the situation, it was (and is) typical for male resort employees to live away from their families for many months, especially if their home is on one atoll and resort work on another. This fragments community power.

Moreover there was a deeper lack of power among the local islanders. With neither economic nor social capital they had absolutely no chance of tendering for an island lease, the major source of tourism wealth, and watched powerlessly as islands within their atoll were developed into resorts, cutting off their access to fishing and other natural resources. An interviewee who was a Government minister showed understanding of the situation but justified the local community's lack of power on economic grounds:

Government minister: *The thinking (antipathy) of local communities is quite rational... they used to go (to uninhabited islands) for swimming, for firewood or for coconut. Then (those*

*things) were taken away for some other commercial purpose and they didn't see a direct financial contribution to the local community.*

To further deepen the powerlessness of the local community, some islanders reflected on a historical lack of power because of the parochialism and nepotism of their own local councilors. On Laamu (in the south of Maldives) one islander articulated a general view that the council favored family over merit, and squeezed power from parts of the local community that lacked leverage.

*Islander: I don't think I can change things. There are three or four families playing here. So, it's difficult. Sometimes they (the council) will not make (objective) decisions because they are relatives. They will not do what they should, because it (the council) is like a family business.*

In turn, however, local islanders who entered the political arena as local councilors themselves felt squeezed of power by entrepreneurs and by politicians and officials in departments at the center of Government (Malé). One entrepreneur offered an explanation for the antipathy towards island councilors:

*Entrepreneur: Whoever is educated, whoever has knowledge, and whoever has any 'go' is in Malé, working or being entrepreneurial...*

The year 2008 saw the democratic election of a new President, after thirty years of a single

party system, and the first action to review OIOR tourism, acknowledging the need to address the long-running peripheral power position of the local community when compared to other stakeholders (Department of National Planning 2009). This informed the power struggle 2008-2015.

## **5.2 Stakeholders and power: OIOR policy *versus* guesthouse policy 2008-2015**

The dominant contextual battleground since 2008, by far the biggest battleground in the 40 year history of Maldives tourism, is the power struggle surrounding advocates of the OIOR policy versus the new guesthouse policy. To a casual observer this might seem like an unusual issue to cause a major struggle but its implications reverberate through the economy, society and politics (not just confined to policy making) of the state. The long term peripheral power position of the local community relative to other stakeholders lies at the core of the struggle. The following section presents the findings that demonstrate the power variants of different stakeholders, namely local community / islanders, political opposition (MDP), Government, the Ministry of Tourism Arts and Culture (MOTAC), and entrepreneurs represented by Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO) with regards to the new guesthouse policy. Partly to reflect some shifting of power we start the section with the views of the local community / islanders.

### **5.2.1 Local community / islanders and power**

Individuals within local communities do not have homogenous views regarding opportunities from guesthouse tourism. A local artist on Laamu, a screen printer, was pessimistic about his prospects for the present and the future. He had a vision of what guesthouse tourism might

offer compared to resort tourism but he remained frustrated not only by his long running inability to place his products in resorts, because they only offered items for sale from outside Maldives, but also by the slow development of guesthouse tourism. On the other hand, he also showed some optimism for a better future, with more tourism in the community rather than on enclaves, as long as the government supported a programme of tourism awareness (not just business awareness). In so doing islanders could understand tourism and tourists. In that respect his cautionary view was not completely divergent from stakeholders, such as MOTAC and MATATO (see below), who held power:

*Artist: I was waiting for an opportunity like this (guesthouse tourism)... (Until now) I couldn't get the chance: I sent samples, of my drawings and things, but resorts were bringing their items from abroad. So I didn't get a chance to sell my items there.*

*I think before we start developing tourism in these islands, we have to run awareness programs for the people. It's very important. (It's) not the business we have to bring. First we have to make awareness, and we have to show them (the islanders) the opportunities they can get from this tourism. Just suddenly bringing tourists, people (islanders) will be shocked... (However), after ten years if you come (back) here, I think it will not only be me who will be doing printing or artwork. There will be a lot of people doing this business. That's what I think.*

