Destination Development in the United States

Emergence and Futures

by

Daniel Clasen

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Christine Vogt, Chair
Kathleen Andereck
Nicole Vaugeois

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ABSTRACT

An emerging group of services and activities provided by some State Tourism Offices (STO) called Destination Development (DDev) programs coincides with a growing practitioner shift from promotion to tourism product development. These programs are largely unexplored models for how STO and local destinations might effectively collaborate to create and manage sustainable tourism destinations. Local communities are the innate touchpoint of tourism experiences and the scale at which most negative impacts of tourism naturally occur. Yet many communities lack resources, expertise, and capacity to endogenously plan, develop, and manage sustainable tourism destinations, which creates a need for external actor involvement—involvement that creates equity and power concerns. State organizations are well-positioned to provide accountable support, but little is known about what STOs can do to best catalyze, facilitate, and support sustainable community destinations. Are DDev Programs the key? To better understand the concept and design of DDev programs, as well as the precise role they play in supporting community destination success, an exploratory case study of four US State Tourism Offices that operate DDev Programs was conducted via purposive, in-depth interviews. Themes within and between the cases were identified, and it was discovered that DDev programming largely emerged from the field of rural development; is positioned as a key complement to destination marketing; and has engendered a highly collaborative community of practice that desires greater structure and professional support.

DEDICATION

Descend the moons (Dear Partner of my Life)

Forming bright steps to the empyreal world

O scene of splendor

O fire

-adapted from William Cowper's "Adam: A Sacred Drama"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is an emerging group of services and activities provided by some State Tourism Offices (STOs) called Destination Development (DDev) programs that coincide with a growing practitioner shift from promotion to tourism product development. These programs are largely unexplored models for how STOs and local communities might effectively collaborate to create and manage sustainable tourism destinations. Local communities are the innate touchpoint of tourism experiences and the scale at which most negative impacts of tourism naturally occur. Yet many communities lack resources, expertise, and capacity to endogenously plan, develop, and manage sustainable tourism destinations, which creates a need for external actor involvement—involvement that creates equity and power concerns. State organizations are well-positioned to provide accountable support, but little is known about what leadership STOs can offer to best catalyze, facilitate, and support sustainable community destinations.

Despite common general usage of the phrase "destination development" in academic literature, there has been little work to establish DDev as a conceptually unique approach by identifying fundamental characteristics that would allow for evaluation of whether a particular model *is* or *is not* a "destination development" program. The number of states (and non-state organizations) offering newly created adaptations and variations of DDev programs or considering the creation of such programs is growing, which illustrates an increasing trend of practitioner interest and adoption. Yet without a standard understanding of what components these programs should include or a pragmatic toolbox of resources for successful design and implementation, organizations risk wasting valuable resources by 'reinventing the wheel' or implementing suboptimal or problematic systems. This need for facilitation of and support for local destination communities has only increased with anticipated

post-COVID-19 travel demand shifting towards smaller, peripheral, rural destinations. In alignment with institutional values at Arizona State University and recognizing the importance of mobilizing academic research for social benefit, this is a prime opportunity for tourism academia to support tourism practitioners with the identification of best practices alongside efforts to operationalize research findings.

Effective tourism planning and development at a community level is important to support the statewide tourism experience, as well as to optimize local community benefits and minimize negative impacts (Dredge & Jamal, 2015). But many communities lack the experience, resources, and expertise to successfully organize endogenously (Moscardo, 2005). Given that public entities are generally more accountable and responsible for the public good, STOs occupy an important stewardship role for supporting local communities, particularly when considering how they can benefit from advantages in scale, financial resources, and expertise. However, external agency involvement in tourism and community development is accompanied by a variety of threats to community equity and empowerment, including unintentional domination of decisions, creation of dependency, or misguided cookie-cutter advice. Support efforts must recognize and work to mitigate these risks (Moscardo, 2005).

During fall of 2019, a review of STO websites in the United States identified eight states with "tourism development," "destination development," or assessment/planning programs. "Destination Development" was the primary term used to describe this type of community tourism support activity performed by STOs. One of the organizations, Travel Oregon (2020, paragraph 2), describes their DDev support as providing "planning, training and coaching to help communities create a shared vision to advance and manage tourism in their region." Some states lacked clear descriptions altogether.

The participative, community-oriented methods employed by DDev programs seem to directly overlap with Community Based Tourism (CBT) approaches, as well as aligning with Hall's (2008) analysis of the historical progression of community and sustainable planning. With its triple-bottom-line thinking, CBT is generally considered a key method to develop contemporary sustainable tourism (Okazaki, 2008). The bulk of recent CBT literature primarily focuses on "developing" nations, and when developed nations have been discussed, US locations are less prevalent (Zielinski, Jeong, Kim, & Milanés, 2020). State DDev programs may occupy an unexplored space as practical applications of CBT development within a domestic US setting.

While CBT is extensively discussed in various official capacities, DDev is only loosely defined. The single definition discovered was outside the delimited population of US organizations. It is apparent that practitioners are implementing "destination development programs," but there is no explicit articulation of what these programs should entail and what best practices might look like. This lack of unified conceptual foundation coincides with nonexistent discussion of DDev programs and little discussion of stateside tourism development programs within academic research in recent years. Historically, study of state tourism development programs, the most closely related topic to DDev, is sparse (Ariwa & Syversten, 2010; Luloff, 1994; Van Hoof, 1996).

A common, fundamentally important, and perhaps conceptually necessary element of DDev programs is community-based planning. In the United States, community tourism planning services have sometimes been provided by land-grant university extension services. For this reason, the relationship between extension programs and STO DDev and community planning programs warrants further exploration (Brown, 2005). Additionally, extension programs have a rich legacy of work around rural community and tourism development. Rural development needs play a clear role in the emergence of DDev programs, as evidenced by the targeting

of rural communities and inclusion of language specifically related to rural tourism with DDev documents.

It is important to note that this topic suffers from a great deal of ambiguity that emerges from the inherent non-discrete nature of DDev conceptualization. The difficulty in finding existing literature on the topic of "destination development" as a bounded *approach*, in the way practitioner resources have framed it, seems to be due to the fact that "destination development" is largely not considered a discrete concept. Exemplifying this is the distinction between the phrases "doing Destination Development" and "developing this destination." While the phrase "destination development" is abundantly present within tourism research, it is largely used in the unbounded, generic way. A brief review of research on the methodology of conceptualization (Goertz, 2006; Sartori, 1970) reinforces this as an underlying factor. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to posit an empirically sound, newly formed concept, but the steps inherent to the conceptualization process intersect with the goals of this research in a manner that provides helpful framing and context. Accordingly, some language and theoretical perspective can be borrowed from the literature on concept formation. In developing working definitions and descriptions to move this research forward, steps will be taken towards concept formation, but any results will be largely fuzzy, and will require further sharpening through future research.

