

## **Pronounced Particularity: A Comparison of Governance Structures on Lord Howe Island and Fernando de Noronha**

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**Abstract:** This paper compares and contrasts the management systems and governance structures of two island sites with national and international World Heritage recognition: Lord Howe Island (off the mid-east coast of Australia) and Fernando de Noronha (off the north-east coast of Brazil). Using historical and contemporary references, the paper explores the manner in which two distinct approaches to governance are implicated in the daily living of community members, and considers their socioeconomic activities. We use the case of tourism and World Heritage management as examples of the complexities involved in the different forms of governance structures adopted by these two small oceanic islands: similar in nature and official status, but significantly different when the outcomes of their governance practices are analysed. In the final part of the paper, we suggest mechanisms and approaches that can promote sustainable local engagement with island issues.

*Keywords:* Fernando de Noronha, governance, heritage, Lord Howe Island, sustainability, tourism

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### **Introduction**

Even a cursory survey of international islands and island groups, and particularly of low-population oceanic islands, reveals a variety of administrative regimes in place and a range of national and international agencies and heritage classifications that operate on them. Aside from those small islands and aggregations that have achieved independence (such as the Maldives or Kiribati), various other relationships with larger states exist. These include:

- independent states in ‘free association’ with larger ones (e.g. Niue and the Cook Islands, which are associated with New Zealand);
- overseas territories that have a quasi-colonial status (e.g. Pitcairn and the Falkland Islands, which are administered by the United Kingdom);
- territories that belong to nation states without full integration into their standard

- regional administrative units (e.g. Norfolk Island as an ‘external territory’ of Australia, the Northern Mariana Islands as a ‘commonwealth’ of the United States of America);
- overseas territories that are now formally part of former colonial nations (such as France’s *collectivités d’outre-mer* Saint Pierre et Miquelon and Saint Barthélemy);
  - islands administered as remote components of metropolitan administrations (e.g. Ogasawara as part of Tokyo metropolitan authority);
  - standard sub-units of national administrative systems (e.g. Lundy as an area of a district in the English county of Devon; Santa Catalina Island as part of Los Angeles county in California, USA).

A substantial number of islands also have idiosyncratic characteristics within the types of administrative status sketched above. The two areas discussed in this paper are Lord Howe Island (comprising the eponymous main island, adjacent uninhabited islets and the steep volcanic remnant Ball’s Pyramid) and Fernando de Noronha (an archipelago of 21 islands named after its main and only inhabited island). Lord Howe Island is administered as a ‘statutory authority’ of the Australian state of New South Wales, a unique entity within the state with complex administrative arrangements. Fernando de Noronha is similar in having a special municipal status (as a *Distrito Estadual* or ‘State District’) of the Brazilian state of Pernambuco. Both are also similar in being World Heritage listed by UNESCO: Fernando de Noronha as part of a ‘Brazilian Atlantic Islands’ listing (together with the Rocas Atoll), inscribed in 2001 (UNESCO, 2013a); and Lord Howe Island, inscribed in 1982 as the ‘Lord Howe Island Group’ (UNESCO, 2013b). But, despite these considerable similarities, there are major differences in the management of the island groups and the effect of this management on their environments, populations and tourism industries.

The present paper uses historical and contemporary references to explore the development of the two distinct approaches to small island governance found on the two archipelagos; specifically how these different forms are implicated in the daily living and socioeconomic activities of community members. Subsequently, we use the case of tourism and World Heritage management as examples of further complexities emanating from the different forms of governance structures adopted by these two small oceanic islands, similar in nature and official status, but significantly different when the outcomes of their governance practices are analysed. In the final part of the paper, we suggest mechanisms and approaches that can promote sustainable local engagement with natural heritage issues.

## Historical contexts

### *Fernando de Noronha*

After Portuguese explorers discovered the unoccupied islands of the Fernando de Noronha archipelago in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> Fernando de Noronha had successive occupation attempts by Dutch and French explorers; however, in 1737 Portugal decided to take permanent possession of the archipelago on account of its strategic position with regard to ocean routes between Europe and South America, expelling French occupiers from the island (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> There is no archaeological evidence of any visitation and/or occupation of Fernando de Noronha prior to the European colonial period.