A newly employed guesthouse worker, who had experience of working on resorts, was also able to make a reasoned general judgement of what non-resort islands could offer to guesthouse tourists. He was very happy with work in a guesthouse because he did not like the lengthy periods of time spent away from his family when working on resorts, aggravated by some traumatic effects as a result of the 2004 tsunami. He was aware of the financial

leakage of resorts and agreed in principle with guesthouse development, although he also advocated some government control and, therefore, maintenance of government power:

Guesthouse worker: *The main problem is that the foreign money doesn't stay here. Whatever they want to take out of the country they can take. It's not being enforced that this or that percent of the earnings have to stay in Maldives, has to be spent here (and) has to stay in our banks. For me if I were the Minister of Tourism, the first thing for me would be to change that.*

A *dhoni* (boat) owner and his crew member had cautious views of the change likely to derive from guesthouse tourism and their ability to participate in that change. On the one hand, through carrying tourists on the *dhoni* rather than using it for fishing the *dhoni* owner was able to reach the end of each month without needing credit in the local shop. He clearly considered that to be a good thing. On the other hand, the crew member queried whether he could ever become a guesthouse provider. Despite a sense that tourism was set to extend beyond the OIOR enclave, the perception was that power still lay with the established entrepreneurs:

*Dhoni crew member: If I ever wanted to have a guesthouse on my land I would not be able to do it. It would require vast amounts of money. Maldivian rich business people do not provide funds. And if I did manage to have a loan and build a guesthouse I still would not be able to get people to come and stay because I would not be able to get the tour operators and travel agencies to send the people.*

### 5.2.2 Political opposition (MDP) and power

A vibrant political opposition always highlights the relevance of power struggle because

without political office ideas are less easily fulfilled. The MDP, the main opposition party with the largest voter support, considers itself the champion of the guesthouse policy which was first introduced in the MDP manifesto for presidential election 2008 and subsequently developed during their brief period of government (2008-2012). On inhabited islands, during the election period of mid-late 2013, MDP campaign-murals depicted a simplistic and harmonious future in which incoming tourists would stay in guesthouses on inhabited islands and enjoy the services and activities provided by the local community. The overt rationale for MDP support of the guesthouse policy related to the benefits that guesthouses projected in terms of the spread of wealth:

*MDP 1: I think when the President (2008-2012) thought about opening up this (policy) he thought all Maldives people should be engaged in the biggest business in the country which is tourism. It's not fair at the moment.*

*MDP 2: Two or three people are controlling or trying to control government and they have all the money and they want to pretty much, you know, keep the people depending on them and their little hand-outs for their survival...*

*So, therefore, why not (develop a guesthouse policy)? The Maldives is for everybody. The only way that every individual can get in at a smaller scale is through the guesthouse policy.*

The guesthouse worker (an MDP sympathizer but not MDP member), who also had experience of working on resorts, summarized what he perceived as the benefits of guesthouses for tourists:

*Guesthouse worker: Yeah, one benefit is that they can experience how the locals live. It is the same as living in the village, same as living on the island... So in that sense it's great for*

*everybody. The locals benefit and the people who want to go on vacation who cannot afford the resort prices, which currently are high, will get to come to Maldives.*

The MDP representatives suggested that the guest house policy would staunch the flow of power to what they called the small but prevalent ‘*jihadist*’ movement in Maldives. In other interviews the *jihadists* were talked about indirectly, but the MDP had more direct views:

*MDP 1: Before the Islamists or the jihadists spread into the rest of the country, we have to expand the guest house policy, and quickly...*

*MDP 2: We have to spread faster than the Islamists are spreading, bringing their speeches and getting people's mind corrupted.*

*You know, if the guy with the cart (food stall) down there in the street makes 200 dollars a day and the Islamists come and mess up his business, so that the tourists go away, he's going to get upset! He will stand up for his rights...*

The MDP felt, rightly or wrongly, that the democratically elected President over the period 2008-2012 had been ousted from power by extremists working within established institutions.