Research Problem

The research problem of this study is to understand and describe the emergence and nature of state-level DDev programs in select US states, with the goal of identifying data to improve the performance of current programs and encourage the creation of new programs.

A working definition for DDev programs will be loosely conceptualized as STO activities that support planning, education, community benefit, community capacity,

and strategic needs-based tourism development activities, predominantly through a supply-side and community-development lens. As definitions of "destination development" and "destination development programs" lack consistency, this study aims to propose a more meaningful definition after data analysis. DDev is an approach that draws on practices such as participative community planning, tourism marketing, economic development policy, and product development, but seems to synthesize them through a lens of community development and CBT equity, emphasizing the importance of local capacity. Yet much of the research on CBT is framed in an international context, with fewer case studies exploring similar CBT principles in the United States and similar settings.

Research Purpose

Across the United States there are state-level tourism offices operating community tourism development programs. A number of these STOs are regarded as exemplary and award-winning Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and are looked to for replication. This is particularly true when STOs shift away from strictly promotional thinking and towards improving the quality of tourism product and supply and begin to give greater thought to whether and how tourism improves community quality of life and place.

As it stands, new programs being created or considered are adopting the "Destination Development" name, but there is no standard recognition of what components and processes these programs should include. Realistically, there seems to be no clear understanding of practices, let alone *best* practices. Moreover, despite the presence of tourism offices in each state, modern research into practical success factors for such organizations is few and far between.

If interest in these programs and associated state offices continues to grow, practitioners would greatly benefit from a more unified understanding of how to successfully implement and manage such programs, improve programs already

established, or perhaps even catalyze political and community constituencies to induce the creation of these programs.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its destabilizing impacts on tourism systems, many recovery plans are anticipating greater demand for rural destinations (BVK, 2020)—a somewhat concerning prospect when complicated by the fact that rural communities can be particularly susceptible to the negative impacts of tourism (Cawley and Gillmor, 2008), as they often lack the resources to adequately prepare, plan, and develop endogenously (Moscardo 2005), and are in some cases reluctant to welcome an influx of outsiders while recovering from a contagious pandemic (KTCB, 2020). Moreover, as recovery from the pandemic continues and visitation begins to rebound, destinations may wish to better manage the impact of tourists and possibly improve tourism supply to strengthen their recovery potential.

The overall aim of this research is to empirically improve understanding, definition, and description of DDev programs in order to create resources that will help state tourism practitioners efficiently and successfully catalyze and support sustainable community tourism (particularly in a post-COVID, resilience-salient landscape) while avoiding "reinventing the wheel" or implementing suboptimal or problematic systems. Furthermore, to better understand DDev programs it is crucial to understand what is entailed by the *concept* of DDev, where the practice originated, and what other concepts may be related to DDev.

Research Questions

The overall research questions are structured around six categories that aim to understand how DDev programs relate to other literature and practice, what the process of creation and management entails, common elements and activities, and what advice and resources would be most beneficial for future provision.

1. **Context:** How is DDev conceptualized? How do DDev programs relate to the broader literature, tourism knowledge, academia, and other programs?

2. **Why** were these programs created (catalyzed) in each case? What is the purpose of the program, as well as the purpose of the STO itself?

3. **What** activities do these programs entail? What are similarities and differences between the programs at different STOs?

4. **How** did the process of creating, managing, and evaluating programs look within and between cases? What were big barriers and how were they overcome?

5. **Evaluation:** How are benefits and outcomes measured? How is political and budgetary value shown?

6. **Mobilization:** How can these findings be interpreted and packaged so that they can help induce new programs and improve existing programs?

Working Definitions

Destination Development

DDev will be considered an approach to tourism support that holistically emphasizes activities such as master/strategic planning, bottom-up participatory community involvement, and triple-bottom-line thinking, with a primary goal of fostering independence and community ownership of tourism efforts through

empowerment and improving community *capacity*. DDev can potentially occur at different scales (local, regional, national), but relies on a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the destination as a complex tourism system. While DDev largely focuses on tourism supply and product, it often requires strategic attention to marketing and visitor segments—but marketing or promotion alone is insufficient to qualify as DDev (Destination British Columbia, 2020; Travel Oregon, 2020). This working definition of Destination Development stands apart from the more common general usage of "destination development" in academic literature. As discussed earlier, this usage, meaning "development of a tourism destination," is a byproduct of unspecific conceptualization.

While most commonly referred to as "Destination Development," other naming conventions include "Community Based Tourism," "Local Tourism Development," or "Rural Tourism Development" (Arizona Office of Tourism, 2019). For the purposes of this research, "Destination Development" will be used as a blanket term that refers to efforts generally meeting the criteria listed above. Recognizing this particularly loose working definition, a desired goal of this research is to identify a more clearly articulated definition and lay the foundation for future conceptualization efforts.

Destination Development Programs

Wholey (2010, p. 5) defines a program as "a set of resources and activities directed toward one or more common goals, typically under the direction of a single manager or management team." For the purposes of this study, DDev programs will be understood as systematic programmatic activities that seek to provide DDev support in an intentional and comprehensive way. Ad-hoc, partial (e.g., stand-alone asset evaluation), or intermittent projects that meet DDev criteria would not qualify as a fully operationalized DDev program. There has been an abundance of research on the topic of tourism planning, which is relevant to the *content* within DDev

programs, but the key distinction is that DDev programs are a system for facilitating and supporting *other* entities to engage in the specific planning best practices. This relationship is analogous to the distinction between studying the content of a course and studying the structure of the course itself.

Travel Oregon's (2020) website describes their DDev services as providing "planning, training and coaching to help communities create a shared vision to advance and manage tourism in their region.[…and helping them shape the way they share their piece of Oregon with the world]" This does not articulate a specific definition, but provides a wealth of implied meaning, touching on methods of support, the expected positionality and role of the state, and the inclusion of marketing (demand) planning.

Destination British Columbia's (2020) (DBC) website posits a definition: "Destination development is the strategic planning and advancement of defined areas to support the evolution of desirable destinations for travelers, with a sole focus on the supply side of tourism, by providing compelling experiences, quality infrastructure, and remarkable services to entice repeat visitation." However, the "sole focus" on tourism supply does not fully align with the efforts of other programs, which illustrates the complexity that stems from lacking a standardized understanding.

While the DBC definition could be considered incomplete, it is powerful and provides a framework that can be supplemented with the Travel Oregon description to create a working definition. A somewhat complicated positionality of DDev is as follows: current best practices in tourism planning recognize the importance of *bottom-up* methods, but by viewing tourism planning and development through a state lens and trying to scale bottom-up approaches, this creates a need for *top-down* administration of efforts to catalyze and support bottom-up activities.

State Tourism Office

The UNWTO (2004 p. 3) defines a Destination Management/Marketing Organization (DMO) as "an organization responsible for the management and/or marketing of destinations" and continues that a Regional, Provincial, or State DMO is "responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism in a geographic region defined for that purpose, sometimes but not always an administrative of local government region such as a county, state, or province" (UNWTO, 2004, p. 3).

