

# Stakeholder Collaboration in a Prospective World Heritage Area: The case of Kokoda and the Owen Stanley Ranges

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*In tourism literature during the 1980s a significant trend became apparent, whereby arguments were made for the involvement of residents in tourism.*

(Hardy, Beeton & Pearson 2002, p. 479)

## Abstract

The process of listing a World Heritage Area in developing countries is often much more complex than in the West. Often all stakeholders are not taken into consideration. This paper presents a case study of Kokoda and the Owen Stanley Ranges, currently a tentative World Heritage site, to show the complexities in stakeholder collaboration and attribution in the process of World Heritage designation. Six key stakeholders were identified in the study. Upon examination of four attributes of stakeholders: power; legitimacy; urgency; and proximity, it was found that all stakeholders in this case study have a high legitimacy in the listing process however only the local community holds high levels of power, urgency and proximity. Additionally it was found that several stakeholders, like the private sector, have too many weak relationships with other stakeholders, resulting in a lack of communication. These findings present the first step in understanding how it might be possible to improve the listing process of World Heritage Sites in developing countries through effective stakeholder collaboration.

## Introduction

Research in the field of World Heritage has often been undertaken to explore local stakeholder involvement in already listed heritage sites. This research has focused on visitation management (Li, Wu & Cai 2008; Shackley 1998) and cooperative site management initiatives between tourism operators and conservationists (Evans & Fielding 1998). To date there is limited research produced on local communities and their views on the developmental use of resources (Jimura 2010), particularly pre-designation.

The establishment of the World Heritage Convention (WHC) in 1972 aimed to preserve world environmental and cultural heritage for future generations (UNESCO 2010b) by introducing conservation in global politics. Over the past four decades the symbolic brand has changed the nature of heritage conservation and moulded the way in which tourism has interacted with heritage, to the extent that World Heritage sites now include tourism as an

integral part of heritage listing and operations. The focus of this study is on local communities and how they have more recently been recognised as significant stakeholders within heritage tourism management, and therefore the World Heritage listing process. The local communities once seen as barriers to conservation and consequently relocated from their land (Lockwood & Kothari 2006), are now recognised as significant contributors to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage preservation.

At the same time the WHC was formed, new approaches and opinions on tourism development shifted focus 'to people in local contexts and small-scale, bottom up strategies for their development' (Scheyvens 2002, p. 51). 'Buzzwords' associated with this theory included participation, sustainable development and empowerment, and an even greater focus was placed on communities and their development. Sofield (2003) identifies empowerment, a focal point for this case, as a key contributor to sustainable tourism supporting bottom-up approaches in tourism development. The bottom-up approach implies that management and development strategies are devised from the local communities on the ground in the region (Scheyvens 2002). While stakeholder collaboration has been investigated in already established World Heritage Sites and will be reported on in the following section, this study takes a different approach and explores stakeholder collaboration and the involvement of communities in the development and management phases of preparation for World Heritage designation.

### **Stakeholders in tourism development and collaboration**

Stakeholders in the process of tourism development are individuals and groups that have a vested interest in the tourism planning process or those who represent the interests of the resources in question. It is important to understand the interdependent relationship of heritage and tourism to be able to legitimise the stakeholders involved in the process; this then provides us with the context for their consideration in the World Heritage listing process. The changing nature of heritage management has led to the inclusion of certain stakeholders that previously were removed from the process completely; local communities (Scheyvens 2002).

Timur (2008) proposes three main partners involved in sustainable tourism development collaboration: the private sector, public sector and the local residents. He investigates the representatives of these main groups and their interconnectedness. Jamal and Getz (1995),

Mowforth and Munt (1998) and Wahab and Pigram (1997) recognise and expand on the idea noting, ‘the basic objective is to involve all those affected by the proposed tourism development within the planning process’ (cited in Aas *et al.* 2005, p. 30). In more recent research the natural environment is considered a stakeholder in collaboration of management (Jamal & Stronza 2009) as it represents the central theme and is often the playground for development. This addition presents a much larger group of interests to consider when planning for tourism development.

An important initial stage in collaboration for heritage management is identifying and legitimising the stakeholders (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher 2005) concerned with the tourism development process. Timur and Getz (2008, p. 446) agree stating that ‘power and legitimacy are the core attributes of a stakeholder identification typology’. For collaboration to be successful, all stakeholders identified need to be considered and failure to do so could influence the outcome of a project (Jamal & Stronza 2009).