The MDP were clearly of the view that the *Adhaalath* Party (religious party) and also the *jihadists* opposed the shift to a more progressive society and, therefore, *de facto* opposed the guesthouse policy:

*MDP 3: The Adhaalath Party has 5,000 people. They don't have any representative in the parliament, nor in the local council or in the atoll councils. So why are they so powerful and strong? The coup was done by them, the Islamist elements in the MNDF (Maldives National*



*Defense Force), and the police. They are the ones who are maintaining the hold of the Government: that is why they have a big voice...*

### 5.2.3 Government and power

A leading and representative Government minister foresaw a future tourism economy with both resorts and guesthouses. However, he also sought to maintain central control of guesthouse development, a top-down approach to decision-making, and to limit the power of local councils, despite an official extension of that power in the Decentralization Act of 2008:

*Government minister: After 2008 the Maldivian constitution gave a lot of power to local councils. Of course, they are questioning now whether they can directly lease some of the islands or pieces of land from their own island. But I think the success of Maldives tourism industry is central planning, federal planning where there is a central body which is responsible for regulating, coming out with necessary regulations, laws, and leasing so that we can control in a much more organized way.*

The same Government minister also recognized the need for control of religious parties and their adherents in order not to foment religious sensitivity. The argument was very similar to that of the MDP and required the central exercise of economic power:

*Government minister: We have a little bit of religious extremism, very minor now, very insignificant I would say. When there is no economic activity they tend to grow beards, you know, tend to be more religious. I think that happens elsewhere as well with economic depression. But when there is more economic activity people are busy working and they tend*

*to be more decent...*

#### 5.2.4 MOTAC and power

To reduce negative socio-cultural implications of guesthouse tourism, MOTAC interviewees stated that it was imperative to educate tourists, local people and their representatives (local councilors). In general, MOTAC supported only the slow development of a guesthouse policy within limits, rules and regulations. Their argument for slow change emphasized the potential negative reaction from religious people if rapid change occurred:

*MOTAC 1: A problem that we might have is sensitivities with, I would say, the religious leaders, the religious communities. This is the area we have to be very careful about. We have to make sure that these people do not have (the chance) to take offence for certain behavior.*

The question arises about what it takes for stronger entrepreneurs, or an incoming opposition party, to out-argue, out-smart and over-rule the power of long-term professional civil servants in a Government ministry, such as MOTAC, seeking slow change. MOTAC professionals were clearly aware of the need to act as a counter to the power of politicians' promises:

*MOTAC 1: The problem is, you know, some politicians are irresponsible when they go and, you know, paint a very flowery picture. "All you have to do is just give me a vote and then everything will happen". This actually raises expectation and is similar anywhere in the world. "Vote me in and I will have an international airport in every atoll". But I think very soon the people will realize that this is actually a dream that we can never realize. It will take the general population some time to realize this and digest the information. But, we are working*

on it.

One other observation on power by MOTAC interviewees related to the dual role of stakeholders who are both politicians and business people.

MOTAC 2: *Most of the political stakeholders are also stakeholders in the tourism industry. Many of the resort owners sit in the parliament. So, it is very difficult in my opinion for any Government to have rather radical changes.*

#### 5.2.5 Entrepreneurs and power

Arguably MATATO most closely represents the stakeholder view of tourism entrepreneurs at a corporate level. Its membership consists of industry entrepreneurs who for the most part have a vested interest in how industry expands with the resultant distribution of power. Even so an executive from MATATO also recognized the need for some change. He used a similar mix of arguments as espoused by other stakeholders plus arguments related to destination branding.

MATATO executive: *I am a pure business-man and I am working for MATATO, and I am just working for the benefit of the industry and our travel agents. So, what I am trying to do, say, is always 'OK, have a guesthouse, but have it monitored, planned, have a vision... don't try to basically spoil our (international) reputation'.*

He argued that anything other than a shaping of the equilibrium/status quo would threaten the branded destination image developed since 1983. It was evident that MATATO was unable to

countenance a tourism policy, let alone a guest-house policy, without a boundary:

MATATO executive: *The Maldives is well known and the Maldives brand has very good value. It is a luxury product, luxury destination and we have achieved this through our hard work, and through vision, and through planning. So if we have no planning, if we have no vision, or (know) where we want to be in the next five/ten/twenty years down the line, we will be going to disaster. The biggest fear that I have is the guest-house policy without any boundary. That's the biggest disaster that we can ever encounter in the tourism industry.*

Of course not all entrepreneurs at corporate level exactly followed the MATATO line. There were a variety of reasons given for essentially holding on to power, resistance to change, and continued power shaping. For example, whilst arguing a related message as MATATO regarding politicians and also branding, one entrepreneur was highly sceptical that guesthouses would be able to gain sufficient guests because of the logistical problems of movement through the Maldives archipelago. The business model was strongly criticised:

Entrepreneur: *This whole thing (guest-house policy) is purely used for political reasons you know... Nobody thinks beyond that point and so we just keep quiet and let it (guest-house talk) happen. I mean, it's not easy for a guest house. Any islands around the airport here can have guest houses... but (what if) there is a guest house about two or three hundred miles away from Male and somebody is investing all that money in the guest house there? My fear is that people do not understand what they are doing, because when the politicians say, "Oh, you can build guest houses" everybody's running to build but they do not give any economic thinking about the feasibility of the whole project.*

The same entrepreneur also argued the economic case for not spreading the allocation of islands for resort development to a wider set of people beyond the existing entrepreneurial elite:

Entrepreneur: *Nobody ever goes deep enough to think what it is to build an island resort. It takes you one and a half years or two years to build it. You have to be able to pay bank interest for those years, 8-9%, and you have to be strong enough to not fall before you open it. And, (when) you open, it takes another two or three years getting to be known in the market...and then it takes you eight years or something before you start to get your money back. So, how many people can sustain them-selves for a period like that?*

## 6.0 DISCUSSION

Hall and Jenkins (1995) argued that power requires a specific analysis of the context in which it operates. This study meets that requirement and analyzes why and how stakeholders gain, hold and cede power; takes a temporal perspective on the analysis of power, politics and tourism destination development; and recognizes and evaluates patterns of stakeholder power dominance, subservience and decline.

### 6.1 Power allocation among different stakeholders

Existing literature streams relating to politics, power and tourism destination development are relevant and applicable to the Maldivian context. For example, power as a relational effect rather than a possession (Beritelli and Laesser 2011) is revealed between the time of the FTMP and the STMP through a reassertion of the role of entrepreneurs, despite the first raft of Government / MOTAC controls in and after 1983. Attempts to change the behavior of others or stop them doing what they want (Lasswell 1936) are evident in the actions and statements of representatives of the Government, MOTAC and entrepreneurs at every turn through the period 1983-2008 even though the overall period was marked by a consensual and collective view. The fourfold division of power outlined by Barnett and Duval (2005) is also evident: compulsory power can be illustrated in the direct control of the ruling party over the opposition; institutional power in the rules and procedures laid down by Government and worked through by MOTAC; structural power in the relationship that normally exists between the resort entrepreneur or resort manager and employees or local islanders; and productive power through dialogue and networks, albeit nascent, such as those existing between some

island secondary schools and nearby resorts. Finally, an emphasis on stakeholder groupings as a framework for collection and analysis of data and presentation of findings (Hall and Jenkins 2005) proves very useful in highlighting unequal power allocation among stakeholders, non-integration of some stakeholders in the tourism system and public-private sector disagreement (Harrison et al. 2003; Dodds 2007).

Critically, however, the study moves beyond an identification of practical evidence that relates to the literature. It also helps to create a theoretical contribution on how power evolves through time. In essence, some stakeholders advocate and induce the *shaping* of power within the status quo/equilibrium. However, other stakeholders advocate and induce a more radical power *shift*.

## 6.2 Evolution of power: Power shaping / power shifting

From interview evidence there is an apparent stacking of powerful stakeholder groups that are aligned against a rapid move from OIOR tourism. Sometimes, but not always, as is apparent from the interviews, they use common arguments. The most vehement advocates of guesthouse tourism at the time of the interviews, the MDP opposition, did not re-enter government in the November 2013 round of elections. However, whilst it is clearly difficult to break the persistence of an established power nexus, it is evident from this study that the mechanism of what we call ‘power shaping’ can metamorphose towards some degree of ‘power shift’. The different patterns of power shaping and power shift that emerge from the findings are illustrated in Figures 2.1-2.4, a summary evaluation of evolving patterns of power

dominance, subservience and decline that is evident in the Maldivian case. Power shaping involves an attempt to influence behavior of stakeholder groups whilst emphasizing the consensus and the collective. Partial power shift involves a partial break with the consensus and collective. By contrast, complete power shift involves a complete break, the establishment of a new power nexus, a new center of dominant control, and a new period of equilibrium/status quo. Control is envisaged as influence over the tourism resource within the economic-political system.