Of key importance is that, like other regional DMOs, an STO oversees multiple local destinations that often have their own local or sub-state regional DMO entities. As federal support and oversight has diminished, many responsibilities have been pushed to the state level (England, 2017; Hall, 2008), often resulting in US STOs operating more like national entities in other places.

Delimitations

The search for definitions and descriptions is expansive, as DDev efforts outside of or at a non-state level within the United States will be useful to inform the conceptualization process. However, all information will be evaluated through a lens of applicability to state-level DDev programs in the United States.

The primary cases are delimited to STOs with identified DDev programs within the United States.

Limitations

This ultimate interest in US application skews the synthesis towards more-developed, Western nations. Of primary concern, the focus on the term "Destination Development" may be overlooking relevant examples that used other phrases or terms. Additionally, due to the highly inductive nature of the research, there is a large degree of subjective interpretation and greater need for intuited working definitions, which amplifies the impact of authorial positionality and reflexivity.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research seeks to understand the practitioner-driven phenomena of state Destination Development (DDev) programs as an approach to community-based tourism development. This understanding will be pursued through a bottom-up inductive approach, using program documentation and interviews with program staff to clarify key themes and processes. Per Creswell and Creswell (2018) the literature will be used "sparingly in the beginning in order to convey an inductive design" (p. 28). As themes emerge, they will be refined and then related to the academic literature.

Recognizing that the term "Destination Development program" is not positioned as a discrete topic of inquiry within literature, it is lacking academic discussion in this particular form; however, some trends and related concepts might be inferred. DDev programs often have a primary goal of improving local economies through holistic tourism planning and development, with planning occurring as an integral foundation to subsequent development. These programs are managed by state-level, semi-public organizations. Some DDev programs include discussion of triple-bottom-line sustainability.

DDev programs can be considered a type of tourism development program. Previous approaches to tourism development are closely related to rural decline and revitalization efforts in the late 1900s (Ballesteros & Hernández, 2018; Brown, 2005; Luloff, 1994). The literature on tourism development programs is not particularly well codified either: while there is a greater abundance of literature, the exact points of relation between DDev programs and the breadth of work on general tourism development efforts is fuzzy at best.

The approaches used by the best-known state DDev programs have apparent similarities to international Community Based Tourism (CBT) efforts that center

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around community involvement and ownership, building local capacity, and empowerment. While there is an abundance of research into specific cases of CBT, exploration of cross-case themes is still a growing field (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018).

Preliminary Themes in Destination Development

Rural Tourism in the United States

Many rural and urban communities are still struggling from the loss of natural resources and manufacturing economies as the United States shifted towards a Post-Fordist service economy decades ago (Brown, 2004; Cawley & Gillmor, 2008).

Recovery has been uneven; while some urban centers have large levels of growth, other cities and many rural communities continue to struggle with depopulation and a lack of economic diversity. Recognizing that, globally, similar economic and social issues are not limited to rural communities, and not all rural communities necessarily experience these issues, Moscardo (2005) re-positioned the issue around the geographic equity concept of "peripheral" regions: areas that lack economic and political power and are thus on the "periphery" rather than an element of the "core."

Even in popular and successful communities, both urban and rural, issues of wealth inequality, housing, and uncontrolled development have emerged. While the issues in struggling peripheral communities are more closely associated with declining populations, a lack of municipal funds, and an erosion of community pride, the issues associated with success are related to planning, impact management, community empowerment, and social wellbeing.

Tourism in general has frequently been discussed as a tool for economic diversification and a way to address the aforementioned issues (Gartner, 2004). Moreover, some rural communities that were previously unable to pursue trendy redevelopment efforts, such as suburbanization or malls, are now in high demand by tourists who are seeking unique "authentic" experiences. Yet, tourism fails to be a

universal panacea, as there can be many negative impacts associated with uncritical and unmanaged tourism development (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008).

Sustainable Tourism and Local Community

Sustainable tourism development continues to be recognized as a key tool for economic development and diversification (Hall, 2008; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; UNWTO, 2020), particularly in developing nations. Historically, approaches often framed goals strictly around ecological sustainability, frequently ignoring or even directly clashing with local community values and economic needs (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). Responding to criticism and evidence of negative outcomes, newer approaches to sustainable tourism development recognize the importance of community partnership and triple-bottom-line thinking that highlights the intersectional nature of economic, social, and environmental wellbeing.

Out of efforts to address ethical implications and improve practical outcomes Community Based Tourism (CBT) emerged as a tourism development approach to encourage planning and growth that represents community interests and agency (Jamal & Getz, 1994). Most tourism supply development inherently happens at a local level (Gunn, 2002; Hall, 2008), and many of the negative impacts of tourism directly manifest there as well. Simultaneously, the benefits of tourism can fail to emerge if not intentionally and effectively planned and designed for (Reid et al., 2004).

CBT efforts have been criticized for failing to create successful development results as well as treating communities as homogenous, which can falsely imply universal consensus that masks local inequity and power imbalances (Blackstock, 2005; Tosun, 2000). This assumption of homogeneity can be amplified within rural communities, as they are sometimes discussed as a singular group in popular discourse (Vaugeois, 2018). Recognizing and working to address these criticisms, CBT has remained popular as a key tool to drive sustainable tourism and economic

development (Asker, 2010; Novelli, 2017; Zielinski, Kim, Botero, & Yanes, 2018). The overall emergence and revision of CBT seems to be closely related to Community Development principles (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012).

As part of this shift towards recognizing issues and failings with CBT *implementation* there has been a growing amount of research looking closely at success factors and barriers in developing CBT (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018; Zielinski et al., 2018). This attention to practical implementation has led to the identification of general needs that certain types of communities have, as well as recognition that individual communities often have separate, unique needs. The importance of identifying both general and community-specific needs then illustrates the necessity of reviewing literature on general needs, along with more dynamic systems that allow organizations to assess and tailor programs to specific communities (Vaugeois, 2018).

Tourism Planning Approaches

A brief overview of the evolution of tourism planning shows a trend towards the imperative of "successful, intentional implementation" and positive, sustainable, and long-term outcomes (Hall, 2008). DDev programs seem to be positioned as a practical application of this thinking. In broad terms, tourism planning and approaches have transitioned from uncritical growth emphasis to economic sectoral planning, to environmental planning, to community planning, and into sustainable planning. Each of the transitions roughly follows a sentiment that it is not sufficient to assume automatic benefits from the previous approach (e.g., growth, industry sectors, environmental zoning, community involvement). For example, in the transition from community planning to sustainability planning, it is not enough to uncritically involve the community; they need to be involved equitably *and* be given the tools and training to succeed. So how can that be done?

