

NETWORK GOVERNANCE, A RESPONSE TO THE DILEMMA OF SKI-RESORT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: *Regulating access to common resources and organizing their exploitation is, usually, the responsibility of local authorities and the object of local governance. However, in ski resorts, participating the private sector in territorial management could have a better impact on resource preservation due to the seasonality of ski dynamism and its impact on network efficacy. This article aims to study the concept of local network governance and to examine its influence on sustainable development. The effectiveness of this governance is illustrated by the case of Mzaar ski-resort in Lebanon.*

KEYWORDS: Network, Governance, Ski-Resort, Tourism, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

The World Commission on Environment and Development explains sustainability by: “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCDE, 1987, p. 45). Since the definition of 1987, the concept of sustainable development has evolved rapidly, especially with Agenda 21, the action plan developed by the Earth Summit (Rio, 1992), the action plan of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) and recently Paris summit in 2015. On the other flip, the concept of sustainable development, in its three dimensions (economic development, social equity, and environmental protection), has been adopted as a desirable goal by several international organizations at different levels. These include, but are not limited to: the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2010), with a commitment to “sustainable economic growth” and the World Trade Organization’s promise to contribute to sustainable development through the removal of barriers to trade (WTO, 2010). While the concept of sustainable development has been recognized and adopted internationally, the term “sustainable development” has given rise to significant debate and concerns among business communities who have been accused for greenwashing (using sustainable development as a rationalization for economic growth without due concern for environmental or social imperatives) and governments who considered it as a continued economic growth (Robinson, 2004, p. 370).

According to Vanhove (2005, p. 241), managing resources for sustainable development may have five objectives (economic, ecological, social, cultural and political) that are getting more recognition nowadays. In particular, the credit goes to the institutional and governance dimensions (Banuri & Najam, 2002). The recognition of the importance of institution and governance stems from the ignorance of the social dimension in the implementation of sustainable development although social sustainability is at the core of this development. This fact has been presented in Brundtland Report which integrates sustainable development

into a managerial logic that necessitates the collaboration of all stakeholders involved in the economic, social and environmental development. In this context, Marsat J.B (2008, p. 20) considers that management of local resources necessitates a collective action, in support of the market. In the same context, Briassoulis (2002, p. 19) considers that the discourse on sustainable development revolves around a central theme: how to manage land, built, and socio-cultural host communities' resources to meet the basic criteria of sustainability? Briassoulis admits, in his approach, that resources are common property operated in service of local development and requiring a mode of participatory management to ensure their sustainability. The participation of tourism stakeholders in the management of local resources reflects the concept of *Participatory Governance* raised in the "Earth Summit" which took place in Rio (1992). In ski-resorts, the management of local resources in service of ski dynamism is either done by the public sector, the private sector or by both sectors (PPP). As for ski dynamism, despite the seasonality, it is characterized by an uncertain lifecycle that influences the performance of ski-resort operators, the structure of ski-resort networks, the efficiency of local governance and the sustainability of local development. In this abstruseness, managing a ski resort necessitates then a flexibility to quickly respond to ever-changing environmental variables, which is not, generally, the case for the public sector who suffers from bureaucracy. With this in mind, the management of ski-resorts by the private sector seems to generate better results in terms of sustainable local development, especially when local governance of ski-networks is a participatory one.

The key contribution of this paper, from one perspective, is to develop a theoretical analysis of the concept of ski-resort network-governance and to examine its influence on sustainable development. In the same vein, it attempts to propose the Leading Firm Network-Governance for ski resorts. The effectiveness of this mode of governance is illustrated in a case study of Mzaar ski-resort in Lebanon.

First, we will elaborate the available theory about territorial management, sustainable development, territorial integration of tourism, corporate social responsibility and the modes of public intervention. Then, we will study the concept of destination governance and network governance. The end will be with a case study about Mzaar ski-resort.

Territorial Management and Sustainable Development

Despite the fact that tourism "contains the seed of its own destruction" (Glasson, Godfrey, & Goodey, 1995), it has been valued, by many nations, for driving economic growth (WTTC, 2012, p. 6). Being a resourcedependent industry, the magnitude of tourism dynamism on a territory is subject to resource abundance, whereas the continuity of this dynamism is directly related to the impact of tourism on the economy and the society. Recently, the worldwide concern about the impact of tourism on the environment has risen with increased focus on the scarce resources of rural and coastal areas. In the same vein, the UNWTO and UNEP (2005, p. 19) consider that for tourism to be the lever for territorial development, it must demonstrate an ability to sustain as an activity in the future and ensure that the conditions are met for this. Hence, the society and the environment should take advantage of the positive impact of tourism in a sustainable way. To attain this finality, the UNWTO and UNEP (2005) suggest a program of sustainable development elaborated around the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism. The two axes of this program could be illustrated by:

- The minimization of the negative impacts of tourism on society and the environment;

- The maximization of the positive contribution of tourism in local economies while conserving the land and cultural heritage and the quality of life of the hosting populations.

On territorial level, the maintenance of balance between economic, social and environmental aspects of development requires, according to Dodds (2015, p. 6), a cooperation that takes the form of a collective action between stakeholders on the elaboration and the implementation of territorial management strategies and policies. Several aspects of territorial management integrate, in the process and the results of development, the maintenance or the restoration of certain qualities of ecological systems, namely asset management (Ollagnon, 1979); participatory management of protected areas (World Bank, 2014); adaptive management (Walters, 2007); integrated management (Margerum, 1999), (Margerum & Born, 1995); community management (COMMAN, 2004); management of communal (Ostrom, 1990), what puts the concept of territorial management from the perspective of the public interest.

According to Leloup et al. (2005, p. 329): “sustainable development is no longer presented as the sole responsibility of public authorities (local, regional or state) but as the result of a process of cooperation and coordination between many actors and operators, in which the local community has a quadruple role of orientation, animation, control and regulation”. The necessity of participating local communities and tourism actors in the management of local resources has been studied by Briassoulis (2002, p. 19) who admits that “resources are common property operated in service of local development and requiring a mode of collective management to ensure their sustainability”.

Recently some scholars like Nordin S. & Svensson B. (2007), Beritelli P. & al. (2007), Eric & al. (2011), Eagles (2009) and D’Angella & al. (2010), etc. have altered their viewpoints from destination management to destination governance, recognizing that tourism stakeholders are important parts of a destination and their participation has a great influence on local development. In fact, the popularity of participatory approaches has grown, since the Rio Conference in 1992, as mechanisms of governance that help to treat complex questions linked to sustainable development (Renn, Webler, & Widemann, 1995). Furthermore, participatory management may assist in local economic development through minimization of social conflicts (Kleeman and Welp, 2008; Chowdhury and Koike, 2010; Jones et al., 2012). Generally speaking, participatory management of land resources, advocated by the Earth Summit, has opened a new path to knowledge in resource management, by engaging the local community in managing its land resources. This type of management has found application in various environments: ski domains, coastal, rural areas, rivers and basins, etc. (Kleemann & Welp, 2008).