[INSERT ABOUT HERE FIGURE 2: POWER SHAPING/POWER SHIFT - VARIANTS]

The varied strength of the power flows, indicated by different widths of the vertical bars, and the movement of the power nexus and power shift along the horizontal bar, is a composite judgement of power allocation made by the three field researchers, as detailed in the methods section, based on separate analysis of the interview transcripts and secondary data.

In more detail, Figure 2.1 illustrates the long standing equilibrium/status quo during the period 1983-2008 when the OIOR policy was dominant, and largely unchallenged, and guesthouse development was forbidden. The power center was lodged between entrepreneurs (#1) and the long-established one-party government (#2), with another key power input from MOTAC (#3). The power of Government opposition (#4), official or otherwise, and the local community (#6) was limited. Recollected evidence from this period is outlined in Section 5.1. Figure 2.2 illustrates a partial power shift towards the ideas of the MDP (#4) prior to and during their short period in government (2008-2012) and the passage of the second amendment of the Maldives Tourism Act 2/99. The power nexus is not lodged in a new position of equilibrium/status quo entirely within MDP control. Entrepreneurs and members of the former



government maintain some control: power shaping continues but there is a partial power shift. Recollected evidence from this period is outlined in section 5.2. Figure 2.3 illustrates the uptake of MDP ideas as increasingly accepted main-stream policy and thought, reflected in the fast moving growth of guesthouses on the ground, even though the power nexus has reverted to its former position. The on-going shaping that parallels a partial power shift has created a power situation that almost mirrors MDP pre-election policies, but without the dominant control that MDP would exercise if they had been elected. Such a situation was emerging during the time of the field research as outlined also in Section 5.2. It continued following the defeat of the MDP in late 2013 by the re-elected coalition. The power nexus in Fig. 2.3 is lodged back between the entrepreneurs (#1) and the new post 2012 Government (#2), but there is a very strong power pulse from #4 (MDP) and a strengthened pulse from #6 (local community). Figure 2.4 represents a complete projected power shift (not yet accomplished) and the establishment of a new equilibrium/status quo. Such a position was articulated by opposition politicians during interview, a situation that was thwarted by the narrow electoral defeat.

However, there is a decisive recent growth of guesthouses and guesthouse beds, much faster than expected, numbering over 200 in the latest published statistics (Ministry of Tourism 2015). There are strong spatial, financial and technical reasons why further foreseeable growth will not allow guesthouses to reach an equal share of beds between resorts and guesthouses, as advocated by the MDP opposition during interview. Inevitably, too, the potential for friction between tourists and locals, with continued growth of guesthouses, will also increase beyond the nascent level evidenced in some sporadic recent cases (Rasheed

2014). Nevertheless the power of MDP ideas and, by extension, the local community stakeholder group has become much strengthened. There is a real projected possibility of a decisive overt shifting of power to local individuals and communities rather than a shaping of power.

Interviewees who advocated power shaping were not entirely against the local community gaining a stake in tourism from guesthouses. Few if any interviewees were unremitting in their opposition, even if they were sometimes trenchant in the need to maintain a brand (MATATO, Government Ministers) or maintain security (Maldives National Defense Force), or maintain control of supply (MOTAC) and so forth. Nevertheless, all the above stakeholders, together with the Government of 1983-2008 were differentiated from the MDP by the pace that they sought to introduce change. That was evident from interviewee accounts and supporting secondary data, both during the MDP's period in government 2008-2012 (Figure 2.2), and renewed opposition 2012-2015 (Figure 2.3). The mechanism of shaping, that was very slow and sometimes dormant 1983-2008 (Figure 2.1), gained increasing momentum both during and following the period of MDP government, so that it is possible to recognize a partial power shift 2008-2012 and 2012-2015, even with the overt power nexus returned to its long established position (Figure 2.3).

Further details on the forces that created partial power shift (2012-2015) instead of power shaping are added in Figure 3. Although they are specific to Maldives it is arguable that they can be applied, with due moderation, to other SIDS and developing countries. First, the

beginnings of democracy in 2008, although threatened in the (contested) *coup d'état* of February 2012 and alleged unfair elections of 2013/14, offered a glimpse of democratic power and associated accountability, even in a very nascent form. Those currently in positions of power in government are not indistinguishable from those prior to 2008. However, they are now somewhat more accountable. They need to address disparity in the spread of economic wealth across social strata and geographical space, a common thread in SIDS and developing countries. The guesthouse policy is most enthusiastically espoused by the MDP opposition, but it offers visible evidence to voters in local communities that some tangible action by Government is forthcoming on economic disparity.