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Of note, during preliminary data collection to identify ideal STO cases, a sweeping classification as "boosterism" seemed to emerge across STOs, with marginal inclusion of economic thinking and dramatically less land-use, community, or sustainable approaches (Hall, 2008). The STOs with DDev programs seem to be some of the few (seven out of fifty) that fell into an environmental, community, or sustainable planning approach, almost collapsing into binary poles that largely integrated multiple elements of Hall's categories at one time, with few qualities of a gradient or spectrum. It was noted that even within a largely "booster" perspective that holds promotion as the ultimate purpose and budget item, a gradual recognition of tourism supply has emerged—if the tourism experience that a destination is heavily promoting struggles from quality issues, then the advertising dollars are less effective and possibly even counterproductive. This resonates with the author's anecdotal experiences at hospitality industry events, where concerns about "market-readiness" were raised.

This seems to accompany a larger argument in tourism literature about whether sustainable tourism is a tourism industry that sustains itself, or an effort that exists directly to sustain a community—leaving space to hypothetically reduce tourism operations if they harmed the community's long-term sustainability (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

State Roles and Tourism

As 1980s Reaganism in the United States laid the foundation for greater neoliberalism and pushed for less federal involvement, something colloquially known as "fend for yourself federalism" emerged, and many responsibilities were pushed to state-level government (England, 2017; Harvey, 1989). While this was accompanied by a greater emphasis on public-private partnerships and having industry take lead in many arenas, states too have played an increasingly more central role in development within their borders and subsequently wield larger amounts of

economic and soft power (England, 2017; Ruhanen, 2013). This creates a somewhat unique situation for United States tourism, where STOs occupy a role that is similar to that of National Tourism Offices in other countries while still largely having characteristics of Regional Tourism Offices, but not fully having the mandated powers and policy scope that come at a national level (UNWTO, 2004). Particularly when exploring policy, tourism literature largely discusses roles and responsibilities at a national scale and thus pays more attention to higher-level efforts around tax incentives, border policy, and business climate (Hall, 2008). At the other extreme, much of the remaining tourism literature has been focused on highly local theory, impacts, and cases. Yet, across the board, the role of government in development issues is largely framed as **catalytic**, **facilitative**, and **supportive** (England, 2017; Ruhanen, 2013). A polarized emphasis on abstract national policy and highly fragmented local cases creates something of a missing-middle literature, where less attention has been paid to identifying methods of systematizing state (that occupy roles of a STO *and* RTO) support for local community success. In light of local tourism success factor literature that identifies a large need for external agents to provide resource, expertise, and other capacity support for local communities (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018; Moscardo, 2005; Zielinski et al., 2018), the state is exceptionally well-positioned to occupy this role. Because of the expectation that they will act as catalyst, facilitator, and support, states have the *mandate* and *accountability* to work for equitable public benefit on an *ongoing* basis, as well as the scale and legal power to mobilize resources and expertise for local communities (Richter, 1985; Ruhanen, 2013).

DMO Roles and Responsibilities

Historically, competition between tourism destinations was less intense, and tourism performance was mainly considered a matter of awareness. Accordingly, DMOs focused on place promotion and convention recruitment (Ritchie & Crouch,

2003). Within the body of academic literature, a shift from marketing to management has occurred, but has inconsistently been adopted in practitioner spheres. There seems to be powerful inertia at play that keeps most DMOs operating as industry-led Destination *Marketing* Organizations, or even Destination *Promotion* Organizations, that simply focus on advertising and promotion while neglecting the more systematic, strategic elements of true *marketing* work (such as data-driven segment profiles, or a full marketing mix). An even more recent shift in DMO literature is recognizing the growing importance of the DMMO as a networker: an organization that brings together diverse community stakeholders to strengthen vertical and horizontal connections for the community, as a focus on management and product development requires greater integration with local businesses, government, and residents (Pike & Page, 2014). In many ways, this diminishes the top-down expert role of a DMMO and substitutes a more collaborative framework, aligning with the equity concerns that are present in modern CBT thinking.

Tourism development has primarily been considered the role of private industry, and government involvement in development may often be envisioned as "command and control" with government directly building and operating an attraction, conflicting with strong market-based sentiments. However, the role of public sector involvement in tourism and tourism development can be far more nuanced and has long deserved greater study as a valuable public administration tool for tourism (Richter, 1985).

Program Design and Evaluation

Given that exemplary DDev programs typically manifest as a structured offering (workshops or assessments), an understanding of program design and evaluation is useful. Greene (1994) describes methods for evaluating programs tied to different philosophical frameworks. The field of Program Evaluation has a number of theories that guide the process of designing and evaluating programs. While

outcome evaluation is beyond the scope of this study, the conceptual underpinnings that are used to identify and define programs might be useful for articulating what makes DDev efforts unique (Boyle, 1981; Coryn, Noakes, Westine, & Schröter, 2011). Ideally, the foundation that this exploratory study creates will allow for subsequent research on evaluation and outcome measurement.

Destination Development as a Comprehensive and Holistic Concept

The practitioner concept of DDev seems to be a complex amalgamation of numerous disciplines including CBT, economic development, community development, urban planning and design, placemaking, and place marketing. All these approaches are synthesized through a lens of tourism, but without DDev's consideration as a discrete approach to local tourism development, there is no conceptual target that would encourage academic research to explicitly explore how these topics relate.

Harvey (1989) provides an abstract-yet-powerful description of the conceptual intersectionality of framing a community as a Destination: "the task of urban governance is, in short, to lure highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space." Tourism is just one of many consumption flows, and one that can induce further production and financial development.

Other Potential Themes in Destination Development

Literature on DMO roles, responsibilities, and structures has also helped create a foundation for DDev, further detailed in Table 2.1. Much of this literature posits an expansion of what a Tourism Office's ideal purpose should be, from meeting and convention recruitment, to general leisure, to conservation practices, to community preservation, and—in recent discussion — providing visionary tourism leadership and networking (Pike & Page, 2014).

Supply-side emphasis is a hallmark of DDev. This can be attributed not only to the history of tourism planning texts, but also the US farm and rural economic

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crisis. The efforts of 1980s rural and redevelopment programs ushered in a number of development-oriented programs, some of which have gradually faded; others have found themselves subsumed into particular departments, such as the Forest Service and USDA, which reduces visibility for those who operate exclusively within a tourism realm, and further fragments the field's literature.

Each of these threads acts as an ingredient in the recipe for DDev, so while they have their own individual academic lineages, an exploration of what topics and how Destination Development brings them together is the 'recipe' this research is interested in crafting. In reviewing the DDev-related programs that eight US states offer, initial themes were identified, which were synthesized with documentation from Travel Oregon and Destination British Columbia to manufacture a working definition. The individual components each have a rich record of study within tourism academia, with many naturally emerging in an iterative fashion from previous findings (land use planning to asset-based planning) or converging with other related topics and disciplines (tourism planning, politics, and community equity).