Stakeholder attributes can assist in the process of classifying and justifying those involved. Mitchell, Agle and Woods (1997) established the three main attributes of stakeholders are *power*, which is the ability to influence, *legitimacy* of the relationship and *urgency* of the stakeholder’s claim (cited in Jamal & Stronza 2009, p. 173). Importantly, Driscoll and Starik (2004) re-evaluate these three attributes and add a fourth, the proximity of a stakeholder to the area (cited in Jamal & Stronza 2009, p. 173). This is consistent with the idea stated earlier in this section that the natural environment becomes part of the stakeholder collaboration group.

Jamal & Stronza (2009, p. 174) sum up stakeholder collaboration in relation to heritage tourism development;

A stakeholder theory of collaboration in protected area destinations should, therefore, integrate the relationship between public/private sector organizations, the natural area destination and those who inhabit it, as well as others who have a “stake” in it.

With the extraordinarily large number of stakeholders to be involved in such planning, conflict is inevitable but without the consideration of these stakeholders, planning outcomes are uncertain and can be disastrous. For example, in not considering communities in the World Heritage listing process one main outcome has been the relocation of communities to outside the boundaries of the World Heritage area which has led to social dislocation,

poaching and conflict between communities and tourists (see for example Gulinck, Vyverman, Van Bouchout & Gobin 2001; van der Aa, Groote & Huigen 2005; Wall & Black 2005).

In a recent publication, Kishore Rao, the Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre, emphasised the need for greater collaboration in World Heritage areas (Rao 2010). Rao (2010, p. 168) questions the current system of site designation for the World Heritage List and insists that there is room for more cooperation between stakeholders 'who may possess the requisite technical knowledge and expertise, including local communities and civil society'. This demonstrates the demand for greater efforts towards collaboration at the international policy level, specifically with the designation of World Heritage sites. It is however important to note that processes that attempt to empower indigenous stakeholders may not achieve this, as Banerjee (2000) finds with the Jabiluka/Kakadu World Heritage Area. Here the communities had no final power of veto on the process. This has also been seen in the joint management regimes in place in Australia, where it has been recognised that they are essentially Western cultural models of management with an inherent Anglo-Australian cultural bias (Wearing & Huyskens 2001). As Cordell (cited in De Lacy & Lawson 1997, p. 176) found, some Anangu (indigenous people of Uluru) are highly critical of the ninety-nine year lease at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, as they see it as a 'denial of their ability to determine for themselves appropriate land use options'. These complexities of process can be identified through a study of the complications of stakeholder collaboration, particularly in protected areas.

### **Complexity of stakeholder collaboration**

Due to the number of stakeholders involved in collaboration, it is clear that there is a substantial process of identifying those involved before collaboration strategies can be executed. Each site has its own set of stakeholders specific to the region. With numerous opinions and perspectives on resource management, it can be expected there will be conflict in stakeholder collaboration. An understanding of this complexity is inherent to the review of previous development projects and the introduction of new, more collaborative approaches to the expansion of tourism within heritage sites and specifically here, in the World Heritage listing process.

It has been stated that historically tourism development was a top down approach, with governments and tourism operators establishing the industry. This caused great conflict when local residents were not only excluded from the planning process but also even displaced in some areas (Sharpley & Telfer 2002; Telfer & Sharpley 2008; Wall & Black 2005). Since the 1980s recognition of this exclusion has encouraged research on the impact of tourism development on local communities (Hardy & Beeton 2009) and how this can affect tourists' perception of a site. New approaches to tourism development have recognised the value of local communities and consequently participatory planning has meant these communities are not only considered but often central to tourism planning and management (Bushell & Eagles 2007). From a policy perspective, it is in the interests of tourism developers to consult and recognise local communities as valuable stakeholders. This then is transferable to the World Heritage listing process.

Understanding different stakeholder perceptions is another component and cause of possible complications in collaboration (Hardy & Beeton 2009). Perceptions of concepts such as tourism development, preservation and conservation of the resource in question, are key issues within effective collaboration. Several studies (Jamal & Stronza 2009; Jamal & Getz 1995; Millar 2006) have articulated these complications and demonstrate the importance of understanding stakeholders, their perceptions and making genuine considerations for inclusion.