In other locations there will be other specific policy change that will emerge from the crucible of political change. However, similar to Maldives and as recognized by Causevic and Lynch (2013), periods of political instability can alter the bonds of government and business that otherwise confirm equilibrium/ status quo.

Second, there was a vacuum regarding decision-making during the run-up period of the elections (November 2013) and re-run of election (March 2014). A number of stakeholders, particularly from MOTAC and MATATO, commented on the way in which the development of guesthouses was proceeding without the planning and control that characterized the development of the OIOR policy since 1983. Of course, such laxity of control, the result of which suggests a shift towards the demands of the MDP and the local community, may be no more than a mirage. There is some evidence that, during the vacuum, some Maldivian

entrepreneurs who previously focused on resort development noted a business opportunity and developed their own guesthouses in a style much more like small-scale hotels and apartment complexes. In other words, the same operators who currently own/operate resorts have established themselves as guesthouse owners. Once again parallels can be envisaged in other locations. Indeed, Bianchi (2004, 522) recognized, in the *Islas Canarias*, that the regional elite from non-democratic times in Spain were able to insert themselves at the center of a new tourism polity 'at the expense of labor, civil society, small investors and, of course, the region's ecology'. There is some similarity in the Maldivian context such that power and wealth remains in the hands of the few.

There is a case, too, that the vacuum has injected a sudden, cathartic release from a long term situation of no jobs, limited jobs or unwanted jobs (filled mainly by Bangladeshi migrant workers) and an antipathy to effort as regards employment and entrepreneurial activity. Some interviewees described a far from bucolic island life, characterized as an 'island jail', with 12% endemic unemployment, underemployment, drug addiction (3,154 in the atolls and 4,342 in Malé) and crime (UNODC 2013). Yet they were optimistic of a tourism future in five or ten years based around guesthouse tourism and the latent talent and endeavor that it would release.

There are other forces that have contributed to the partial shift of power. For example, the Maldives is by no means as isolated geographically or socially as in the 1970s. A number of stakeholders commented on the growing international awareness of sections of the

population who no longer rely on fishing; who have some contact with international visitors; who have been trained and educated outside the Maldives; and who are well connected inside and outside Maldives by mobile phones, computers and social media. From that point of view there is a growing mixture of ideas, including some questioning of religious purity, even if not expressed overtly and explicitly.

Moreover, Internet growth has also allowed guesthouse operators to bypass tourism intermediaries. There is a growing presence of guesthouse options that tourists can access direct through e-Tourism websites such as booking.com, agoda.com, hotels.com. The development of the wealthy elite in China, SE Asia, Russia and satellites has fueled the expansion in the numbers of OIOR developments and helped to maintain resort occupancy levels even during times of recession in Europe. However, there has also been a concomitant growth of tourists seeking alternatives to the established destination and resort brand in the Maldives, sometimes out of economic necessity and sometimes as a search for more independent tourist experiences common elsewhere (Bowen and Clarke 2009; Pearce 2012). Diversification, including guesthouse development on inhabited islands, with all that means for a shift of power to the local community and islanders, is not possible without a matching of supply and demand. Fortuitously or otherwise, the rejection of the OIOR product by one segment of tourists has aligned with e-tourism growth.

In essence, whilst the forces above are specific to the Maldives they are closely related to wider changes in the region and beyond. The struggle for the spread of tourism in Maldives

beyond OIOR is a window to wider events. Those include democratization; technological developments; ideological movements and counter movements (as in the search for a supposed counter to jihadism through economic development); new tourist motivations and behaviors; the development of new economies in China, SE Asia, Russia and satellites and ongoing recession or threat of recession, particularly in Europe.

[INSERT ABOUT HERE FIGURE 3: PARTIAL POWER SHIFT, NON-DOMINANT CONTROL]

## 7.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is important to note that previous tourism management literature investigating the tourism and politics interface fails to offer a detailed account of the power struggle among different stakeholder groups in the formulation and implementation of tourism policies. For example, whilst Waligo et al (2013) and Farmaki et al (2015) acknowledge the involvement of different stakeholders they do not go so far as to investigate the causes of power struggle and the resultant policy implications.