Strategic and Master Planning serves as the backbone for much of what defines Destination Development, this literature can be traced to early texts by Blank (1989), Inskeep (1991), Gunn (2002), and more recently Hall (2008), with many of these resources originating as practitioner-oriented texts. Paradigm shifts in planning and placemaking theory have informed the practice of tourism planning, though at varying rates (Hall, 2008; Lew, 2017). The planning literature has been further informed by the study of international planning and development. For example, the transition from problematic top-down conservation efforts to community-oriented planning, which created the underlying principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT).

Table 2.1 *Possible Elements of Destination Development*

Table 2.1 Possible Elements of Destination Development	
Planning	
Traditions: History & Characteristics	Hall (2003) Chapter 3: Tables 3.2 and 3.3
Community Based Tourism (CBT)	
Sustainability	Asker (2010); Blackstock (2005); Goodwin & Santilli (2009); Okazaki (2008); Tosun (2000); Zielinski et al. (2018)
Social, Economic, Environmental	
Bottom Up, Participatory	
Networks & Collaboration	
State Role	
Assistance: Technical, Financial, Data	Hall (2008); Pike & Page (2014); Richter (1985); Luloff (1994)
Local Role	
Expanded Supply Focus	Hall (2008)
Capacity: Training, Education	Moscardo (2005)
Leadership: Visionary, Operational	Pike & Page (2014)
Success Factors	Moscardo (2005); Dodds, Ali, & Galaski (2018); Zielinski et al. (2018)

Research Gap

Academic literature recognizes that successful sustainable tourism development at a local scale is of primary importance, this is accompanied by an understanding that local communities require external (non-local) support, and an argument that state organizations are uniquely suited for this role. Yet a directed, comprehensive understanding of steps and models for facilitating and supporting local tourism success is lacking. This is the identified research gap and exploring popular Destination Development programs currently in operation is the means to bridge this gap.

Without unpacking the conceptual black box that is DDev programs, the gap can only be broadly articulated, as detailed by Figure 2.1. To unpack DDev programs, their context, components, and elements must be identified and related back to the

corpus of tourism literature and practice, with a specific emphasis on practical

implementation.

A   B

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   ┌─────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐
   │  State  │      │             ???              │      │    Local    │
   │ Tourism │◄────►│ Destination Development Programs │◄──►│  Community  │
   │ Offices │      │                              │      │   Tourism   │
   └─────────┘      │             Gap              │      └─────────────┘
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
   Literature              Explored through data.              Literature
   exists                                                      exists
                    A sharper understanding of what DD
                    programs 'are' will allow for greater insight
                    into precisely how it brings A and B together
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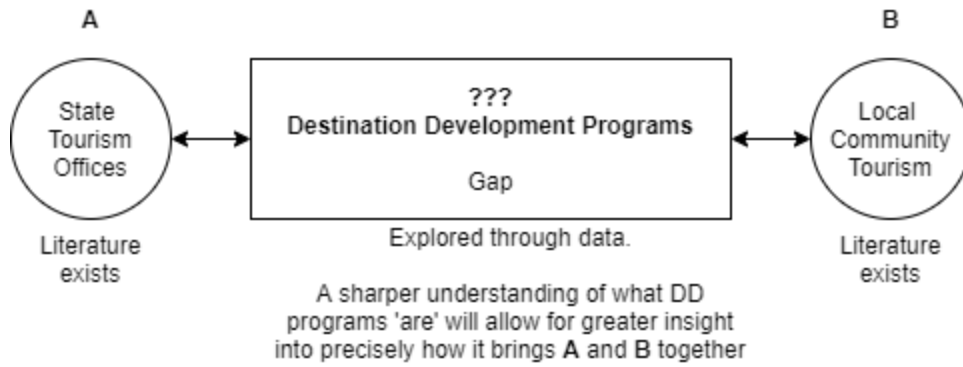
Figure 2.1 – Visualizing the Literature Gap

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology

While a few pioneering Destination Development (DDev) programs have

existed for over a decade, there are still relatively few across the United States, and

those that do exist have different components, names, and structures. This

inconsistent design and conceptualization are further complicated by a lack of

academic research or external documentation of these state programs. Because

there are few pre-defined concepts for this inquiry, the research design will be

deeply rooted in an *exploratory qualitative approach*. As part of a foundation for

future research, this study seeks to understand how particular informants

conceptualize and frame their work on DDev, recognizing a constructionist

epistemological belief that meaning is derived through interaction with the world

(Crotty, 1998). Additionally, the desire to mold methods to an existent, yet new,

problem lends itself to a pragmatic worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and

further reliance on qualitative methodology.

Qualitative research is most appropriate for developing new topics of inquiry

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Due to the minimal academic literature and lack of

standardized key search terms, an inductive exploratory approach was necessary,

concluding further literature review at the end of the research that will relate

emergent themes to the larger body of academia. One of the traits of inductive

qualitative research is that it can be highly emergent, meaning that aspects of the

design should be anticipated as malleable, and open to iterative changes as the

research progresses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, as this study is

qualitative and exploratory in nature, it will not be tying itself to a particular

informing theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), but instead seeks to identify relevant

theories when relating findings to broader research during the concluding literature

review. The intention of this study is to provide a cursory look into the current 'black box' of Destination Development programs and lay a foundation for more expansive future deductive studies, ones that can address relevant theories.

Methods

A qualitative comparative multiple-case study design was utilized. A comparative case study is a form of multiple case study where cases are selected for the purpose of analyzing similarities and differences (Goodrick, 2014). The research includes multiple cases because each program in question occurs within a different contextual setting (Baxter & Jack, 2010). The research question and phenomena of inquiry align well with Yin's (2003) position that case-studies are most appropriate when "a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (p.9).

The aim of this research is not to conduct a full case analysis of the State Tourism Offices as complete organizational systems, but to understand the characteristics and emergence of a specific category of programming provided by the case organizations, positioning the program and organization process around the program as the unit of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2010).

Data were collected using semi-structured, key-informant interviews. Qualitative interviews are most appropriate when doing research to 'explore new issues in depth' (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Further data was collected through content analysis of STO industry documents and used to inform the preliminary script development.

Case Selection

A review of all 50 US State tourism offices identified several that fully or partially met the working criteria for Destination Development. Except in cases where the terminology Destination Development was explicitly used, the decision to include a state was largely based on how many offerings they provided and how the content

and delivery methods were described (Table 3.1). One case was initially included because they offered a "Destination Development Grant", but the actual description of the grant left little flexibility for planning or other services and seemed to predominantly exist as physical site development funds – further evidence of the confusion resulting from the generic phrasing of 'destination development.'

Table 3.1 *Destination Development Inclusion Criteria*

Destination Development Inclusion Criteria
Explicit DDev Department or Staff*
Resources Labeled DDev*
Community Planning Support
Product Development
Community Assessments
Flexible Grants
*(All explicit mentions resulted in automatic inclusion, followed by evaluation for *contra*indications)

Based on the above criteria, after IRB approval (Appendix A) four cases were selected and contacted (Appendix B), each offering unique insights into the genesis, spread, and management of Destination Development programs. Two cases – Eastern State 2 (E2) are Western State 2 (W2) are considered innovators in the field, with programs in operation for over a decade. Conversely, Eastern State 1 (E1) and Western State 1 (W1) have newer programs and look to have adapted their designs from E2 and W2.