Evans (2005 p. 46) discusses the gap in involvement between large private investors to governments and local communities and concludes there is a 'lack of genuine local community and cultural involvement in heritage site management'. He acknowledges the need for collaboration between all key stakeholders in heritage management. Evans also acknowledges there needs to be an inclusion of those displaced and disempowered. Without these important stakeholders, the site becomes void of the heritage itself, the heritage that is being preserved in the first place. Evans' study demonstrates the linkage between heritage and tourism development through stakeholder collaboration. Without the appropriate involvement of those important participants, there is going to be conflict and complication within any management plan.

Once involvement is established, another potential complication of stakeholder collaboration is the distribution of power between parties (Aas et al. 2005; McKercher, Ho & du Cros

2005). Involving the recognised parties is only the initial stage of collaboration, as there needs to be a willingness on their behalf to cooperate in the process (Aas et al. 2005). The role of power is identified in this willingness within the different groups and needs to be addressed to better manage the collaboration. Within these groups, power plays a key role as each set of stakeholders has differing priorities and expectations of potential resource management plans. Conflict can result due to these power differences (Jamal & Stronza 2009).

Recognition of potential stakeholder conflict is the first step to designing an appropriate strategy to manage heritage conservation and tourism development. When aligning the concepts discussed in this review, it is apparent that there has been a shift in the paradigm in the management of heritage properties. Millar (2006) calls this shift a *sea change* in the process of enlisting World Heritage sites, as the concept of stakeholders expands to include host communities in the planning and development of their resources. Rather than focusing on the effects of World Heritage on local communities, Millar proposes a case study of the stakeholder collaboration in the planning and development of a region in preparation for World Heritage listing. This could therefore prevent the destructive nature of some tourism development on the natural and cultural environment and also assist in the education and development of local communities in the management of their heritage resource.

## **Methods**

This study employed a case study approach to explore the issue of stakeholder collaboration in World Heritage Area (WHA) designation. The case study was the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges, Papua New Guinea (PNG), currently a site on the Tentative List for World Heritage consideration (UNESCO 2010a). The Kokoda Track runs through the Owen Stanley Ranges and was the scene of a tough and bloody battle between Japan and PNG, Australia and New Zealand in World War II (Wearing, Grabowski, Chatterton & Ponting 2009). This site also represents an important tourism product for the people of PNG and a source of development for the 14 tribes that reside on the 96km track (Wearing et al. 2009).

Six key stakeholder groups were identified and from these seven representatives were chosen and interviewed to understand how the process of World Heritage designation has impacted them. The three key themes that emerged from the interviews were sustainability, stakeholder collaboration and the concept of World Heritage. These interviews were subject to content

analysis according to these themes however only the first theme will be discussed in this paper. Additionally, a number of documents were analysed to provide extra depth to the findings. These were documents prepared by some of the stakeholder groups such as *Eco-trekking Kokoda: A Plan for Sustainable Tourism* prepared by the Kokoda Track Foundation (2006).

Three techniques were used in Stakeholder Analysis: Stakeholder Objectives; Stakeholder Attribution Identification; and Stakeholder Interactions. Stakeholder objectives were examined in both a content analysis of secondary data and through the interview process. Of particular relevance were the mission and vision statements of each stakeholder group. This was sourced on respective websites and through questioning in the interview process that established the differing objectives of key stakeholder groups.

The method of attribute analysis is generally used to identify current stakeholder collaboration; it not only demonstrates the relationship between the attributes of the stakeholders, it also clearly shows how each stakeholder attribute compares with others. This is what can lead the process of stakeholder collaboration within tourism and protected areas (Jamal & Stronza 2009). The purpose of adapting the theory of Mitchell, Agle and Woods (1997) to this study is to analyse and show how stakeholder legitimacy and involvement are interconnected and how stakeholder attributes affect current and potential collaboration (cited in Aas et al. 2005). This analysis also includes the fourth dimension introduced by Driscoll and Starik (2004), known as the attribute of proximity (cited in Aas et al. 2005). With an examination of current project documentation and through the interview process, the level of collaboration between key stakeholders was obtained. A line of questioning regarding the level of involvement of each key stakeholder in respective projects was examined. Specifically relevant to this case was the involvement of the local communities in projects being developed and rolled out by the PNG and Australian governments, the tour operators and the NGO.

Finally, stakeholder interactions analysis involved a manual coding of themes arising from the interviews to build an interactions web. This shows how strong or weak the relationships are between stakeholders. Participants were questioned on how often (if at all) stakeholder groups consult one another on their respective projects and the level of involvement and collaboration between them. General feelings towards different stakeholder groups were also

determined through the interview process. This allowed the researcher to determine the relationships that exist between each stakeholder group. The results of each stakeholder analysis technique will be presented and discussed in the following sections.