This study responds to such a research gap in the interface of politics, power and tourism destination development and makes a distinct contribution to knowledge. After identification of the key tourism stakeholders the study details and analyzes, through consideration of contested policy formulation and implementation, why and how they have sought to gain, hold and cede power. The temporal perspective develops theoretical understanding that recognizes and evaluates patterns of stakeholder power dominance, subservience and decline in a tourism destination (Figure 2 & Figure 3).

Specifically, it is shown that until 2008 founder entrepreneurs together with a Government elected through a one-part system and, to some extent, an influential civil service (MOTAC) shaped the tourism industry through a dominant power nexus. This was a success in terms of creating a strong branded destination with a single image, contrary to what is sometimes deemed possible (Beritelli et al 2014). However, the catalyst of a policy move away from

OIOR tourism, consequent on the election of an MDP led Government (2008-2012), developed a change in power relations among stakeholders. Even though the contested coup and subsequent elections post 2012 ousted the MDP into political opposition, the increasingly firm growth of guesthouse tourism led to a partial power shift toward the neglected local community, whose role was otherwise ignored, notably muted, or not integrated alongside other stake-holders 1983-2008. Essentially, enclave resort tourism created one sort of power scenario. However, guest-house tourism unleashed the beginnings of a democratisation of the industry so that by default it involved the local community / islanders beyond the role of comparatively low-level service personnel in resorts.

Local community power is linked mainly to a nascent right to vote in elections. Prior to the establishment of electoral government, local community expectations from the political, administrative and economic elite were extremely modest. This has been slow to change and has not been helped since 2012 by a return to what has been described once again as an autocratic form of government (Lynas 2015).

However, as of 2015 there has been some ceding of the control of power in relation to the tourism resource by the elite, with the adoption of the guesthouse policy in local communities at a far faster rate than envisaged. It might be proposed that such a situation, tending towards a compromise-way, is a power scenario that with some modification is most generally appropriate when a tourism destination is subject to power shift. In the Maldivian context, the compromise-way will require that the elite do not exclude the development of guest-house



tourism, in order to protect their interest, but nevertheless facilitate some control on development, in agreement with the local community including small scale entrepreneurs and local politicians. By so doing, guest-house growth develops but, for example, standards are established and maintained in relation to carrying capacity, building quality, price-structure and so forth.

The long-running brand of the Maldives, celebrated by MOTAC and MATATO (5.2.4 & 5.2.5) had a corporate character and is a top-down managed entity or power tool. By contrast, the development of guest houses within the community creates a tourist experience that is substantially changed. The product is almost bound to be more cultural and social (and so more diverse, evolving and chaotic) rather than a merely hedonic product. In addition, tourist experience that is community driven, with an emphasis on contact with local people, may need to be incorporated into destination branding. This will add to the complexity of the evolving power variant(s). The tourist may become a generative force and power as s/he influences locals with the creation of further power shaping / shift variants beyond Figure 2.4. There is anecdotal evidence at the time of writing that such a situation is occurring on a few islands. The opposition party interviewees (MDP) recognised the likelihood of such a dynamic (5.2.2), as did some local islanders such as the artist (5.2.1) and guesthouse worker (5.2.2). Part of the resistance of MOTAC (5.1.3), MATATO (5.2.5) and, indeed, the Maldives National Defense Force (6.2) relates to the potential for substantial change.

A case can be argued, in line with that made by some of the entrepreneurial, government

(and administrative) elite, that power shaping of the variant evident in Maldives 1983-2008 (Figure 2.1) with its concentration of power among elites is the power relationship that provides the most effective means of early tourism destination development. A case can also be argued that complete power shift away from the elite (Figure 2.4), as favored by the most radical voices, fails to make the best use of accrued knowledge and financial capital. However, partial power shift, the power variant evident in Fig. 2.3 (and Figure 3) provides the most benefits and least dis-benefits of power re-distribution in the more mature stage of tourism destination development. In that sense an overall judgement from the Maldives, which might be considered to have a wider application is the need, using the terminology of Barnett and Duval (2005), to focus on the mechanism that can restrict compulsory power, restrain the extremes of institutional power, reconfigure structural power and drive the development of productive power based on dialogue.

