



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Tourism Development & Local Resilience

Self-Organisation and Community Empowerment Perspectives

This **work-in-progress** research project **explores how tourism development affects local community resilience to natural hazards in tourist destinations presenting different manifestations of local empowerment, state regulation and local self-organisation**. Being highly significant to the Australian economy—representing 11% of GDP (WTTC, 2016), tourism requires comprehensive understanding to ensure it is properly addressed in planning processes that target disaster risk reduction and local resilience for community benefit. Seeking to support **disaster risk reduction**, the Australian Government acknowledges it **cannot be fully eliminated** (Australia, 2003, p. 1). Endorsing the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience in 2012, the Council of Australian Governments states that “**communities need to be empowered to take shared responsibility for coping with disasters**” (Australia, 2011, p. 1).

Resilience building can be influenced by a combination of **state regulation** and **self-organisation**, or **top-down** and **bottom-up** approaches. While **regulation** can aim for **quicker governmental responses** and **standardised risk treatment**, **self-organisation** can cater for **localised treatments**, to the **unexpected** and to moments of **temporary system failure** or **State absence**, common characteristics of **catastrophic events**.

How can **tourism development** affect **social-ecological resilience to natural hazards in tourist destinations** presenting different manifestations of **local self-organisation** and subject to different degrees of **state regulation**?

For this research project, a **multiple case study design** informed the selection of 2 core sites where alternative self-government arrangements have been exercised and formally recognised for about 40 years—Christiania (Copenhagen, Denmark) and Norfolk Island (Australia), and two reference sites where state regulation and control is exercised in different local governance models—Port Fairy (standard unit of a Victorian Local Council) and Lord Howe Island (state-appointed administrator responding to a state-local board). **The four sites are tourist destinations under different natural hazard threats**, bearing distinctiveness in term of clear boundaries; being subject to different degrees of state regulation; and portraying different manifestation of self-organisation connected to specific levels of local empowerment, local social cohesion, local identity and local attachment to place. Findings deriving from this project are expected to **advance understanding of the connections between urban and regional development**, illustrating pathways for **building local community resilience to natural hazards**, informing Australian and Victorian **policy-making for disaster risk reduction**.

Norfolk Island is an isolated small oceanic island with a history of **different degrees of self-governance** and **recent government reforms transitioning the island to greater Commonwealth Government control**. Despite being a young island community established in the 1800s, Norfolk Island's geographical isolation and community identity have continuously sparked claims for indigenous acknowledgement and right to self-determination. This tourist destination, that at one point operated its own airline, is an insightful site to illuminate questions of local empowerment and social cohesion to resilience building. **Tsunamis, Cyclones, Storms** and **Droughts** are key natural hazards likely to impact the island more severely.



Google Earth, 2018.

Located in Copenhagen, **Christiania** is a self-organising and self-proclaimed freetown community portraying clear physical and institutional boundaries—an island of self-governance and informal urban planning and design within Copenhagen. Having held different Danish government acknowledgements through Acts of Parliament over the decades since the 1970s, Christiania is an **insightful example of state legislation formally recognizing a self-organising local settlement**. Being located on low lands surrounded by water courses with some connection to the nearby Oresund canal, Christiania is prone to suffer from **storms, cloudbursts, floods** and **sea-level rising**. It is also an important tourist destination in Copenhagen, a city that has been ranked as the world's most liveable by different rankings, similarly to Melbourne. Questions of local attachment to place, local identity, local social cohesion and local empowerment seem to be key for Christiania's success as an alternative community facing different challenges for over more than 40 years.



Having experienced a more stable level of self-organisation over the decades, allied to growth containing strategies, **Lord Howe Island** is an interesting counterpoint to all other three cases. It presents a **unique model of shared governance** that can be used to reflect on the cases of Norfolk Island and Christiania. The way it has **managed to control tourist numbers and impacts** is also likely to provide relevant reference for the analysis of Port Fairy and Christiania. Similar to Norfolk Island, **Tsunamis, Cyclones, Storms** and **Droughts** are key natural hazards that can impact Lord Howe Island more severely with the added threat of **coral bleaching** from **climate change** likely to affect its diving-oriented local tourism industry.



Google Earth, 2018.

Port Fairy is a peripheral small town on the Great Ocean Road that is rich in heritage, festivals and local identity, being voted as “the world's most liveable community of towns with a population of under 20,000, in the UN-recognised Liv Com award” in 2012 (Williams, 2015). Subject to natural hazards deriving from **sea-level rising, land erosion** and **storms**, Port Fairy will need to address growth and development deriving from tourism development sparked by its recent title and increased media exposure. It presents a good counterpoint to the other 3 cases, being an example of **greater State regulation** through applicable **standard Victorian governance and urban planning provisions, legislation and regulations**. The town's strategies to protect its level of liveability despite increased tourism development and natural hazard threats can be useful for future reflection on the case of the City of Melbourne and its pursuit of greater resilience.



Google Earth, 2018.