**Figure 1: Location of Fernando de Noronha Archipelago, Brazil.**



Source: Map drawn by Eduardo Longo, using information available on-line.

**Figure 2: Location of Lord Howe Island, Australia.**



Source: Map drawn by Eduardo Longo, using information available on-line.

As well as serving as a strategic defence port, Fernando de Noronha was made a penal colony in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for convicts transferred from mainland Brazil. Its status as a penal colony/prison lasted for over 200 years and that has had a significant influence on the current

social and administrative dynamics of the island (Lima, 2008). During those years, convicts were used as labour in the construction of buildings on the island, including the forts and churches that remain as heritage sites today (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2005). Following independence from Portugal, declared in 1822, Brazil assumed administration of the islands.

As an ally of the United States during World War II, Brazil allowed the United States to build a base on Fernando de Noronha in 1942. At that time, the island was a federal territory, under the administration of the Brazilian Army, with no civilians apart from convicts living on the main island. More than 3,000 military personnel were moved to the island and with that, housing and basic living infrastructure became an immediate requirement. After World War II, the island was kept under Brazilian Army administration until 1988, when it was incorporated into the Pernambuco State territory and transformed into a State District. Following this incorporation, the number of civilians migrating to the island increased considerably, reaching the current population of approximately 3,800 people, of which about 2,600 are permanent residents (IBGE, 2010) and 1,200 temporary (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2008). Today, Fernando de Noronha is a strong tourism destination in the Brazilian domestic market, and also attracts a number of international tourists. The population has doubled in the past 10 years and new urban nuclei have developed as a consequence.

### *Lord Howe Island*

Lord Howe Island was first sighted and explored more than 250 years after Fernando de Noronha (then named Quaresma) first appeared in the Cantino Map of 1502 (the earliest Portuguese record of the Brazilian coast). On a return trip from Port Jackson to Norfolk Island in 1788, the crew of *Supply* is the first known to go ashore and initiate a series of short visits by British vessels to the island, most of them en route to Norfolk Island<sup>2</sup>. Their brief stops to gather food, water and firewood provide the earliest records of the biological characteristics of the island, but it was not until the whaling era that Lord Howe attracted more interest from potential settlers (Anderson, 2003). In 1833, the first settlers arrived: three couples coming from New Zealand (the women being of Maori ethnicity), and two Maori boys. They stayed on the island for eight years, supplying passing ships with fish, meat and vegetables in exchange for other goods. After they voluntarily departed, a small group of Australians arrived later that year and settlement has persisted to the present, with subsequent arrivals, including New England whalers and Micronesian women, contributing to the cultural diversity of the population. The first resident Australian official took his post in 1878, after the whole island was declared an Australian forestry reserve, but was pressured out of his position due to local opposition in 1882 (no other Australian official resided on Lord Howe Island until 1940, when the war in the Pacific gave Lord Howe Island a potential strategic significance). From the 1870s on, cultivation of *Kentia* palms (*Howea forsteriana*) developed. This local species' ability to thrive in low-light conditions rendered it an excellent indoor plant, and its cultivation and export became a major local enterprise. In 1913, a governance system was established in the form of the Lord Howe Island Board of Control, which was replaced by the Lord Howe Island Board 50 years later (see below). Tourism on the island began in the late 1940s with the start of a regular flying boat service from Sydney. Current residents number about 360, 85% of whom have Australian ancestry (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> Similar to Fernando de Noronha, there is no evidence of visitation and/or occupation of Lord Howe Island prior to British colonial expansion into the south-west Pacific.