Case Profiles

Table 3.2 *STO Case Details*

Western State 1 (W1)	**DDev start date: 2016**

- Particularly structured workshop sequences that targeted specific segments at a destination, organization, and individual scale
- This case featured a more developed emphasis on 'methodology'

Western State 2 (W2)	**DDev start date: 2005**

- Has iteratively experimented with a variety of models, frameworks, and focuses. Operates tourism workshops as a salient convening model
- Serves as a primary 'model' that other DDev programs are highly aware of and have frequently modeled their own programs on
- Has collaborated or supported each other STO case

Eastern State 1 (E1)	**DDev start date: 2015**

- Flexible and lean model. Minimal expenses and ideal model of how DDev can operate with minimal staff
- Operates DDev Workshop in partnership with a nonprofit entity

Eastern State 2 (E2)	**DDev start date: 2005**

- Particularly strong business and product development programming, exemplified by a funding framework that other STO informants were familiar with
- Features multiple regional staff familiar with and embedded in local communities

Procedure and Measures

To maintain flexibility, overly structured anticipation of methods was avoided. However, while the precise version of questions and interview flow fluctuated, the overall goal of the data collection was structured around two primary topics, one descriptive, and the other operational. Descriptive information sought to identify what the programs entailed (elements and properties), while Operational information identified how these elements and properties were implemented and managed, both were combined to understand how the elements, properties, and processes might inform the creation of a new DDev program.

An initial semi-structured interview script was developed in collaboration with project advisors. A pilot set of interviews was done to verify the relevance of the initial questions. In addition to exploring the intended questions, these pilot interviews provided insight into how different groups conceptualize DDev and DDev Programs.

As defined above, DDev programs were generally identified as tourism development activities that target a local scale, provide support beyond grants, offer community-based tourism planning, and focus on building capacity.

Sampling

Key-informants were identified at organizations with two categories of information in mind: 1) design and genesis of the programs, and 2) management and evaluation of the programs. This divide in responsibility created the need to recruit six total participants between the four offices.

Key-informant interviews are driven by the principles of **purposive sampling**, which is important when only some members of a target population have the relevant information and a probabilistic sampling method might reduce the validity and accuracy of the data (Tongco, 2007). Precautions were taken to frame discussion in a positive manner, emphasis was placed on the emerging practices and thought processes, to avoid framing any programs of organizations as "non-innovative" or as representative of a non-desirable state. Appropriate informants included individuals who work directly within a DDev department, on a DDev program, helped design and implement DDev programs, and/or were involved in the decision to develop a DDev approach. Per emergent qualitative design, a clearer understanding of ideal specific informants emerged as preparation of protocol and pilot interviews proceeded.

Data Collection Methods

The primary mode of data collection was interview-based. After informants were briefed and signed consent forms, a semi-structured 60-to-90-minute interview was conducted with each key informant via Zoom, an internet-based video chat service. One interview was conducted via Zoom but was audio only.

The interviews were recorded through Zoom and a backup phone recorder, and then reviewed and transcribed using a transcription service called Sonix.ai. STO websites and STO DDev documents were reviewed for additional information to inform and supplement the interviews.

Operationalizing Research Questions

The primary Research Questions were used to inform the outline of a script for the interviews. The interviews were semi-scripted, with guiding and framing questions, but with an expectation to progress in an open-ended manner (Appendix C). The content of the interview can be categorized into six main sections:

1. **Context:** How is DDev conceptualized? How do DDev programs relate to the broader literature, tourism knowledge, academia, and other programs?

2. **Why** were these programs created (catalyzed) in each case? What is the purpose of the program, as well as the purpose of the STO itself?

3. **What** activities do these programs entail? What are similarities and differences between the programs at different STOs?

4. **How** did the process of creating, managing, and evaluating programs look within and between cases? What were big barriers and how were they overcome?

5. **Evaluation:** How are benefits and outcomes measured? How is political and budgetary value shown?

6. **Mobilization:** How can these findings be interpreted and packaged so that they can help induce new programs and improve existing programs?

Questions were generally categorized according to the main theme they were exploring, but for the purposes of the interview flow, sometimes broken into different areas. A helpful approach for the interviews was soliciting questions from 'newer' cases that were then asked of 'older' cases and soliciting advice from 'older' cases on things that 'newer' cases might not be aware of.

Refining Research Questions:

- What is the process of creating and managing a DDev Program? (How)
- What are key activities and elements in Destination Development Programs? (What)
- How are Destination Development programs related to academic literature? (Context)
- How are Destination Development programs related to other practices? (Context)
- What are key success factors and inhibitors for DDev programs? (Evaluation)
- How best practices for Destination Development programs can be established? (Evaluation & Design)
- What are the cogent arguments for organizing and implementing Destination Development programs at a state level? At a community/destination level? (Mobilization)
- What is the conceptual meaning of Destination Development within DDev programs? (Context)

1. **Exploration of the *Process* around Destination Development Programs**

   a. What catalyzed the program?

b. What has the planning process looked like so far? What resources did they use? What resources would have been most useful? What would they do differently?

2. **Exploration of the *Characteristics* and *Elements* of Destination Development Programs**

   a. What would you describe as the core elements of your DDev program? Other non-core elements?

   b. What makes something DDev or not-DDev?

3. **Identification of Success Factors and Barriers for the creation and management of Destination Development Programs**

   a. Questions about the design stage will overlap here.

   b. Was some sort of needs assessment done? Details?

4. **Contextualization of Destination Development Programs – in relation to academic literature, history, and practice**

   a. Earlier questions about contributing resources and most wanted resources will relate to this.

   b. What, if any, academic literature played a role in their work? Roles of DMOs, CBT, success factors, case studies, etc.

   c. Any key practitioner models or literature, including how you frame their program in relation to other state's offerings?

   d. State, national, and other history influences?

5. **The meaning and conceptual underpinning of "Destination Development"**

   a. How do you understand and define "Destination Development" and "Destination Development Programs"?

   b. Earlier answers regarding characteristics and elements will play roles here.

Additionally, some administrative information was reviewed including the funding structure of the organization, the nature of their official mandate, and the type of organization (public, public/private, etc.).

Data Interpretation

Data were then analyzed, themed, and coded aided by the qualitative analysis software NVIVO. Member checking and peer debriefing were utilized to strengthen the qualitative validity of the findings and conclusions (Creswell, 2018; Tracy, 2010). The cleaned data and preliminary themes were reviewed by committee members and an outside auditor to ensure consistent interrater reliability. Participants were then contacted to review and approve the final identified themes, featured quotes, and overall content.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter contains interview results and analysis structured around the research questions that were detailed in earlier chapters. The research questions are detailed below and featured in Appendix C.