According to Froger, Méral, & Herimandimby (2004, pp. 164-184), participatory management could be categorized into:

1. Village land use planning.
2. Community-Based Land Resources Management.
3. Joint Forest Management.
4. Collaborative management (Co-management).
5. Adaptive management.

Talking about the Community-Based Land Resource Management, it is based on a territorial anchor. In fact, it is the local community organized into networks of flexible and open structure that is involved in the implementation of resource management policies. The community-based land resource management considers that the territory is the product of the collective action of the various market players, and the success of the collective mobilization in the implementation and evaluation of sustainable local development program is based on the efficient management of local resources. Hence, the cooperation of local stakeholders and actors is a cornerstone for the success of the program.

In the research for effective managerial solutions to the environmental problems of tourism, Healy (2006, p. 25) distinguished three types of management: private management (Disneyland, etc.), the management by a public authority (spas, etc.) and management by co-regulation (public-private partnership). On the first hand, private management is often accused of creating inequalities leaving free hand to owners to leverage resources as they wish. This freedom is often accompanied with uncontrolled resource depletion (Rousseau, Hardin, Piketty, Ostrom and others). On the other hand, public management is often criticized for its inefficiency and its inability to determine and to control the actual practices of populations in environmental matters. In this context, Agenda 21 (APMM, 2011, p. 1) resulting from the “Earth Summit” recommended the participation of all concerned stakeholders in the implementation of a policy for managing land resources. This could be achieved, according to Ballet (2007, p. 2), by conditionality issued on projects that involve and benefit the local community, for example with conditionality on priority employment of local populations, the creation of infrastructures that benefit them, etc. As for joint management of territorial resources, it lies in the perspective of the principle of subsidiarity (Mors, 1993, pp. 235-248). In terms of territorial development, the principle of subsidiarity involves delegating to the next level which cannot be done at the lowest level (closer to the local population). Joint management (also called participatory management) between tourism stakeholders and tourism actors is a well-known management approach that promotes the preservation of cultural and environmental diversities in protected areas (White & al., 1994; Bauman & Smyth, 2007; Berkes, 2009). It has been advocated in many countries as a mean to provide native communities with recognition of their cultural practices in the use and management of the natural resources within a protected area, while working together with governments to achieve conservation goals (Izurietta & al., 2011, p. 1). The Potato Park in Peru, which gives the native population near Cusco the right to manage its Agro-ecological landscape is an example.

In his article “the joint management of natural resources: a critical perspective”, Ballet (2007, p. 6) stated that the delegation of authority to the lowest levels is based on their efficiency in managing these resources. This delegation is justified, according to Ballet, by two additional arguments: the ability to define common property rights and the ability of the community to enforce these rights and to prevent deviant behaviors.

A. The necessity of Common Property Rights

According to Hardin (1968, pp. 1243-1248), the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, the free access to these resources, as well as, the existence of negative externalities of production constitute the main risks of extinction of natural resources. It is quite evident that, in the absence of property rights, each agent seeks only his private interests and consumes the resource beyond his utility. Define property rights then becomes the key issue of the regulation of resources where the solution is based mainly on the efforts

of local authorities to establish the conditions for access to natural resources. More specifically, in a regime that does not consider property rights (known as *res nullius*) and in absence of penalty for causing negative externalities, problems start to rise between traditional users of natural resources and new comers. In the same stream, Ballet (2007, p. 4) considers that the root cause for failures of property rights and the market resides in transferring these rights to local authorities who become guardians of natural resources. Departing from the fact that local authorities seek to internalize the externality caused by operators, the question is about the best possible internalization solutions. In this context, Roussel (2007, p. 6) suggests three solutions of internalization: 1) the implementation of regulations through quantitative standards on production inputs in order to limit the overall effort, 2) the establishment of economic incentive instruments in the form of taxes or grants directly modifying the profits of operators and more specifically the perceived costs, 3) creating a tradable production quota market on the outputs based on a maximum operating target set by the regulatory agency. On the other hand, by comparing the efficiency of internalizing externalities by private property and communal property regimes, Platteau J.P. (2008, p. 6) considers that the internalization of externalities by private property rights does not prevent overexploitation of resources. Whereas, in absence of transaction costs, communal property allows rights-holders to internalize externalities as effectively as private property.

B. The Capacity of Local Communities to Prevent Deviant Behaviors

The success of local communities in managing collectively common natural resources has been studied by many researchers (Ostrom, E. (1990,2007); Baland, J.M. & Platteau (1996, 1997, 1998, 2003); Webler, T. & Seth, T.(2000); Bauman, T. & Smyth, D.(2007); Ballet, J. & al. (2009); etc.), in particular, by Professor Ostrom of Indiana University who declared, based on a fieldwork and creative theorizing, the possibility for communities to manage natural resources as commons without over-exploiting them. Although this seems to be simple, the success of the collective action at the level of a given community is very complicated, it requires a sense of shared destiny and relations of mutual trust among players. In this context, Platteau, J. P. (2008, p. 14) relates the success of the collective action and the allocation of resources between various users to their ability to cooperate based on the comparison between the profitability of jointly held resources compared to their profitability when they have been individualized.

On the other hand, the success of local communities in managing local resources has been related to the size of a community, to the social capital that characterizes it, to the efficiency of local governance and the deepness of local networks. In fact, small homogenous communities who share the same culture, traditions and interests can communicate easily. Furthermore, in small communities, players tend to know each other better and give high importance to their reputation and pay more attention to the consequences of abusing the access to common resources. In the same context, Baland & Platteau (1996) consider that communication is facilitated easily within a small community and the formation of collective identity feelings is also easier. As a consequence, individuals are more induced to take into account the effects of their decisions on other members.

There is no doubt that the social capital that characterizes small communities would greatly boost the participatory approaches and would assist the collective action to eliminate free-riders and any deviant behavior which will result into reducing transaction costs (Williamson, 2014). To put it the other way round, let's consider the case of a tourism

destination, characterized by a strong social capital. The mutual trust between tourism players, on this territory, creates a compliance to standards because each players will anticipate the fact that other players also apply the same standards. Consequently, land resources would be preserved due to the common respect of resource valuation standards by all players on the territory (for more details about resource valuation standards, see Chang, 2005).