### **Stakeholder Collaboration: Findings from the Case Study**

Stakeholder relationships are complex. The stakeholders identified in this case study range from government departments and non-government organisations (NGOs) to local management authorities, the private sector and of course, the local communities and landowners. Literature has shown that understanding complexities and acknowledging and balancing stakeholder relationships proves difficult in a World Heritage region (Evans 2005; Harrison 2005; ICOMOS 1993; Jimura 2010; Li et al. 2008; Nicholas, Thapa & Ko 2009; Pedersen 2002; Thompson 2005; van der Aa et al. 2005; Wager 1995; Wall & Black 2005; Winter 2005). A pre-World Heritage implementation approach would see effective stakeholder collaboration in place, with key stakeholders interacting and knowledge sharing, with the common goal of sustainability and finally, a nomination for World Heritage listing.

Currently ‘research on collaborative tourism planning still relies on rather weak theories of power relations within community settings’ (Reed 1997, p. 567). The assumption is that collaboration will override power imbalances in tourism planning when all stakeholders are included and when their needs are perceived to be met (Reed 1997). This simplistic theory is not applicable in the case of PNG (cf. Wearing, Wearing & McDonald 2010) and deliberate measures must be carefully introduced to enable indigenous people to take advantage of the tourism opportunities if the objectives are to achieve sustainable development. Without such inclusion and ‘implementation of necessary measures, the industry might lose host communities’ support in a gradual manner, that may in turn threaten the sustainability of development in future’ (Tosun 2002, p. 250).

#### *Stakeholder Objectives*

Identifying differing stakeholder objectives is necessary to understand why collaboration can be difficult. Each of the key stakeholder groups identified in this study represent the typical stakeholder groups in tourism development case studies and texts (Mowforth & Munt 2008; Scheyvens 2002). The Government of PNG (represented by the Department of Environment and Conservation: DEC), both federal and local agencies (represented by the Kokoda Track Authority: KTA); the Government of Australia (represented by the Department of the



Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts); the private sector (in this case study, trek operators); a prominent NGO (Kokoda Track Foundation: KTF); and a representative of the local communities are the six key stakeholder groups. Due to the PNG landownership laws the local communities and landowners, and their relationship with the other stakeholders, is of most interest in this discussion.

As discussed, identification and legitimisation of stakeholders is a process of heritage tourism management that traditionally saw local communities excluded (Scheyvens 2002). In more recent times, authors have described the evolution of community involvement, now recognising and legitimising these members as key stakeholders and valuable tools in the management of tourism (Aas et al. 2005; Jamal & Stronza 2009; Jamal & Getz 1995; Timur & Getz 2008). Specifically, Jamal and Stronza (2009) focus on communities and their participation in tourism in protected areas, a theory ideally suited for application in this study.

After identifying the key stakeholders and completing the interviewing process, stakeholder objectives were extracted from the data. These objectives demonstrate the vast scope of vested interests of each stakeholder group. Table 1 clearly shows why complexities in collaboration exist.

These objectives assist the reader in comprehending what motivates the stakeholder groups and where their focus lies. A useful tool in understanding the stages of each stakeholder group, in relation to the development of this tourist site, is Butler's (1980) Product Life Cycle Model. Generally accepted as an analytical framework in tourism studies, this model is used to demonstrate that as the tourist site develops and moves through each phase, the involvement and objectives of stakeholders increase and change. The model depicts a tourism destination's development as the number of tourists increase over a period of time. The destination begins at an exploration stage and after a period of development and stagnation, can either go to rejuvenation or decline. While the model is designed to describe the development of a region in relation to tourist numbers, it can also be applied to the range of key stakeholders and their involvement and the current stage of participation in development. The principals of the model remain the same, as do each stage.