Research Questions

1. **Context:** How is DDev conceptualized? How do DDev programs relate to the broader literature, tourism knowledge, academia, and other programs?

2. **Why** were these programs created (catalyzed) in each case? What is the purpose of the program, as well as the purpose of the STO itself?

3. **What** activities do these programs entail? What are similarities and differences between the programs at different STOs?

4. **How** did the process of creating, managing, and evaluating programs look within and between cases? What were big barriers and how were they overcome?

5. **Evaluation:** How are benefits and outcomes measured? How is political and budgetary value shown?

6. **Mobilization:** How can these findings be interpreted and packaged so that they can help induce new programs and improve existing programs?

Due to the qualitative nature of the data, preliminary interpretation and analysis is included alongside the reported findings. Data are presented through quotes and tables detailing common themes. The interviews were structured around the six research question categories, which were lightly modified from the original version. As research progressed, greater emphasis was placed on exploring what

'Destination Development' (DDev) was understood to be and identifying various evolutionary and contextual themes. There was less attention dedicated to exhaustively discussing specific components of each program (RQ3: Activities) this seemed to reflect the notion that since DDev is a field of practice and study with high degrees of tacit knowledge and other information, that there had been few opportunities to concretely codify models and elements in a way that would lend itself to exhaustive, concise description. Furthermore, the topic of understanding and developing a formal community and network of practice around Destination Development emerged as particularly relevant to the participants.

The Tourism Offices (STOs) for four states were selected, two Western states and two Eastern states. For the sake of confidentiality, they are referred to as Western State 1 (W1), Western State 2 (W2), Eastern State 1 (E1) and Eastern State 2 (E2). These four states were selected as ideal cases to study the emergence and spread of State Destination Development programs across the United States (Table 4.1) due to their salience and varying lengths of operation. Interview participants were selected at each of the four offices based on whether they currently lead the Destination Development (DDev) programs, or had previously led them. Some offices had changed staff over the years, so to get an accurate view of both the ongoing operation *and* creation of the offices, multiple informants were selected. As a result, a total of six participants were interviewed across the four offices.

Table 4.1 *STO Case Details*

Western State 1 (W1)	DDev start date: 2016

- Particularly structured workshop sequences that targeted specific segments at a destination, organization, and individual scale
- This case featured a more developed emphasis on 'methodology'

Western State 2 (W2)	DDev start date: 2005

- Has iteratively experimented with a variety of models, frameworks, and focuses. Operates tourism workshops as a salient convening model
- Serves as a primary 'model' that other DDev programs are highly aware of and have frequently modeled their own programs on
- Has collaborated or supported each other STO case

Eastern State 1 (E1)	DDev start date: 2015

- Flexible and lean model. Minimal expenses and ideal model of how DDev can operate with minimal staff
- Operates DDev Workshop in partnership with a nonprofit entity

Eastern State 2 (E2)	DDev start date: 2005

- Particularly strong business and product development programming, exemplified by a funding framework that other STO informants were familiar with
- Features multiple regional staff familiar with and embedded in local communities

The four STO cases had many similarities between them, but each had numerous unique facets that set them apart from the other offices. Two offices had started the early iterations of their DDev programming around 2005, while the other two offices had developed their programming around 2015, drawing inspiration from the two earlier offices.

For the purposes of discussing and relating the findings in later sections, the categories are further simplified into broad sections, as through the course of the interviews there was a great deal of practical overlap between the topics, reducing the practicality of framing responses around all six research questions.

Themes

A variety of specific themes emerged through the interviews. As was expected with inductive, exploratory research, the topic categories provided a useful framework, but many of the insights were unexpected or the themes themselves did not concisely fit within the six Research Question categories: Context, Why, Activities, How, Evaluation, Mobilization (Appendix C). For this section, the findings will be organized according to emergent themes (Table 4.2), accompanied by illustrative quotes and analysis.

Table 4.2 *Data Themes*

1. Tacit Knowledge and Codification	2. Communities and Networks of Practice
3. DDev and Rural Development	4. DDev and Marketing
5. DDev as Highly Multidisciplinary	6. DDev as Facilitation and Networking
7. Management and Sustainability	8. International vs. Domestic Research
9. Community Based Tourism	10. Asset Based Development
11. Oregon and Founder Effect	12. Program Activities and Elements
13. Evaluation	14. Evolving Implementation and Outcome Focus
15. Destination Creation and Readiness	16. COVID-19

Tacit Knowledge and Codification

An early emergent theme was the importance of tacit, uncodified knowledge within the field of Destination Development. All the respondents had a very strong sense that Destination Development was a distinct, and discrete, category of practice, despite the lack of a concretely bounded framework across the STOs stating what DDev was or who was practicing it, and thus there was a higher prevalence of fuzzy conceptualization and degrees of situationally unarticulated elements within working concepts of DDev.

This would seem to be closely related to the early difficulty in this research and preliminary literature review with finding discussion of 'capital-D' Destination Development as a discretely conceptualized approach or topic. It was discovered that even within the field of DDev practice, the title of 'Destination Development' has only started to spread in awareness over recent years, seemingly building the most traction in the past five years or so. In what looks to be one of the primary vehicles for connecting DDev practitioners and interested parties at different STOs, the annual US Travel Association Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) Conference introduced a DDev session that has more than quadrupled in size over the past three years:

> There were maybe 20 people in the room... I was one of a handful of people that was actually the director of destination development... That's probably three years ago. But since then, the last one that I went to, not this past year, but the year before when it was in Phoenix, I mean, there were 100 people in the room (Respondent 4)

While this growing awareness *has* made it easier to find information on DDev, and identify those practicing it, there is still an important practical reliance on description and context, as many 'DDev outsiders' may be doing related work, or be highly interested in adapting DDev principles, but not be using the term "Destination Development" itself. Thus, to some degree, DDev is identified through 'intuitive feel',

as an overreliance on formal labels could risk excluding large amounts of relevant

information, as described at ESTO:

> I just went from conference to conference and sought out people who said they were doing destination development. [To identify whether they were talking about Destination Development or not] I'd listen to the context of what was being discussed and if it sounded like what I was thinking... (Respondent 2)

In other cases, through practice, DDev staff have developed an innate feel for

employing DDev and thus warranting the label of a 'tacit' understanding of DDev

practices and best practices. But as DDev is largely absent from academic discussion,

and academic tourism practice seems to now disproportionately emphasize an

international development context (in lieu of a domestic setting that might cause

academia to more directly intersect with practitioners in State Tourism Offices) there

have been few external efforts to create a codified DDev knowledge base, and

internally there are fewer reasons to broadly codify knowledge except for where

practically important for the operation of individual STO DDev programs.

While there was general awareness of the activities other DDev offices were

engaging in, relative to one another, this awareness was accompanied by a common

sentiment that STOs lacked the mandate and time to codify what work other offices

were doing, so many comparisons between offices drew on the respondent

impressions of the other STO.