Territorial Integration of Tourism and the Sustainability

According to the UNWTO & UNEP, the development of sustainable tourism requires the involvement of all stakeholders, and a strong political will to ensure broad participation. Still according to the UNWTO & UNEP, the validity of tourism requires a continuous process that necessitates continuous monitoring of impacts, and the introduction of necessary preventive and / or corrective action as needed (UNWTO & UNEP, 2005, p. 11).

The approach of the UNWTO & UNEP on the relationship between man and the environment is to consider the possibility to avoid or at least to reduce the negative effects by ameliorating the utilization of resources and integrating the environmental constraints in the behavior of tourism operators. As to the objectives of integration, they were recognized by the European Union in the context of a debate on the management of coastal areas. "It is essential to implement a coastal zone management that is environmentally sustainable, economically equitable, socially responsible and culturally appropriate, and preserves the integrity of this important resource" (European Parliament, 2002, pp. 24-27).

Eventually, the integration of environmental constraints in economy represents three schools of thought:

1. Physiocratic and classical currents

For A. Smith (1723-1790), D. Ricardo (1772-1823) and other classical economists, natural resources are available for free and in abundant quantities. It is not about how to save them, but how to exploit them in a manner to maintain a good level of economic growth. However, it is with the neoclassical school that we witnessed the integration of the environment (natural) in economic analysis.

2. The consideration of external effects by theorists of welfare

AC Pigou (1877-1959) and H. Hotelling (1895-1973) have integrated for the first time the environmental dimension in economic research which aims to reconcile the free market and social optimum. This research, which challenges the liberal creed of non-intervention of the State, lead to two basic doctrines: first, the principle of "polluter-payer" and, secondly, special methods of pricing of non-renewable resources.

3. Radical Liberalism versus environmentalist current in economy

For the radical economist Coase (1910-2013), the establishment of property rights is sufficient to achieve the social optimum. As for the environmentalists, they try to confirm that, on specific issues, it is possible to practice solidarity and yet to go in the direction of sustainable development.

This transformation in the economic approach advocates for an alternative form of tourism that integrates the needs of local communities, while minimizing the adverse effects of tourism on the environment. This alternative tourism that seeks to integrate stakeholders in

the management of territorial resources is named “integrated tourism”. The concept of integration was used extensively to express spatial integration; human resource integration; institutional integration; economic integration; social integration; policy integration; etc.

Practically, tourism is a multi-facet sector that links local resources, activities, services, products local community and local authority. Furthermore, tourism helps the establishment of relationships and networks between stakeholders (hosting community, local businesses, local-resource controllers, governmental and non-governmental institutions, etc.) across a variety of dimensions (including economic, social and natural). As tourism involves a wide range of networks, relations, dimensions and stakeholders, tourism integration requires a territorial cohesion in order to attain a sustainable development. On the other flip, the integration of tourism in rural areas in Europe was the subject of an EU program, SPRITE (Supporting and Promoting Integrated Tourism in lagging regions of Europe), between 2001 and 2004. According to Marsat & al., (2004, p. 29), there are key features of integrated tourism on the economy, especially the benefits to the synergy effect in rural development policies. According to Jenkins, Oliver & al. (2001, pp. 21-25), there are seven possible key features of integrated tourism:

1. Horizontal and vertical networks

Integrated tourism implies and requires a focus on networks, relationships and partnerships. Vertical networks involve the formation of extra-local alliances, whereas horizontal networks coordinate local activities and local relationships of actors.

2. Scale

Integrated tourism has to be conducted at an appropriate scale with regard to local structures if integration is to be effective. Scale refers to the size and extent of tourism resources and the volume and impact of tourism activities in relation to the existing economic, social, cultural and resource-based endogenous development.

3. Endogeneity

Integrated tourism is closely associated with the concept of endogenous development which sets development within a local (or ‘territorial’) framework. According to endogenous development, economic activity is based on specific local resources and developing the products and services, derived from such resources, usually means a strong local participation in development.

4. Sustainability

Integrated tourism is closely linked to the notion of sustainable development. Sustainable tourism reflects the minimization of tourism’s impacts rather than the optimization of its benefits. Whereas, integrated tourism concerns the stimulation of local development through the creation of new partnerships and networks which link economic, social, cultural, natural and human activities and resources.

5. Embeddedness

Embeddedness implies that relationships are formed within particular localities who shape, through their social and cultural linkage, the relationships and networks.

6. Complementarity

Tourism activities may be complementary or substitutional. Complementarity among resources and activities is likely to lead to increased partnership and synergy whereas

substitution leads to increased competition and conflict. It is thus essential to place tourism in a broader social context in which relationships and networking play a key role.

7. Empowerment

Empowerment is the manifestation of local control over resources and activities. It could be reflected in decision-making, with a high empowerment for participating and involving local actors in decisions that affects tourism resources and activities.

In the same vein, Cicin-Sain and Knecht (1998, pp. 43-46) distinguished five dimensions of integration:

- The sectoral integration (between different sectors), coupled with an integration between their respective regulatory authorities.
- The intergovernmental integration between different levels of government (vertical integration).
- The spatial integration between different domains.
- The international integration between countries whose respective actions have effects on their neighbors.
- The scientific integration between different disciplines and between scientists and managers.

Finally, as tourism is the composite of the interaction between tourists; tourism organizations; local community; governmental and nongovernmental organizations; a collective action that harmonizes the efforts of all parties is basic for territorial development. The success of the collective action in making the territorial integration of tourism sustainable is subject to cooperation and coordination of tourism players who share common territorial resources but may have different interests. In this context, they are supposed to present a responsible behavior if they are anchored territorially, otherwise, public intervention would be necessary to eliminate deviant behaviors and to establish standards and rules of conduct, in light of sustainable development.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Intervention

As we mentioned earlier, tourism utilizes collective territorial resources in the production of goods and services. The mode of management of these resources may lead to either positive or negative externalities on the economy, the society and the environment. Eventually, even positive economic externalities are generally accompanied with environmental degradation, which implies a growing interest in responsible modes of production and consumption, as an approach to tourism governance (Frey & George, 2010, Spenceley, 2008, Orlitzky et al., 2011). Since the Cape Town Declaration of 2002, tourism organizations, tourists and regulating bodies have been urged to assume their social, environmental and, first of all, ethical responsibilities in delivering positive behavioral changes on their behalves (Coles et al., 2013, p. 122). The importance of responsible behavior is supported by Clark, H. (2012) who considers that a responsible contractor is anchored territorially and respects the land resources and the environment. In that vein, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), an approach to business administration, has been advocated by the European Commission as a significant contributor to achieving sustainable development across its

dimensions. For it, enterprises should assume their responsibility for their impact on the environment and society through the integration of social, environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and strategies, in close collaboration with their stakeholders (EC, 2011, p. 3). As such, the practice of CSR through tourism providers and consumers should reduce the need for public intervention in markets and limits its role to formal regulation and control of organizational practices to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are applied (Plume, 2009, p. 22). Whereas it has been widely acknowledged that the consideration of the general interest of local community relies on the peculiarities of valued territorial resources. According to Huteau (2002, pp. 8-9), the difficulties engendered by the management of these resources according to market mechanisms justify public intervention. Whereas, since the implementation of public policy involves the interests of various stakeholders who share limited community resources, conflicts can arise. In this sense, it is the collective interest that must dominate public policy in light of the needs of the territory.