**Table 1: Stakeholder Objectives**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Objective</b>
<b>PNG Government</b> DEC	‘What we’re doing here in Papua New Guinea as much as through necessity as anything else it’s got to be built from the bottom up so that the last step in the whole process is a [World Heritage] listing.’
<b>Local authority</b> KTA	‘Well our role as an organisation, we are very operationally focused organisation, so we are not really a policy organisation, we’re doers not really planners. Our key role is to manage the track. Our number one strategy over the...last year has been to build trust [with the communities].’
<b>AUS Government</b> DEWHA	‘The Australian government is committed to making sure the Kokoda Track is protected and assisting Papua New Guinea to do that but also in improving the livelihoods of the people along the track which has I guess, two links: one, it links it to the protection and conservation of the track, but also just under the general AusAID relationship and development that goes on with PNG more generally. We have a delegation...and we’re playing a regional role in terms of assisting neighbours...with their uptake of the World Heritage Convention.’
<b>Private Sector</b>	‘I’m the director of the company... I guide treks along the track...and the treks are fully guided, all-inclusive.’
<b>NGO</b> KTF	‘Our main goal is that we want to improve the livelihoods of the local people alongside...honouring the Kokoda story...plus finding a new generation of Papua New Guinean leaders. We really do try to listen to the needs of the locals and then try to rally support.’
<b>Local Communities</b>	‘As a local person, I think...development is very vital since tourism brings with it a lot of opportunity apart from creating income earning opportunity to people that live in the rural villages along the Kokoda Track.’

Based on the analysis of primary and secondary data, it would seem that the governments of both PNG and Australia are operating in the development stage of the product life cycle. Both governments have identified the potential for growth and recognise the importance of development and have been implementing programs over the past two years. It would be reasonable to suggest the KTA is also in the development stage of the lifecycle, due to the nature of its work as the local authority responsible for implementing the government policy. Briefly, the KTA is a special purpose authority set up with the intention of managing the Kokoda Track. The Australian Governments’ involvement in the KTA began under the Joint Understanding, signed by the PNG and Australian Governments in 2008. Up until January 2011 it had been primarily staffed by Australian nationals with PNG counterparts now slowly assuming lead roles.

The KTF on the other hand, through its community workshops and project focus, would be considered to be moving from the involvement to development stage of the product life cycle. ‘We ran workshops in the communities asking them to think about a five year and a ten year vision of where they want to see their communities going. What we kept hearing was that they want development, they want change’ (Kokoda Track Foundation). From this point, the

KTF has focused their project design around community visions, and is now implementing development programs in the field of micro business, health, education and community development.

In contrast to other key stakeholders, the private sector has recently gone into the decline stage of development. A question posed by a spokesperson for one of the trekking companies was: ‘the numbers have dropped 30%, how can we reverse this?’ (Private Sector 1). This decline in tourist numbers shows that the trekking industry went into decline in 2009. The stakeholders who are directly affected by the weakening of the industry will have a different focus than stakeholders in the development stage of the life cycle.

The local communities are currently situated at the involvement stage of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges product life cycle. The community spokesperson indicated:

People participate in the very basic activities that they are very familiar with, without any proper tourism and hospitality training. For the Kokoda Track, the tourism development and activities has just started. There are still lots of opportunities for development in the roles that people play in supporting this industry.

The representatives for the KTF, DEC, DEWHA and KTA all agree that the involvement of the communities in development is in the initial stages and limited to a basic knowledge of tourism.

With such a variety of development stages evident in the analysis of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges’ key stakeholders, barriers to collaboration are clear. The process of collaboration requires stakeholders to be on equal and similar levels, particularly in relation to their focus for tourism development. It will be important for the future development of the trekking industry that involvement from stakeholders is equal and the focus of development is concurrent between each group.

In the context of stakeholder collaboration in the area, the communities are in a unique position. While the communities are only in the early stages of involvement in the product life cycle, their influence is significantly more than that of local resident communities in other regions. The landownership laws in PNG empower the communities to exercise their rights regarding the development of their land. If communities are unhappy with development or changes, they can exercise their right by closing their section of the Track. This attribute of

power is unique to this case. Enquiry into the theory of stakeholder attributes will facilitate an understanding of power in this case, especially that of the local communities.

### *Stakeholder Attribute Identification*

A stakeholder identification attribute analysis has been completed to aid the understanding of the difficulties of stakeholder collaboration in this case. Information obtained from the interviews and secondary data has been synthesised and provides the foundation for the application of this theory (Figure 1).

		Attributes			
		Power	Legitimacy	Urgency	Proximity
Stakeholders	PNG Government	High	High	High	Medium
	Local authority	Medium	High	High	High
	AUS Government	High	High	Medium	Medium
	Private Sector	Medium	High	Medium	High
	NGO	Low	High	Medium	Medium
	Local communities	Very High	Very High	High	High

**Figure 1:** Stakeholder Attribute Identification Analysis

Firstly, the attribute of power is a central theme in stakeholder collaboration theory and an important and interesting concept in this research. The reason that the Australian government is considered to have a high degree of power is due to the bilateral agreement with PNG under a Joint Understanding signed in 2008. The substantial financial, technical and expert assistance being provided by the Australian government makes its position one of power, almost equal to that of the PNG government.