## **Governance structures and social challenges**

Governance structures have a crucial impact on the development and implementation of policies and on the enactment of democratic or non-democratic ideals (Atkinson & Coleman, 1992). Governance in this article is understood as the structured and non-structured relationships between different stakeholders at a community level who have direct or indirect roles in decision-making. Ideally, fair and ‘well-functioning’ governance structures will involve collaboration and shared ownership among all relevant stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Conversely, top-down approaches tend to exacerbate conflicts within communities and ultimately lead to great resource and welfare degradation (Bond, 2006). On oceanic islands, governance issues can be of significant complexity due to the very nature of their isolation and the common challenges associated with ‘islandness’ (Baldacchino, 2004; Jackson, 2006). As mentioned in the introduction above, different configurations of administrative regimes can be found in islands around the world but a commonality across most of them is the frequent avoidance by metropolises and mainland powers of “the creation of exclusively island-based administrative or political units, ensuring that geographic ‘island regions’ are incorporated within larger sub-national units” (Baldacchino, 2004, pp. 80–81). This scenario is certainly the case for Fernando de Noronha and Lord Howe Island. Both archipelagos have similar administrative systems – being parts of sub-national state administrations, Pernambuco and New South Wales (NSW) respectively – but with management regimes distinct from all other districts under the same government bodies. However, their governance structures differ significantly and therefore the outcomes for their communities are just as disparate.

Unlike other communities in Brazil, Fernando de Noronha is not considered to be a municipality, where there is a local council locally elected by democratic vote. Being a State District (the only one in Brazil), Fernando de Noronha is administered directly by the State of Pernambuco, with no locally elected administration (Pernambuco, 1995). The General Administrator of the island is chosen by the Governor of the state without any formal recruitment process. Most other managerial positions are filled through the same process, with most managers coming from the mainland (mostly from Recife, Pernambuco’s capital city). This bureaucratic context leads island residents to claim that there is very small popular representation in the island administration, particularly as most bureaucrats do not take up permanent residency in Fernando de Noronha.

Parallels can be traced between Fernando de Noronha’s administrative regime and that present on Lord Howe Island, although with equally striking differences, particularly when it comes to their governance structures. The *Lord Howe Island Act* of 1953 (NSW Government, 1953) established the Lord Howe Island Board as a statutory authority responsible for managing “the Island’s affairs subject to the control and direction of the NSW Minister for Lands” (Lord Howe Island Board, n/d a, p. 2). After a few changes in representation since its inception, the Lord Howe Island Board is currently composed of three non-local members appointed by the Governor of NSW and four islanders elected by the residents. In addition, the Board is administered by a non-local Chief Executive Officer, who is immediately transferred to the island for his/her tenure period. Such a set-up somewhat reduces the alleged lack of local representation and social awareness among administration members that is reported in Fernando de Noronha, as the majority of the Lord Howe Island Board members are islanders and their CEO is transferred to live and work full-time on the archipelago. Also, unlike the Fernando de Noronha system, the Lord Howe Island Board has powers similar to those of a

local council in NSW but with added responsibilities, such as administration of Crown Land and of the trade taking place on the island (Lord Howe Island Board, n/d a). It is, thus, a stronger political unit than that found on Fernando de Noronha.

On Fernando de Noronha, the official mechanism established to provide popular representation in a democratic political system, where the main administrator is not elected by the people whom they govern, takes the form of the Fernando de Noronha District Board. With seven members directly elected by vote by the resident population of the island, the Board is a legal, independent agency whose main function is to oversee the general administrative activities, with consultation, approval and deliberation powers over issues of interest to the population (Pernambuco, 1995). By comparison, when the *Lord Howe Island Act* was first passed in 1953, the Board consisted only of mainland-based, Governor-appointed members. Local representation was secured by the Island Committee established by the same legislation, whose role was similar to that of the current Fernando de Noronha District Board: one of making recommendations and exercising any roles that were defined by the Board (Lord Howe Island Board, n/d a). It seems, therefore, that Lord Howe Island has made progress in ensuring local representation in its governance structure by amalgamating the Lord Howe Island Board and the Island Committee, and consequently increasing the 'voice' and power of local representatives in decision-making. Fernando de Noronha, on the other hand, still presents a rather dated, top-down structure when it comes to community participation in decision-making and is therefore still struggling to include the local 'voice' into the governance structure that is key to a truly democratic system (Ansell & Gash, 2007). In Fernando de Noronha, the local Board has no executive authority; most decisions, policies and legislation regarding the archipelago are made at the state and federal levels, on the continent, far away from Fernando de Noronha (Pernambuco, 1995). The local administration only delivers and implements decisions and policies created and discussed away on the mainland.