Assembling different stakeholders with different interests on a collective commitment is not guaranteed, especially when small tourism entrepreneurs, and representatives of local community may not be as committed as the main tourism provider on the development of a common strategy for sustainable development. In this case, heritage development contracts could be a solution, if paired with public support (under a public-private partnership), what recalls again for a role for the State. For Bensahel (2009, p. 42), the focus should be on the threshold calculations (human, economic, social, cultural, environmental) to allow flexibility, to plan development in several stages and to enable negotiation with all stakeholders of a territory. In this context, Bensahel favors the system-actor model of E.Torres, based on a decision-making process, to highlight the strategies that should be elaborated in negotiation with various stakeholders involved in problem diagnosis and solutions.

In turn, J.B.. Marsat (2008, p. 20) distinguishes between two types of public support for the collective action:

1. Stimulate direct coordination between amenity providers and beneficiaries, which has two components: “stimulate the market development of amenities” and “support collective actions”.
2. Change the rules of the economic game, which also has two components: “regulation” and “financial incentives”.

For the same author, public intervention may build an appropriate institutional framework that stimulates the emergence of collective actions by:

1. Placing providers in non-cooperative game situation,
2. Providing conditioned incentives by the achievement of collective actions,
3. Encouraging them through competition, 4. Providing direct support to collective action.

The primordial role of local authorities in supporting the collective management of territorial resources has been justified in the report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2006) which emphasizes the need for a public action in support

of the collective action of actors to achieve the objectives of sustainable development. The public action, according to the OECD, can follow two types of policies in its application:

1. Policies aiming at stimulating coordination between supply and demand: boost market development of amenities and support collective actions.
2. Instruments that establish incentives or regulatory/financial disincentives to any action.

For them, Knoepfer, Olgiati and Warin (2006, p. 200) presented a general model in which the public action is conducted by “political and administrative authorities” in coordination with “target groups” and “beneficiary groups” to solve a given problem. These authors distinguish the following modalities of public action:

1. The regulatory mode, which aims to directly modify the behavior of the target group.
2. The incentive mode, which is more indirect than the previous. It operates through financial transfers aimed at influencing the behavior of the target group through price signals.
3. The persuasive mode, which uses information strategies to convince the target group to go in the direction of the objectives.
4. A last modality is the direct provision of goods and services to the target group.

In brief, the collaboration between tourism players, local community and local authorities on the elaboration and implementation of territorial management strategies for sustainable development, regardless of the reason, requires a strong interdependence in the form of conflict resolution, or the construction of shared visions (resulting in a common action) that balances the interests of various stakeholders and reduces the risks caused by opportunism or uncertainty. Eventually, tourism could be an interesting lever for local development if being based on collective strategies of sustainable development.

Destination Governance and Network Governance

“Destinations are considered as complex systems, represented as a network by enumerating the stakeholders composing it and the linkages that connect them. (...) a tourism destination shares many of these characteristics, encompassing many different companies, associations, and organizations whose mutual relationships are typically dynamic and nonlinear” (Baggio, Scott, & Cooper, 2010, p. 803). Accordingly, managing a ski resort is not an easy task due to the multiplicity and heterogeneity of actors, organized into networks, and sharing common resources but not necessarily same interests and interdependencies. The magnitude of stakeholders’ influence on these networks, according to Zhang & Zhu (2014, p. 127), is subject to their density and their type (formal and informal). What adds the cherry on top of the cream is the diversity and complexity of these networks, as well as, the mode of governance on the territory (level of autonomy, rules of interaction, resource allocation and coordination, etc.) which may affect the performance of tourism actors and, consequently, the attractiveness and the development of a destination.

Generally speaking, the seasonality of ski dynamism affects the sustainable development from several perspectives. Starting with the social perspective, ski dynamism creates multiple job opportunities in winter (ski-lifts’ operators, ski slopes’ maintenance, hotel

operation, restaurants and clubs, etc.) for local communities and their neighbors, what ameliorates their living standards and life style. From an economic perspective, ski dynamism is considered an economic leverage for rural areas as it generates sufficient income for tourism operators and local communities to live from for the rest of the year. Nevertheless, this dynamism is not at a free price, its socioeconomic positive impacts have always been offset by the degradation and pollution of local natural resources. From this standpoint, one should question about the efficiency of local networks in limiting the negative impacts of ski dynamism.

According to Nordin & Svensson (2007, p. 3), “Networks naturally span across tourist destinations, as well as, extending beyond them; they operate within and around the formal organizations in the destination, comprising sets of formal and informal social relationships between industry, the public sector and civil society. Networks, particularly those embracing both public and private actors and those focusing on policy issues, are also an important element of the governance concept”.

To remain competitive, ski resorts should be well managed and tourism networks should be well governed, which implies a common private-public collaboration in the elaboration and the implementation of an effective sustainable development strategy at all levels (Baritelli, Bieger, & Laesser, 2007). In the research for the common characteristics for the principle of destination governance, Ruhanen et al. (2010) indicated that governance is translated into less government control, is about directing and monitoring rather than controlling, it involves many stakeholders. Finally, in presence of an accelerated degradation of land resources and ineffective strategies for managing ski resort resources, one can question on the efficacy of ski-resort networks, as well as, on the destination governance and its implications on local sustainable development.

According to the UNDP, “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences” (UNDP, 2000, pp. 36-37). In tourism, these modalities of management aim to improve the exploitation of land resources by establishing durable relationships (formal and informal) of trust and cooperation between tourism stakeholders and tourism actors. In the long run, the involvement of tourism actors and local community in decision making facilitates the cooperative behavior and the establishment of a *good governance* which means, according to Zergout (2007, p. 12), “a system of collective action containing a multitude of actors and directed to the establishment of coherent urban policies across the territory”. In the same vein, the practice of network governance at all levels of the political and administrative structure enforces the participation of civil-society networks in the formulation and development of most economic and social projects, also known as *participatory governance*.