Many of the power change elements evident in Figure 3 are only set to strengthen, both in Maldives and other destinations. International tourism industry representatives, from the United Nations World Tourism Organization and other bodies such as the European Union and various NGOs do not have a uniformly good reputation among stakeholders in the Maldives, or elsewhere. However, some mediation by such bodies is probably required to advise on a compromise path as a destination moves from early tourism development so that the power stake of a local community is developed and upheld within a framework of some central control.

All of this does not mean that power redistribution cannot be thrown in reverse as has happened elsewhere (Nelson 2012). First, there is much at stake, both financially and with regard to private patronage, for those involved in government and also for entrepreneurs with resort developments whose *raison d'être* is the OIOR model. Power is not easily relinquished. The interview findings suggest that a compromise-way with partial power shift is not rejected outright by any grouping, but the polarization of politics and the associated antipathies do not encourage compromise. Second, community based dialogue and action of the sort isolated by Hwang, Stewart and Ko (2012), that can minimize negative tourism impacts and maximize positive impacts, is by no means firmly founded and is, rather, barely evident. The benefits of guesthouse development may not accrue with the resultant negative effect on host support identified in social exchange theory (Latkova and Vogt 2012). Third, of all the range of forces discussed in relation to Figure 3, it is Islamic belief, moderate and extreme that is most likely to create a reverse shift.

This study has limitations. First, the approach relied to some extent on the memory and interpretation of interviewees who were also sometimes protagonists. It is arguable that such evidence is not always reliable. However, there was a strong convergence of detail in the interviewee accounts, a rigorous examination of transcripts by the three researchers and also corroborating secondary data in the form of relevant documents. Second, it was not possible to interview members of the *Adhaalath* (religious) party and so the view from the political opposition was confined to the MDP. However, the MDP is the main opposition, there are plenty of views on *Adhaalath* from other interviewees, and there was considerable contextual reading that informed analysis. Some might also argue that the decision not to interview

tourists was a limitation. However, whilst tourists are clearly stakeholders in Maldives, in the terms of Foucault (1980) they are much more targets rather than agents of power. Moreover, on Laamu atoll the researchers had opportunity to engage tourists in conversation, and glean contextual insights from them on their experience of guesthouse tourism, even though they were not formally interviewed. Finally, whilst formal interviews were also not carried out with NGOs, the research team have had many informal discussions with a variety of pressure groups and consultants that have attempted to influence tourism and other policy and, in addition, NGO activity and influence is overtly evidenced in secondary literature.

The future trajectory of power shaping or power shift in Maldives, whichever way that develops, even in the extreme to a potential point of chaos, is well worth additional research so as to extend comment on the influences that affect the development, maintenance and resistance to power equilibrium / status quo. An emphasis on one stakeholder group or various sub-stakeholder groups, such as different sections of the local community / islanders or guest-house owners, with further in depth qualitative research using ethnographic method, might generate additional nuance. For example, if guest-houses are owned in portfolios by existing Maldivian resort entrepreneurs there may be no change in their power position relative to the local community / islanders. However, if guest-house owners operate single guesthouses they may develop different power positions compared to those who are also resort entrepreneurs. Further research is needed to consider whether they will fit in to a more democratised model in which they remain close to the local community or whether they will become set apart from the community.

Parallel research and comparison in other island communities (SIDS) might also evidence synergy: for example, it seems from the work of Farmaki et al (2015) in Cyprus that overlying ideology complicates struggles between stakeholders, very similar to the Maldivian case. It seems, too, in an echo of Maldives, that dominant personal interests and connections create undemocratic networks that affect, for example, governance structures and destination development. Findings might show transferability within an island context. Finally, additional research could view the Maldivian situation through a different theoretical lens, other than power relations.

The future challenges faced by tourism at an Asia-Pacific and global scale (Robinson et al 2014; Von Bergner and Lohmann 2014) run in parallel to many of those identifiable in Maldives. As such it can be argued that study of the Maldives and its competing approaches to development may be regarded as of much wider theoretical relevance, beyond the limits of its geographic space, comparable SIDS or developing countries. In microcosm, the Maldives may illuminate challenges facing tourism destination development worldwide.

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