Theoretically, however, the Fernando de Noronha District Board, even with no executive powers, would fill part of the popular representation gap derived from the non-democratic election system in place. But, as verified in informal conversations with local residents during research in Fernando de Noronha in 2012, in newspaper articles about the topic (e.g. Associação do Ministério Público de Pernambuco, 2011; Jornal do Commercio, 2011; Marinho, 2013) and in academic sources (cf. Rua, 2008), elected councillors fail to provide this input either by acquiescing with the General Administration's ideas or by not prioritizing popular issues over the social-political-economic agenda dominated by large financial groups, operations and interests. In this manner, the District Board appears merely figurative in this system (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2008).

Despite the greater local representation in its governance structure, the current system on Lord Howe Island is not without its critics and challenges. Lord Howe Island's isolation from the mainland, considerably more acute than that experienced by Fernando de Noronha, means that any political negotiations at the state government level are more problematic and lengthy due to infrequent visitation to the island by mainland administrators. Although other modes of communication are possible and used, island residents repeatedly suggested feelings that political negotiations are more effective when constant presence and face-to-face activities, meetings and lobbying are possible. Again, according to Lord Howe Island residents, due to its small population, political matters are often debated on an individual (i.e. one-on-one) basis and even consensual measures suggested by the Lord Howe Island Board might take years to implement or may never come to fruition.

On Fernando de Noronha, other challenges are evident: corruption and lack of basic social policies are regular complaints made about both the General Administration and the District Board (Associação do Ministério Público de Pernambuco, 2011; *Jornal do Comercio*, 2011; Marinho, 2013), the former for not providing elementary public services, such as effective health care, education, waste treatment and collection; and the latter for failing to put in place real action to oppose or make valid popular claims through its legal powers and duty. Again, the General Administrator and most of the managers working within his mandate are new migrants to the island who spend at least half of their time on the Brazilian mainland. According to testimonials of local residents, this situation leads to a lack of full knowledge of, and engagement with, the problems locals face in their daily lives, with issues considered to be of significance to the population often being overlooked by the administration.

Difficulties related to new migrants on islands are, however, not unique to Fernando de Noronha, happening frequently in island communities (cf. Baldacchino, 2006). On Lord Howe Island it is no different: Heimans' (2006, p. 55) oral history study on the island found that "as with all closely-knit and isolated communities, some islanders did not always readily accept newcomers". Migration and acceptance are therefore challenges for whoever is appointed on the mainland to be the Chief Executive Officer of the Lord Howe Island Board, or take up any other managerial position on the island. As a 'new entrant' to the community, not only does s/he need to confront pressing management issues, but must also address the difficulties involved in 'fitting in' and being accepted by the community being administered. S/he can also be pressured by conflicting local and national concerns as the effective administrative conduit between the two. This potential scenario, somewhat derived by the findings of Heimans' (2006) study, was confirmed in interviews on the island.

In both archipelagos, in addition to the complexities involved in the 'state district' format of administration, the states also regulate the use of the land, with all land belonging to the federal government in the Fernando de Noronha case, and to the Australia Crown in the Lord Howe Island case. However, the implications and administration of such situations vary between the two examples presented here. Fernando de Noronha's entire territory belongs to the federal government, a right established in the Brazilian Constitution (Brasil, 1988). This condition therefore means that no Fernando de Noronha resident can own the piece of land on which they live and on which they have built their houses. In addition, any construction, renovation or change to any building on the island needs to be approved by the federal government, through a long and exceedingly bureaucratic system. Lord Howe Island residents faced similar issues until the 1953 Act when extended rights were given to residents with the creation of 'perpetual leases', issued to islanders only and to be used for residential purposes (Lord Howe Island Board, n/d c). Although the law does not allow freehold ownership of the land – which is still considered one of the most contentious issues on the island (Heimans, 2006) – the perpetual leases provide far greater stability and security for islanders than anything found on Fernando de Noronha today. They also regulate and largely prevent mainland investors from buying property on the island and creating associated real estate and gentrification problems (cf. Jackson, 2006; Marjavaara, 2007), as perpetual leases can be transferred to non-islanders only if and when no islander<sup>3</sup> is willing and able to take it up.

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<sup>3</sup> Officially, an islander is someone who has "resided on the Island continuously for the previous 10 years **or** resided on the Island immediately before January 1982 *and* held, or has been closely related to someone who held, a permissive occupancy before 22 April 1954" (Lord Howe Island Board, n/d b, p. 1, emphasis in the original).