Based on its definition, participatory governance requires a compromise between private businesses and public actors (local or central) articulating the overall institutional and productive forms. Thus, the degree of involvement of tourism actors in public policy depends on the form of local governance that, according to Gilly and Pecqueur (1998, pp. 501-525), can take one of the following three forms: private governance (when an organization is the key player of the territory), corporate governance (where one or more institutions are the key actors), and partnership or joint governance (where private actors and public organizations are jointly cooperate and key actors of the territory).

To summarize in a few words, territorial management is no longer a matter for public authorities alone, the development of a destination is based on its inter-organizational relationships (Ghirelli, 2013). In these times of renewed governance, it requires a participatory process that includes all actors and stakeholders, integrated into networks, in strategy formulation. The reflection about the effectiveness of local governance on sustainable development (Nordin & Svensson, 2007) is supported by Dwyer et al., (2009) who advocate the destination governance perspective for a better understanding of the dynamic development of a certain destination and its direction of change in order to achieve competitive advantages in the long run.

In tourism, the concept of destination governance appeared for the first time in the work of (Williamson O. E., 1979) and (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). According to Nordin and Svensson (2007, p. 58), governance in tourism “is an expression of the mutual dependency between governments and private tourism industry”, suggesting that governments and private actors should accept that a common interest, such as the development of a tourism destination cannot be achieved individually. Based on the approach of network, cluster and partnership strategy, governance can play a primordial role in the development of a destination (Ghirelli S. , 2013). In the same context, Zhang & Zhu (2014, p. 8) define destination governance as: “the rules and mechanisms elaborated by public authorities for developing policies and strategies that combine all tourism providers and consumers under the same roof”.

For the research of *good governance* and its influence on the development of a destination, Nordin and Svensson (ibid.) adopt network model of governance based on a single case study of the Swedish ski resort of Are. Three dimensions were considered for studying destination governance: 1/the complexity of the destination, 2/the relationship of public-private organizations and 3/ resource management correlation. The results of the study revealed that the social capital characterized by relationships of trust, sharing risk, informal structure and strategic harmony has a positive influence on the development of tourism destination (Zhang & Zhu, 2014, p. 2). The importance of social capital in the functioning of networks and the choice of governance model for a destination has been confirmed by Eagles (2009) who considers that local culture plays a significant role in the choice of governance model.

Ski-Network Governance and Sustainable Development

Ski resorts have been considered as an economic leverage for local communities, especially in developing countries where rural areas are not the central focus of governments. These resorts usually provide a diversity of tourism activities, either directly related to skiing, or as annex tourism activities such as accommodation, restauration, entertainment etc. In both cases, seasonality is the general aspect of these activities, it determines their magnitude, diversity and life span. Due to seasonality, employment rate in a ski-resort increases in winter (high season) then declines for the rest of the year. Temporary workers at ski resorts are normally selected from local communities, what assures a steady income for them, added to the income generated from working in agriculture or any other traditional activities. On the other hand, ski dynamism is a source of income for local municipalities as well. This income takes the form of taxes and rentals of public spaces, not to forget the economic profit they generate from delegating the management of ski-resorts to private companies, saving thereby the costs of operating these resorts. In addition to ski-resort operators and local municipalities, providers of complementary tourism services, in conjunction with ski,

benefit also from ski dynamism to develop annex services such as hotels, restaurants, ski-material rental, transportation, entertainment centers, etc. However, tourism income is not at no cost. The dynamism that ski activity creates on a territory has certainly its negative implications on local communities (the first beneficiaries of ski dynamism), as well as, on local municipalities. The negative impacts could be detected on two main levels: 1/ due to the high frequency of skiers located in a small geographic area in a specific period of the year, a high pressure is exerted on the fragile infrastructure of ski-resorts (which is a rural area), what leads to congestions on all public services and facilities. Not to forget the effects of resulting pollutions of this congestion (air pollution, water pollution, land pollution, visual pollution, noise, etc.) on the society and the environment, 2/ the development of ski-resorts may require the destruction of an eco-system or the erosion of a landscape. On the other hand, tourists themselves may request particular complementary services to skiing activity (ski and skidoo slopes, parking space, clubs, entertainment facilities, etc.) that participate in the erosion of forests or the distortion of natural resources. To analyze the impact of ski-resorts on sustainable development, it is essential to understand the functioning of ski-resorts, the structure of ski-resort networks and the influence of the governance mode of these networks on sustainable development.

A. Ski-resort operation

Tourism is a multidimensional activity that puts together purveyors of tourism products/services and tourists, using territorial resources. Ski is not an exception, it is a seasonal activity developed in rural mountainous areas, it requires the abundance of snow, a favorable site (favorability depends on the degree of inclination of slopes, the thickness of snow, the daily exposition to sun heat, the presence of obstacles like rocks, caves, trees, etc.), specific infrastructure, established superstructure and equipment, specialized workers and a good management. Talking about management, ski resorts could be managed by governments and local authorities, by private operators, or by a co-management of both parties. Operators of ski resorts could be, at the same time, the owners of these resorts, they implement their own managerial standards (local or international) to provide skiing related services. The services provided at ski-resorts are diversified between:

1. Activities directly related to ski: ski lifts, chairlift, rental of ski-material, rental of skidoo, etc.
2. Accommodation and restaurants: hotels, chalets, country houses, restaurants, pubs, etc. that could be located next to ski resorts or in proximity, they could be operated by ski-resort operators, local authorities or by small entrepreneurs.
3. Entertainment activities: shopping malls, cinemas, playgrounds, night clubs, etc.
4. Other services such as: car rental, transportation and shuttles, etc.

In addition to ski resorts, annex services located at proximity from ski-resorts (gift shops, minimarkets, studios, restaurants, ski-material rental and other services) could be provided by private entrepreneurs who usually originate from the local community, as well as, by support services (suppliers of raw materials, maintenance services of ski resort and its equipment, security services, cleaning services, etc.). Eventually, ski dynamism gathers ski-resort operators, local communities and local authorities into networks (formal and informal) that determine their role and relationships, the way they interact with each other,

the formal and informal rules of game, and the formation of policy that dictates the level of their cooperation and the determination of responsibilities and benefits. The existence of networks in tourism is essential for local development (Yoveva, 2014). However, the ability of these networks to guide different stakeholders towards achieving a sustainable development is the big challenge. According to Dedeurwaerdere (2005), it is the governance of these networks that dictate their success or failure in achieving a common goal.