Whilst traditionally, governments and policy makers hold the majority of the power (Mowforth & Munt 2008; Scheyvens 2002), in this study the landowners and communities are in fact the most powerful players. The KTA stated that it is ‘organic law, which imbeds all power in the landowners’. Due to legislation in PNG, customary land rights automatically place the communities in the position of power; the power to determine their own resource management and land use planning (KTA 2010). This is very different from local communities around the world where their experience has been that of oversight, exclusion and even relocation in some instances (Evans 2005; Gulinck et al. 2001; van der Aa et al. 2005; Wall & Black 2005).

Other powerful stakeholders such as the governments of PNG and Australia, need to work with and for these powerful communities; without their acceptance, progress will be slow. Demonstrations made by the communities have proven this in the past. When the landowners believed they had not been consulted or they were not happy with the management of the track, they simply closed their portion of the track (KTA 2010). This causes disruption for the tourism operators and tension for the local authority and management team of the track to resolve these issues<sup>1</sup>.

The second attribute of legitimacy is particularly important with reference to the powerful community landowners. Scheyvens (2002) discusses how communities' opinions should be considered in planning and management, which is a fundamental step for this region. Legitimising the landowners required other powerful stakeholders to 'acknowledge and appreciate that communities have the necessary knowledge and skills' to take part in planning and management of their own resources (Wearing et al. 2010, p. 66). Although all stakeholders have a high legitimate stake, it is the communities who will be most affected by decisions made regarding World Heritage.

Urgency, the third attribute, refers to the ability of stakeholders to act in collaboration. 'Power alone is insufficient, legitimacy is necessary to enable authority and urgency is required for execution' (Jamal & Stronza 2009, p. 173). This has been proven by the landowner demonstrations with regard to dispute settlements on the Kokoda Track. Clearly the local stakeholders like the PNG government and the communities will be most affected by any changes to the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges.

Finally, the element of proximity is important when evaluating the three stakeholder groups who share a high level of connectedness in the region. The communities own the land on which the private sector operates and the local authority controls track management. The two governments have been ranked medium because while both of the governments do have some representatives on the ground in the region, the majority of the work is completed off site and in a policy format. The KTA is in close proximity because it is responsible for managing the trekking fees and continuing a dialogue between the local communities and the federal governments. Any problems that occur in the region (most notably in recent times the death

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<sup>1</sup> For more on local power relations in the study region, extensive detailed review can be found in Wearing, Wearing and McDonald's 2010 paper entitled *Understanding local power and interactional processes in sustainable tourism: exploring village-tour operator relations on the Kokoda Track, Papua New Guinea*.

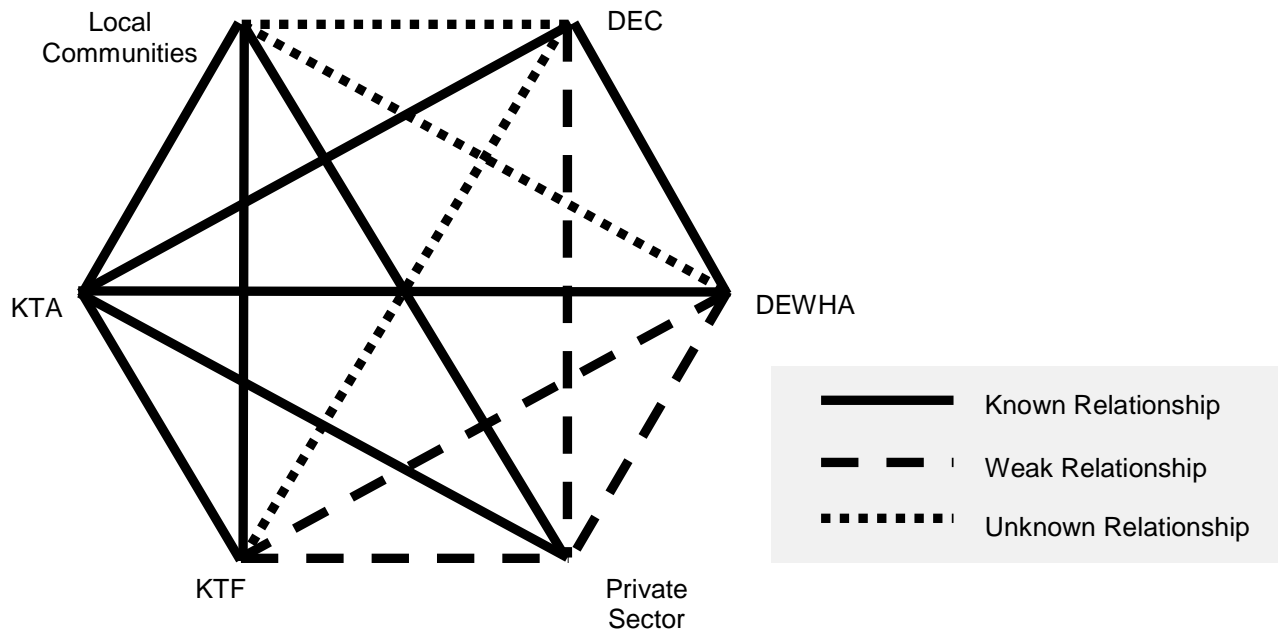
of trekkers and the withdrawal of the PNG Airlines flights into Kokoda) will ultimately need to be resolved by the KTA.