Despite the strict regulation of land ownership on Fernando de Noronha, land use is still characterized by controversies and problems. Management of land use and occupation within areas of land where these activities can occur (i.e. outside National Park boundaries) has been legally transferred to the island's administration, creating caveats concerning where land use can occur under 'special circumstances' and payment of fees can be charged to authorized users (Brasil, 2002). In practice, therefore, there are no real barriers to prevent mainland investors establishing new businesses on the island, be they hotels, shops, restaurants or any other service, if they pay what is required. That means that, in 2008, when a carrying capacity study was conducted on the island, there were 304 tourism businesses operating on Fernando de Noronha, more than 100 of them as accommodation providers (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2008); these are the official numbers only. As a consequence, today Fernando de Noronha is increasingly economically dependent on mainland investors who do not live on the island but who employ a large proportion of the island's workforce. Such a situation increases tensions between 'locals' and 'foreigners', and appears to contribute to constant social conflicts (Lima, 2008). These conflicts create further complications for effectively implementing collaborative governance structures and strategies, particularly as several locals report feeling disempowered and threatened by any input or decision coming from migrants and foreigners, including public bureaucrats (Lima, 2008; Rua, 2008).

In this regard, note that one of the social consequences of the long periods of military occupation on Fernando de Noronha was the significant financial support given to residents on the island, who were once all directly or indirectly serving in the Brazilian Army. This support ceased immediately after the incorporation of the archipelago into Pernambuco State, and the basic infrastructure and opportunities for residents to operate in a different social and economic environment were not provided as a means of overcoming the expected problems that such a shift would imply (Lima, 2008; Souza, 2007). Tourism then became the major source of income for islanders, particularly because regulations over fishing in National Park waters meant commercial and subsistence fishing were significantly impacted. However, no training or support prepared the islanders for this shift and therefore the tourism industry of the island, unsurprisingly, went into the hands of new migrants coming from major centres in the country, as well as into others with foreign investment capacity. The oft-reported resentment of the local population is therefore 'justified', as is their apparent lack of initiative after so many years of paternalistic administration that did not require, or allow for, collaborative decision-making. Furthermore, this recent military history has meant that social relations on the island were based on a hierarchical system that now seems to impact significantly on current relationships with the executive and political powers on the island. In addition, according to local residents and to previous research on Fernando de Noronha, the small number of people who lived through this recent 'penal colony era' direct a lot of disappointment and anger at recent civil administrations which have denied them the ownership of their place on the island, even if only socially/abstractly (Lima, 2008; Mesquita, 2012).

In general terms, it is clear that collaborative forms of governance require not only that public agencies formally initiate a forum for discussion and include different stakeholders in decision-making processes, but also that members of the community respond and actively participate in the development and implementation of public policy and management that arise from these discussion fora (Ansell & Gash, 2007). In Fernando de Noronha, possibly influenced by the aforementioned social structures and histories, such a response has not been achieved and therefore significant resentment is felt from all involved. Those who participate



tend to be the new migrants who commonly enjoy better social and economic conditions, and blame the locals for the current inefficiencies; those who refrain from participating justify their position by blaming the historical disempowerment created by the system previously in place, and feel continually disempowered due to their usually lower social and economic status. This vicious circle is hard to break, and creates a context in which bottom-up approaches are almost unfeasible to be operationalized. Top-down approaches to governance on Fernando de Noronha are therefore the norm.

On Lord Howe Island, advancements made in regards to community participation in decision-making have led to a significantly different scenario. The community is consulted and actively engaged in processes that lead to management practices including involvement, for instance, in matters such as the establishment of programs for the eradication of invasive species (Oppel, Beaven, Bolton, Vickery, & Bodey, 2011) and development of the island's biodiversity management plan (Brown & Baker, 2009). The more democratic and participatory system found on Lord Howe Island, however, is not without its flaws and difficulties. As Farrier (2011) found in interviews with island residents, there is still resentment from some islanders, particularly those who can trace their origins to earlier settlers, towards current administration staff, especially environmental managers, who play a major role in the island's affairs and who are 'outsiders' or recent migrants. This feeling is due to an engrained social hierarchical structure that positions islanders who are descendants of early settlers in a higher authoritative position, and recent migrants, particularly those who are 'transient', in a lower socio-political position. In spite of this distinction, and despite common conflicts arising from different opinions/positions on different matters, Lord Howe Island residents display a strong sense of community and connectedness through their 'islandness' and frequently bond together "when faced with perceived external threats to their island way-of-life" (Farrier, 2011, p. 86). This sense of community might be the answer to the effectiveness of the participatory governance achieved on Lord Howe Island but not so far attained on Fernando de Noronha.