B. Ski-resort networks

The concept of networks has been the subject of several researches (Palmer 1996, Rhodes 1997, Tremblay 1998, Woolcock 1998, Putnam 2000, Pavlovic 2001, etc.). Pecqueur (1989, p. 54), who determined a positive correlation between networks and local development, classified them into: networks of material flow, informal networks and relationship networks of institutional nature. For this author, "local development dynamism is the consequence of a favorable combination of individual projects which partially meet on common interests". In the same vein, networks have been greatly valued by Marsat (J.B, 2008, p. 185) who categorized them according to their flows, space (vertical, horizontal or mixed networks), and length of relationship, aspect (formal or informal) and strength of relationship. In the research for an effective networks' structure for local development in a SME economy, Gouttebel (2003, p. 104) suggested the approach of *Interenterprise Networks* which joins that of J.-C. Jarillo, for whom "networks should be conceived as a medium that entrepreneurs consciously use to gain a competitive advantage for their company, rather than using the notion of networks as a metaphor to describe the transactions between firms" (Jarillo, 1988, p. 33), and that of P. Veltz (2001) who emphasized on the need to move from hierarchical organizations and pyramidal Taylorism to organizations in network, mesh and based on a balancing of the intelligence of the system as they offer an important chance for these organizations for spatial balance, a more reasonable allocation of resources and less bipolarized territory.

In tourism destinations, and particularly in ski resorts, the focus on networks that link local authorities, economic players, local community and visitors, is even of greater relevance. Talking about the characteristics of a ski resort, it is a multi-service sector, grounded on alliances between actors bundling together to form a ski destination. In this destination, ski operators and other tourism-service providers (whether competing or complementing each other) can simultaneously participate in different networks and establish multiple linkages. Taking into account the main role of these actors in the functioning of networks raises the question about their capacity to promoting sustainable development.

Recently, emerging trends in preservation of nature, limitation of pollution and waste, as well as rationalization of the use of water have induced changes in the mode of exploitation of land resources. Tourism operators are now seeking to gain competitive advantages through the adoption of measures that serve the purposes of sustainable development, whose basic principle is to find a compromise between environmental, economic and social objectives. Still, to achieve these objectives, tourism operators, in collaboration with local stakeholders, should participate in the formulation and implementation of a territorial strategy of land-resource management. This strategy may find its way to implementation in the system of networks where players enjoy the traditions of cooperation and mutual trust, establish particular forms of alliance, create informal cooperative linkages and encourage the coordination between network members what facilitates the achievement of common goals.

The importance of networks for tourism development has engaged several researchers in studying their organization, structure and operating modes. According to Tremblay (1998, pp. 851-854), there are three types of networks that economically organize tourism sectors:

Type 1: Horizontal Alliance or chain of similar establishments, for example between hotels.

Type 2: Vertical Alliance for a given locality, for example between a ski-resort owner and ski-lift operator.

Type 3: Alliance mix, for example between ski-resort operator, hotels, local transport service, etc.

Talking about ski resorts, seasonality is the framework that governs their dynamism and burdens both: the activities of actors and the scope of action for stakeholders. Due to seasonality, it is very difficult to organize and control different ski-networks who link different members. The fact that ski resorts operate just for few months a year, opens the debate on the structure and characteristics of these networks. Some of the important questions that arise, henceforth, concern: 1/the nature of relations that should exist between members of these networks, 2/the operating mode of these networks and, 3/the means of regulation of these relations, also called *Network-Governance*. On the other hand, the impact of these networks and their mode of governance on the management of ski resorts is of an equal importance, the focus is particularly on the policies to be adopted and the investments to be made, what raise doubts about the sustainability of ski-resorts' development. From this standpoint stem the following important questions: are ski-resort networks seasonal as well? If so, what is the mechanism that assures their restructuring with every new ski-season, especially when the market is in perfect competition? Answering these questions will enable us to understand why some ski resorts are more developed than others, and will guide us on the operating mode of ski-resort networks that better serve the sustainability of development and the adaptation to environmental changes.

Lately, interesting studies have linked network structure to sustainable development. Tompkins and Adger (2004), for example, claimed that community social networks can build resilience, and thus, aid adaptation to environmental change. One year later, Newman L. and Dale A. (2005) disputed Tompkins and Adger that community social networks, if not combined with diversity can impose constraining social norms and foster group homophily, reducing resilience. In the same context, Newman and Dale (2005) have based their argument on the concepts of *Bonding and Bridging* network ties of Woolcock (1998) and Putnam (2000) to study a community's ability to adapt to all types of change (technological, environmental, political, etc.). Furthermore, the role of networks and social relationships, as elements that shape the collective learning and sustainable territorial development, was particularly studied by Angeon (2008) and Saxena (2005). The latter developed the idea that sustainable tourism is *territorially integrated* which implies a cooperation between local actors, engaged into networks, to carry out all of the long-term territorial resource-management strategies. Drawing on the role of networks, we argue that they could serve as a tool for sustainable development if reinforced by synergies between territorial development strategies and business strategies (Hirschi, 2010). From a sustainable development viewpoint, the composition, structure and tie of networks are critical for the current and future development of a region (Dedeurwaerdere, 2005). In the context of ski resorts, due to the seasonality of ski dynamism, network members are heterogeneous and do

not necessarily share common social norms and trust. Consequently, in absence of a significant social capital, there is definitely an absence of network “Bonding” ties between members. Such being the case, ski-resort network members would try to establish, instead, “Bridging” network ties in an attempt to overcome local norms, access resources, benefit from the positive externalities that may exist in different networks (techniques, knowledge, opportunities, etc.). Furthermore, it is here that bonding capital provides the group resilience needed to absorb the externalities of bridging capital. In other terms, “the two capitals are complementary, the sheer amount of social capital is not likely to be a good indicator of how well a community will be able to engage problems. It is a dynamic balance of bonding and bridging social capital that builds resilience” (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 3).

Bridging social capital is then function of local networks, their members and their operating mode. In this context, Beaumont N. and Dredge D.(2010, pp. 5-6) distinguished between three operating modes of tourism networks:

- 1) Lead Organization-Governed Networks, which are networks wherein a lead organization takes a central coordinating role, facilitating and enabling collaboration, often contributing in-kind support and leadership.
- 2) Participant-Governed Networks, which are networks wherein members themselves collaborate to achieve goals that would otherwise be outside the reach of individual stakeholders.
- 3) Network Administrative Organizations, which are networks wherein a separate administrative entity is established specifically to undertake governance activities.

The prevalent governance of any ski-resort network stems from the characteristics (flexibility and/or complexity) of networks, network members and the ability of these members to cooperate. Generally speaking, in ski-resorts, Lead Organization-Governed Networks (Anglo-Saxon operating mode) and Network Administrative Organizations (European operating mode) are the two predominant operating modes of networks. The reason could be that ski-resorts are expected to provide varied services with high level of consistency in a changing environment, what imposes on network members particular obligations (management skills, policies, operating procedures, etc.) that cannot be implemented individually. This becomes more evident in presence of “free riders” who should be tied to their network with particular norms, procedures and obligations in service of sustainable development. A task that Participant-Governed Networks cannot realize due to the seasonality of ski tourism, the heterogeneity of network members and the quasi-absence of social capital.