Attribute identification analysis is extremely useful in framing and understanding the mixture of stakeholder interconnectedness in preparation for future re-evaluation and establishment of collaboration techniques. If a regional master strategy is to be formulated, close attention would need to be made towards these stakeholder attributes and how they could affect collaboration efforts.

### *Stakeholder Interactions*

Close examination of the current interactions between the key stakeholders in this study is required to better understand what collaboration is currently occurring. The understanding of stakeholder attributes helps to clarify why some relationships are successful while others are not. Lines of communication differ within each organisation and some stakeholders focus more on collaboration than others. A relationship web has been created to demonstrate the known, unknown and weak lines of communication between the key stakeholders (Figure 2). This web does not attempt to rank the degree of successful communication and relationships between each stakeholder. Ethnographic research would be required to make these judgements and that is not within the scope of this research.

The two governments involved in this research state that knowledge-sharing is transferred freely between each government agency and taskforce, establishing the solid line between them. Australia and PNG both have a Kokoda Taskforce with respective government agencies working under this, communicating projects to field staff and focusing on the development of policy. 'Being a federal environment department, we set more policy and we implement program delivery and the mechanisms around it and we do rely on the agencies on the ground in PNG to deliver a lot of that' (DEWHA 2010). The local agency on the ground that delivers much of the policy is the KTA. There are interactions between the KTA, DEWHA and DEC.



**Figure 2:** Stakeholder Relationship Web

The KTA is at the heart of the ground management team. It is located in the region and is a key link between the governments, communities and other stakeholders. The KTA is responsible for implementing policy from PNG and Australian governments and dealing directly with the landowners. This is a ‘middleman’ or intermediary role. The KTA states its ‘number one strategy...over the last year has been to build trust’ with the landowners and communities (KTA 2010), which is an important step in the intermediary process.

The KTA intermediary role includes communicating information from the landowners to all key stakeholders, including appropriate government agencies. It is also responsible for reporting information from the track and the communities to the PNG Minister of Tourism Culture, the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority as well as DEWHA. The staff of the KTA are in fact contracted and financially positioned by the Australian Government to work in the specific managerial roles, as stated in the bilateral Joint Understanding (Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts, 2008). This is an example of how important the relationship with the KTA is for the powerful stakeholders involved.

There is also an important relationship and constant interaction between the KTA and the private sector. ‘The local authorities have the delicate task of juggling private sector interests with local resident needs and wants, in order to maintain the economic health of the

community and ensure that development is sustainable' (Jamal & Getz 1995, p. 193). The KTA holds two forums annually, inviting the trek operators to pre-season and post-season meetings to discuss the track and all aspects of tourism. The trek operators are also invited to the KTA office at the completion of each trek to discuss their experience on the track and to advise of any issues they have experienced (KTA 2010). This communication is vital for the management of the track, particularly maintenance and community issues, such as track closures or land disputes. This demonstrates that the local authority has solid relationships with all key stakeholders in the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges region.

The private sector in this study consists of trek operators who operate their businesses guiding travellers across the Kokoda Track. More attention needs to be paid to their voices. Businesses have been operating in the area for over 20 years and have established relationships with the landowners that are functioning and trusting. With their regional knowledge and close partnership with local communities, they are a valuable resource in collaboration. However, to gain a voice they need to work on their extremely weak ties to the government departments and key NGO in the region, the KTF.