### **An added complexity: World Heritage status and its impacts**

In the intricate political and administrative context found on both archipelagos, another facet provides added complexity: natural environments worthy of World Heritage status and the accompanying government bodies that act to conserve such prestigious conditions. This key aspect of both archipelagos raises further issues about the systems in place to manage 'island matters', including governance structures associated with managing common-pool resources. Common-pool resources consist of natural resources that are open access and in which the resource use by one reduces its availability to others (Ostrom, Dietz, Dolsak, Stern, Stonich & Weber, 2002). Coastal common-pool resources (or commons) include public-access marine fisheries and off-shore and on-shore resources that have their use controlled by environmental laws and zoning regulations (Ostrom, 1990). In Brazil, areas of environmental protection ('APAs') have been established to control impacts on local coastal communities and resources (Oliveira, 2008). The existence of an APA gives legal grounds for better monitoring of impacts; but it does not preclude development from taking place, nor guarantees the fulfillment of the APA's proposed socioeconomic and environmental goals, often due to a lack of demarcation and legal monitoring (Kantek, Sautter, & Michaliszyn, 2009; Zanoni et al., 2000).

In Fernando de Noronha, significant biodiversity, especially of marine life, led to the establishment of two protected areas in and around the islands: the Fernando de Noronha

Marine National Park and Fernando de Noronha/Rocas/São Pedro/São Paulo Environmental Protection Area. First, in 1986, Fernando de Noronha was declared an APA and in 1988 the Marine National Park was established: the latter covering approximately 70% of the main island and all the other islets and rocky outcrops, and the former covering the rest of the main island, including the populated area. The Chico Mendes Institute for the Conservation of the Biodiversity (ICMBio) is the federal agency responsible for the administration, management, inspection, protection and monitoring of all Brazilian National Parks; in the case of Fernando de Noronha, most of the main island and surrounding waters, therefore playing a major role in the lives of the residents. ICMBio oversees all issues related to the archipelago's environmental management and therefore creates another level of governance on the island. With the establishment of the two protected areas, stricter regulations for the use of natural resources around the archipelago were put into place and strict rules regarding visitation were implemented (Oliveira, 2003). A zoning plan for marine activities that includes, among other restrictions, some 'no access' areas, some tracks requiring the presence of authorized guides, and some areas having strict visitation hours, were all put into place almost immediately after the formal creation of these protected areas.

UNESCO recognition of Fernando de Noronha's natural attributes and their significance to humanity was secured in 2001, when the process of creating APAs on the land and waters of the archipelago was already well established. By then, the implementation of the protected areas policy had already impacted strongly on residents through the stark development of tourism, changes in land ownership and use, and revision of marine resource regulations (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2005; Widmer, 2007). The Natural World Heritage designation that came through the formal UNESCO listing process did not, therefore, represent a significant change for the island community or for its tourism industry (Widmer, 2007). The administrative system used to deal with the UNESCO listing was effectively the one already in place for the two protected areas, and so the governance structure was not further affected.

On Lord Howe Island, the context and its historical developments were significantly different. Unlike Brazil, Australia established a *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act* in 1983 and subsequently superseded and incorporated it into the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* of 1999. By doing so, the Australian Government created a regulatory environment for World Heritage Properties that is absent in the Brazilian context. Clear requirements are delineated in the Act, including what management plans should include, how often they should be revised, and how they should be prepared. In addition, this regulatory environment created World Heritage Committees and World Heritage managers for most World Heritage sites in Australia, making their management and integration with other protected areas in the country more efficient. However, on Lord Howe Island, no such committee has been established: the management of World Heritage properties is run by the Board in cooperation with Parks and Wildlife NSW. Although specific issues pertaining to World Heritage properties might not be discussed in isolation, as they are when a specific committee has been set up, the situation of the current management of the Board cooperating directly with community members makes community participation feasible and likely.