C. Ski-resort network-governance

Successful ski resorts are generally characterized by their location, attractions, facilities, as well as, by the diversity of their organizations and inter-organizational relationships. Recently, the focus on inter-organizational relationships such as leadership; collaboration; cooperation and networks between industry, the public sector and civil society is of a greater importance (Pesämaa, 2007), (Favre-Bonté, Gardet, & Thevenard-Puthod, 2016). This focus stems from the role that inter-organizational relationships play in the development of a destination. Researchers such as Ghirelli (2013) consider that due to the high level of interdependencies among the majority of actors in a tourism destination, sole players are

not, usually, self-efficient. From this standpoint, Nordin and Svensson (2007) found, based on a case study of the Swedish ski resort of Are, that public-private relationships built on trust, joint risk taking, informal structures and strategic consensus, do influence the development of ski resorts. The focus on inter-organizational relationships as a key factor for ski-resort development spots the light, again, on the role of social capital in bridging and/or bonding these relationships, as well as, on the mode of organization, regulation, coordination and collaboration of various members integrated into networks of different types.

As ski dynamism puts together various members with different interests and expectations, integrated into simple and complex networks, managing ski resorts is not an easy task, especially when the objective of this management falls in the sphere of sustainable development. Hence, a higher focus should be given to inter-organizational relationships with particular attention to the mode of ski-resort *network governance*. In this context, a local *good governance*, where responsibility for policy making extends to both public and private sectors in joint action (Dredge, 2006), could be a central element of a holistic and balanced approach to sustainable tourism (UNEP, 2003).

The concept of network governance is intensively studied in economic literature with the work of Reinnicke W.H. and Dend F. (2000), Ostrom E. (2001), Diani & McAdam (2003), Bogason P. & al. (2006), Börzel T. & Panke D. (2007) and others. From a functional point of view, “the aim of network governance is to create a synergy between different competences and sources of knowledge in order to deal with complex and interlinked problems. In this functional perspective, governance is accomplished through decentralized networks of private and public actors associated to international, national and regional institutions” (Dedeurwaerdere, 2005, p. 2). However, in the case of ski resorts, can this form of decentralized networks bring solution to the problem of sustainable development? The reason why this doubting question was raised stems from: 1/the seasonality aspect of ski resort’s operation that affects the configuration, the length and strength of inter-organizational relationships, 2/the argument about the necessity of inter-organizational relationships, especially that most ski resorts are owned or managed by a sole operator who dictates, in most of the cases, the rule of the game, 3/ the negligent effect of social capital on the performance of heterogeneous networks, composed of temporal (seasonal) actors with little or no common commitment to the sustainability of development of the ski-resort. In this context, Hirschi (2010) considers that heterogeneous networks composed of actors with different views will allow a destination to keep flexibility to adapt to socioeconomic and ecological changes. For this author, new forms of policy making (based on the concept of network governance) that consist of strengthening horizontal and vertical network structures, could enhance the sustainable development of rural regions. In the same vein, Schout and Jordan (2003) distinguish between: 1) network governance that focuses on networks as self-organizing systems and 2) network governance involving active institutional steering of the different nodes in the network. The consideration of networks as self-organizing systems proposes that delegating the sustainable development concern to network actors, linked by strong interdependence, allow for the emergence of decentralized solutions. As for the network governance model of active steering, it proposes that institutions should steer the network design and coordinate the capacities between different network members in order to reach common objectives (Dedeurwaerdere, 2005).

In fact, both governance models may help network members reaching a common objective. With this in mind, the pursuit of a particular model depends on several factors which are not limited to: the local governance system, the number of local actors, the power of local industry leader or elite, the strength of interdependent links among actors, the management style of ski resort (private, public, PPP), the type of alliances, etc. In all cases, the success of the first model in integrating the perspective of sustainable development in the strategies, adopted by actors of different sectors of the ski dynamism, depends on the capacity of these actors to self-organize into a collective action and to self-adjust and self-regulate for these strategies, especially when ski-resort networks are dominated by a power leader (e.g. land owner, ski-lift operator, etc.) who dictates the rules of the game (Ostrom, 1990), and/or the background of legitimization that determines the overall normative orientation of the interaction between the different nodes in the network is a burden (Dedeurwaerdere, 2005, p. 7).

Due to the seasonality aspect of ski dynamism and its influence on the composition, characteristics and life span of networks, our central proposal for sustainable development goes towards networks of self-organizing systems, where local authorities delegate the sustainable development concern to a local dominant ski-resort operator (integrated or corporate model of management) who establishes interdependent relations with network members (lead organization-governed networks), exchange resources with them, negotiate with them the operating procedures, coordinate with them while maintaining their power of autonomy (Zhang & Zhu, 2014). The focus should be then on the business culture of the local dominant ski-resort operator and its influence on inter-organizational networks. Putting in parallel the coordination function of the leading firm and its network-governance mode (D'Angella, Carlo, & Sainaghi, 2010), one should question about the effectiveness of local tourism governance and whether it satisfies the conditions of a good governance.

According to Zhang & Zhu (2014, p. 126), Beaumont N. and Dredge D. (2010) are the explorers of the research for the effectiveness of local tourism-network governance through the identification of what are seen as the characteristics of good governance. These parameters are:

- 1) Positive cultures, constructive communication and engaged communities;
- 2) Transparency and accountability;
- 3) Vision and leadership;
- 4) Acceptance of diversity and the pursuit of equity and inclusiveness;
- 5) Developing knowledge, learning and sharing expertise;
- 6) Clear roles and responsibilities of participants and clear operational structures and processes of the network.

Combining the proposed concept of Leading Firm Network-Governance with the above-listed characteristics of a good governance, it is possible to conclude that ski-resort leading firm, being delegated and empowered by local authorities, may advocate, in coordination with other ski-resort network members, for sustainable development through:

- 1) Encouraging communication and integrating network members in the management of local resources;
- 2) The respect of local common rules and norms;
- 3) The deployment of leadership traits in the elaboration of a strategic vision for sustainable development;
- 4) The acceptance and the encouragement of diversity which characterizes the heterogeneous ski-resort networks;
- 5) A continuous improvement of management procedures and sharing knowledge with network members;
- 6) Participating in training, development, guiding, coaching and counselling activities etc.;
- 7) Coordinating the efforts of network members and negotiating rules to protect community interests.