The KTF appears to be in close communication with the communities. It is the main stakeholder that interacts with communities and has a strong focus on communication with these communities and other stakeholders in the region. It appears to have a solid grasp of community needs through the Participatory Rural Appraisal workshops completed in 2003-2005. This was discussed in their interview and is also presented in the Eco-trekking Kokoda Strategic Plan (Kokoda Track Foundation, 2006). These workshops provided the organisation with a greater understanding of community needs. They also fostered strong relationships with the landowners and communities that other stakeholders would not possess.

We have good connections with... (*the*) PNG government, Department of Education, Department of Environment and Conservation...it's more of a case at the moment where we inform them and keep them up to date with what we are already doing along the track. I would like to see that move into a bit more of a back and forth relationship where they can keep us up to date with the biggest needs on the track but...we often find that sometimes it's that they are not engaged with the communities and we happen to be more engaged with them [communities] (KTF).

This provides an interesting point of discussion. The KTF appears to be reporting as much as possible to the leading government agency, yet there is no reciprocation. The spokesperson



for DEC did mention the KTF, yet no official communication lines from the agency were acknowledged in the interview. There was also no mention from DEC of any current or forecast work with this NGO. Potentially in this region, NGOs are under-valued and their knowledge is underutilised, something that is not uncommon around the world (Scheyvens, 2002). Knowledge-sharing is vital for the success of programs like the ones implemented in this case study region, and those expert in this region, being the local communities and those agencies working closely with them, need to be at the centre of collaboration efforts.

Democracy is particularly relevant in the collaboration process. 'Politically the collaboration process is more equitable than the conventional approach, as the views of stakeholders are as legitimate as those of an expert' (Bramwell & Lane 1999, Bramwell & Sharman 1999, Hall 2000 and Hall 1999 cited in Aas et al. 2005, p. 31). This view is one that needs to be recognised by all stakeholders in the case study region. While the DEWHA believe its program, the Kokoda Initiative, is being driven by PNG, it is important that advisors on the ground are not only consulting and listening to the needs and wants of the local communities but realising the value of their views. The people of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges have extensive local knowledge of the environment and the entire region that would be invaluable to the other stakeholder groups.

## **Conclusion**

The nature of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges region differs greatly from other tourism destinations. Jamal and Getz (1995 p. 193) state:

The destination domain is thus characterised by an 'open-system' of interdependent, multiple stakeholders, where the actions of one stakeholder impact on the rest of the actors in the community. Furthermore, no single organisation or individual can exert direct control over the destination's development process.

In the case study presented here, Jamal and Getz's statement is not entirely true as there is one stakeholder group that exerts more control than others. Unlike other countries, customary landownership in PNG is prevalent and the local communities own the land that has been put up for tentative World Heritage listing. Therefore although the community members may be less educated and less involved in the planning and strategy formulation of tourism development, they not only have the ability to influence the progress of any project, their consent is required and they have the ability to veto any decisions. Local communities were

shown to have high levels of power, legitimacy, urgency and proximity. It then seems only logical that their genuine inclusion is paramount in the planning and management of what is simply their backyard. In this way, all stakeholder objectives need to be carefully reconsidered and communication between different groups needs strengthening.

Recognition and legitimisation of all stakeholders however is only the beginning of successful collaboration, with the process of stakeholder attribute identification providing a platform for justifying involvement (Jamal & Stronza 2009; Timur & Getz 2008). Despite the common diverse range of stakeholder objectives in tourism development, stakeholder attribute identification has proven to be particularly relevant and significant to this unique case. The role of power was found to be a major factor to the process of development and sustainability in this potential World Heritage region. The practice of customary landownership in PNG has contributed to the landowner's high degree of power in collaboration; it is unusual that the local community stakeholders hold such a powerful position. Essential to the success of collaborative efforts and the development of the regional strategy, will be all stakeholders understanding the communities' role. The existence of this will ensure landowners and communities in this region will be consulted and included in collaboration and planning for World Heritage.

The next step in the World Heritage inscription process will be the establishment of a recognised protected area, ensuring the appropriate safeguarding of the natural and cultural heritage of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges. This process will require the cooperation of all stakeholders and particularly the participation and acceptance of landowning communities. In accordance with the World Heritage Convention's nomination guidelines, an extensive protected area management plan will need to be submitted along with documentation identifying the universally accepted heritage values and an appropriate tourism development strategy for the region. The formulation of such stages will rely heavily on effective collaboration between all key stakeholders.

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