### **Conclusion: sustainable futures**

Collaborative governance structures have been shown to provide more sustainable outcomes for communities, particularly within contexts in which tourism and natural heritage

management are of utmost significance to the economic life of that particular society (Mbaiwa, 2004; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Fernando de Noronha and Lord Howe Island are both highly dependent on their natural resources for tourism and, therefore, economic development, with their status as World Natural Heritage sites confirming such significance. However, despite the similarities between them, the two archipelagos have developed significantly different governance strategies that have ultimately defined their current social structures and the success of their environmental conservation efforts and of their tourism industries.

The establishment of World Heritage areas is commonly associated with an increase in tourist visitation and this association is usually made based on the assumption that such a recognition triggers interest from the general population to visit places ‘officially’ considered of universal value (Leask & Fyall, 2002). This assumption seems to be present both on Fernando de Noronha and Lord Howe Island. However, research has repeatedly challenged this assumption (e.g. Poria, Reischel, & Cohen, 2013) and, in the case of both archipelagos, previous studies suggest that no significant increase in annual visitor numbers has occurred as a clear consequence of World Heritage designation (Tisdell & Wilson, 2002; Widmer, 2007). However, despite this lack of evidence of a direct relationship between World Heritage status and tourism numbers, their conservation is paramount for any future development of these isolated oceanic islands that prioritizes environmental stability.

A reasonably well-functioning and participatory governance system operating on Lord Howe Island has enabled the community to contribute to the establishment of strictly adhered rules to conserve the local, natural and social environment, such as capping visitor numbers to 400 at any one time. Although the local tourism industry is debating the limitations and challenges of such a number,<sup>4</sup> the policy is observed and ensured through a monitored limit of available tourist beds on the island. This monitoring is carried out by the tourism association itself, showing its interest and active participation in community matters and its concern to protect local environments.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, although legislation establishes a daily limit of 450 tourists on Fernando de Noronha, there is no system in place to monitor and ensure this cap is adhered to, and research suggests that Fernando de Noronha receives a daily average of 1,400 tourists in high peak seasons (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2008). As rules and regulations are created and implemented, largely without local input and accountability, engagement and adherence are low, directly impacting on the sustainable management of the island.

Thus, despite the challenges that Lord Howe Island still faces, the adoption of a more collaborative governance structure has meant that members of the community have a sense of ownership of their land, including its preservation and, equally significantly, of the tourism industry. On the other hand, the turbulent historical developments and current complex administrative arrangement found on Fernando de Noronha, including a strict, but arguably inefficient, environmental protection system, has had serious implications for basic aspects of the everyday life of residents and for the sustainability of the island and its natural resources.

In sum, the examples provided by these two small oceanic island communities confirm previous research that indicates collaborative forms of governance have the potential to provide better outcomes for the social, environmental and economic sustainability of communities, particularly when management of common-pool resources is involved. More

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<sup>4</sup> A topic indicated to the authors as meriting further research during consultations on the island in early 2013.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to limiting numbers of tourists arriving by air for residential holidays, the association has also used its powers to prevent large cruise boats from calling at Lord Howe Island and discharging a high volume of visitors for short durations.

significantly, the comparison between Fernando de Noronha and Lord Howe Island enabled us to identify that as well as *implementing* systems for collaborative governance, communities need to feel empowered to effectively act in decision-making processes. Otherwise, collaborative governance structures fail to deliver on expectation. Community empowerment, however, requires a conducive governance context. The historical and contemporary analysis provided here attests to the challenges involved in establishing such a context, particularly among small island communities where off-shore players perform a central role in administration and therefore in the lives of residents.

The question that remains is how to create a governance context that facilitates community expression and empowerment and, consequently, community participation in decision-making. The construction and/or enhancement of senses of community is an important step in this process; but much remains to be discussed in terms of the ways in which this can be fostered. In addition, as history has been shown to produce particular ways of being and participating in community affairs, participatory action research ought to feature in this research agenda as it may enable new ways of communication and interaction between community members. Research that supports the development of more empowered individuals and communities may benefit from such an approach.

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