To explore, on the first hand, the relationship between leading firm network-governance and sustainable development of a ski-resort and, to deepen, on the other hand, our understanding of both the theory and practice of network governance, we undertook a case study of one such attempt, in Mzaar, the most famous ski resort in Lebanon and the Middle East.

The Impact of Ski-Network Governance at Mzaar Ski-Resort on Local Sustainable Development

Located in a rural area of Mount Lebanon at 2465 meters of altitude, Mzaar is the most famous ski resort in Lebanon and the Middle East due to the quality of its snow, the perfect inclination of its slopes, its proximity from the capital Beirut, as well as, due to the variety and the quality of ski-related services provided. Split into 3 inter-connected skiing domains, Mzaar ski-resort has 42 ski slopes spread over 85 kilometers of skiing ground. This famous ski-resort is managed and partially owned by the private company Mzaar SARL.

With the ascending flames of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), tourism that was the main contributor to GDP before the war, lost its brightness with the decreasing number of visitors. On the other hand, domestic tourism hasn't stopped, especially in remote areas that are distant from conflict zones, Mzaar was not an exception.

With a quasi-absent role of the State during the civil war, regulating the access to natural resources has become the responsibility of local stakeholders especially, in presence of free riders who took advantage from the absence of the state to make illegal welfares. Being the central player in ski dynamics in the region, Mzaar SARL has taken the initiative to organize the tourism sector in this rural, but distinguished and attractive, area of Mount Lebanon. With this in mind, Mzaar SARL has become the leading organization who coordinates the activities of local tourism actors, advocates for a rational management of local resources in service of sustainable development of the territory. From here, the relationship between local organizations has started to evolve into a self-organizing mechanism of ski destination and ski-networks started to appear.

On the other flip, the role of the local community of Mzaar in tourism development is remarkable. The importance that was given to developing tourism activities (ski and summer mountain-holidays) stems from the search for a steady source of income, especially that agriculture, the traditional local economic activity, have not guaranteed sufficient revenues due to the difficulty of trading with other Lebanese regions during the war. In support of the leading organization, the local community promoted powerful cultural values and norms and built, in collaboration with the municipality a system to identify and punish free riders by ceasing them from spoiling and exploiting common resources, stop dealing with them and excluding them from public events.

The success of Mzaar SARL in leading tourism development in Mzaar ski resort, has enticed other local actors to cooperate with it and to integrate into, what Boureille & Guesnier (1994) called it, *network organization* to promote a common goal. This integration, that took the forms of planning and implementing, collectively sustainable development strategies, has increased the ability of ski-resort networks not only to facilitate the communication between heterogeneous actors, but also to initiate collective action. In Mzaar ski resort, the density and concentration of ski-networks enabled the communication between actors and tolerated positive externalities, flexibility in ski-service provision and economies of agglomeration which, all together, facilitated the specialization of the territory and the success of the collective action.

With the end of civil war, the role of the private sector has become more significant in restoring the destroyed country. The focus was on the service (tourism, telecommunication, banking, etc.) and construction sectors of the economy. In this context, the government adopted an expansionary fiscal policy that supported the development of SME and encouraged the investment in the promising sectors. At the local level, Mzaar SARL has witnessed several important private investments in the tourism sector in addition to the remarkable governmental expenditure in restoring the infrastructure, inauguration of Shabrouh dam (the largest in Mount Lebanon), establishing a modern road network, etc. These investments and others, accompanied with a remarkable support and help from local authorities, have enticed private investors (national and international) to open new projects (particularly: hotels, chalets, restaurants, car rental, ski-material rental, entertainment facilities, wedding venues, retail shops, etc.) and attracted national and international visitors.

With the ascending interest in Mzaar resort as a tourism destination, the number of visitors has increased exponentially, what encouraged new investors to join. The presence of several heterogeneous actors located in a small geographic area, exploiting common resources and sharing the same market, has increased the pressure on local community and the environment. At the same time, conflicts among actors started to arise. In this critical situation, Mzaar SARL has taken a leading role, supported by local authorities, in: 1) imposing European standard procedures of sustainable development for operating ski-resort facilities, 2) coordinating the activities of tourism actors integrated into the three main local networks (networks of ski provision, networks of ski-annex services, networks of ski-resort promotion), 3) integrating network members in the management of local resources and negotiating rules to protect community interests, 4) training local community and persuading it to work into ski tourism and hospitality.

The Leading Firm Network-Governance role delegated to Mzaar SARL and supported by local authorities has succeeded in 1) coordinating the efforts of different network members, 2) creating a synergy between industry, the public sector and the civil society, 3) enforcing

the inter-organizational relationships and 4) strengthening the interdependency among actors. Briefly speaking, the business culture of Mzaar SARL, which is based on persuading small local actors to self-organize into a collective action, combined with the support of local authorities, lead to the apparition of strong decentralized networks (vertical and horizontal) and allowed for the emergence of decentralized solutions for the problem of sustainable development in Mzaar ski resort.

CONCLUSION

Uncertainty, seasonality and heterogeneity of tourism actors/stakeholders, are the main characteristics of ski dynamism. These characteristics, and others, may hinder the structure of social capital and obstruct the collective action, what offsets the attempts for sustainable local development.

Looking at the organization of ski resorts, it puts together heterogeneous actors who share common local resources, interact with various stakeholders and self-organize into networks in service of ski dynamism. Nevertheless, the efficiency of the governance of these networks in limiting the number of free-riders and attaining the common goal of sustainable development is subject to the structure of these networks, the level of interdependence among actors and the capacity of local governance in coordinating the efforts of different network nodes, in creating a synergy between industry & stakeholders and in enforcing the inter-organizational relationships.

With this in mind and beside the fact that public sector's efforts are usually offset by bureaucracy, our study led us to suggest the Leading Firm mode of Network-Governance because of:

- 1) The leading firm has the capacity to inter-organize business-related actors into networks and integrate these actors into the management of local resources according to a common territorial strategy for sustainable development.
- 2) The leadership role will allow the leading firm to promote CSR among network members through the integration of social, environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and strategies, in close collaboration with their stakeholders, what would allow to reduce and, may be, eliminate the public intervention.
- 3) Delegating the management of ski destination to a private leading firm could have a better impact on resource preservation due to the seasonality of ski dynamism and its impact on network efficacy.

Despite of its capacity to govern ski-resort networks, the managerial role of the leading firm should be legitimized and empowered by local authorities. This legitimization could take the form of delegation while its content is more about decentralization as it leads to the apparition of decentralized ski-networks that may achieve decentralized solutions for the problem of ski-resort sustainable development.

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