Though not directly articulated by participants as 'tacit', there is a recognition

that certain information and knowledge within DDev is largely uncodified and

accordingly there is a movement and interest towards codifying the knowledge within

the field, as there are still large amounts of tacit knowledge. And the idea that

"There aren't that many tourism development type focused studies or research

available" (Respondent 1) was echoed in varying forms by several participants.

Even beyond the narrower topic of Destination Development, there was a

perception that academic and other types of focused research were lacking in the

field of tourism development. This may be influenced by the perspective that much

of tourism academia is sometimes considered rather impractical and not directly

useful to communities and agencies doing this work, "other literature might be

helpful for somebody coming out of academia, but for most people much of the

academic literature is not all that practical" (Respondent 2) If practical domestic

tourism development research and literature is not being produced by the academy,

or dedicated professional groups, then who might produce it? The state offices

largely have their hands tied by their funding mandates and importance of focusing

on the needs of their own state, so while STOs are highly collaborative, conducting

cross-state codification and research is pragmatically unrealistic.

Responses illustrated the need and interest for identification and organization

of knowledge and networks within the DDev field,

> Most helpful would be a grid. Just all the states you're talking to, who the contact person is, and take certain categories, how they're approaching the process of destination development and make that available to people. It would have been very helpful just to know who is doing it, who wasn't, and how to reach them. (Respondent 2)

While much practice around DDev does still exist in a somewhat nebulous space,

there has always been intentionality behind the phrase itself, an intentionality that

continues as other organizations adopt its usage,

> The term Destination Development really feels to have originated within Travel Oregon, probably around the late 2000s, before 2010. As we saw the work broaden over the years we began to question whether or not Destination Development was the right word in late 2019." (Respondent 3)

> There was a lot of discussion about what this new program should be named and what made sense. (Respondent 4)

However, as time has passed, awareness has grown and the label of DDev has

emerged as a better-known term across tourism offices,

> We decided to go with Destination Development because it was a well-known term out there, like marketing, PR, or promotion in general. So as a tourism office we knew other offices had these programs like Oregon and other states, and other destinations around

the country. For continuity and recognition, we wanted to move it into that realm. (Respondent 4)

But even with the intentional selection of 'Destination Development', the conflict between *discrete* and *general* terminology remains- as 'destination' and 'development' are frequently used to refer to concepts other than DDev programs which can make it difficult to convey consistent and standard meaning between different people. Additionally, since there is a rich usage and meaning behind the individual words themselves, efforts to define 'Destination Development' can be somewhat circular as "in terms of defining what [Destination Development] actually means, well, it means just that." (Respondent 4) So even with its internal clarity and spread, there can still be difficulty in translating the concept outside of the circles where it is primarily used:

> If you're already preaching to the choir you can say Destination Development, but as you start to bring it to the larger tourism industry and non-traditional stakeholders, I think it starts to become less clear. (Respondent 3)

This potential difficulty in translating across 'group' practice boundaries can manifest in other ways as well, such as a community need or demand for support or intervention through DDev work being articulated in a way that does not explicitly include the phrase 'Destination Development', requiring DDev practitioners to constantly remain vigilant for descriptions of DDev or relevant practices either by other names, or without names:

> While working on a state strategic plan where there were something like 30 tourism, listening sessions, across the state a 3-5 year strategic plan was put together for the tourism office. The entire concept and need for a Destination Development program, while not called that in the plan, was very loud and clear. (Respondent 4)

As this response illustrates: the need for a DDev program had to be inferred from community responses, but the demand for it was high.

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Communities and Networks of Practices

The concept of 'Community of Practice' and 'Networks of Practice' are some of the primary topics in literature that discusses 'tacit' knowledge, so are closely related to the study of tacit knowledge and the practical implications of codifying knowledge. While the theme of intuitive 'by feel' knowledge is its own topic, it overlaps importantly with respondents who described demand for a network to connect the offices and individuals engaging in Destination Development. There seem to be some similarities with the emergence of 'Community Development' as an intersectional self-organizing field of practice, and the resulting conversations around how the growing field should identify and organize itself.

Another common theme was the importance of creating a professional network, or at minimum creating a clear outline of 'who is doing what, where, and how.' While this was mentioned in varying forms across all the states, awareness of cross-state practices was more salient about some states than others. There is a large degree of collaboration between the DDev offices, but official efforts to strengthen bonds between practitioners, and grow awareness about the topic would still be beneficial.

Despite few standardized definitions and minimal formal industry networks there *is* a clear, albeit organic and emerging, community and network of practice around Destination Development - there is indeed a concept of a 'choir' "If you're already preaching to the choir you can say Destination Development..." (Respondent 3) As DDev is largely absent from formal academia and research, connecting with other offices and practitioners is the primary method of learning about and spreading the practice: "Definitely reach out to those states, other organizations, or agencies that are doing similar things that you want to aspire to achieve within your organization as well. I think that's the best way to learn." (Respondent 4) But identifying and reaching out to other offices can be complicated if there are no clear

outlines of who is doing DDev work and details about their approaches, and

accordingly was why there was a perceived need for this type of information:

> Most helpful would be a grid. Just all the states you're talking to, who the contact person is, and take certain categories, how they're approaching the process of destination development and make that available to people. It would have been very helpful just to know who is doing it, who wasn't, and how to reach them. (Respondent 2)

> I think having a single point of contact, or a single resource with contacts. I know a couple folks in Oregon [and maybe two more states] but I'm not familiar with other states. So it'd be good to have a resource. (Respondent 1)

And as DDev is state practitioner driven and taxpayer funded, without central

leadership structures or professional-industry entities, there are fewer opportunities

to compile such a list. But where structured opportunities do exist, they are utilized

and encourage cross-state collaboration. The primary method of diffusion for DDev

practice seems to have conferences. With the ESTO conference as the primary

national gathering, followed by other offerings like state Governor's conferences, as

described by informants:

> I just went from conference to conference, and sought out people who said they were doing destination development. (Respondent 2)

> I met [Director X] at the … ESTO for US Travel Association, where I was there spreading information about [a] destination development program. (Respondent 3)

Destination Development and Rural Development

A relationship between DDev programs and rural development was

anticipated, but the direct framing of rural development work as a catalyst for DDev

programs and a key facet of their ongoing operation was more directly influential

than expected. All but one of the STOs had an explicit focus on serving rural

communities, and in the case of the STO that did not have an explicit rural focus,

they still heavily served rural communities - there simply was not a rural label on

their work.

In all four STO cases, the programs had *emerged from* state rural

development efforts or were informed by adjacent industries such as Outdoor

Recreation, "our DDev program originated out of a Governor's initiative that was

dedicated to helping rural areas through economic development" (Respondent 1).

This relationship to rural development continued into program operation, directly in

some places, "Our destination development program was specifically focused on rural

destinations and those lesser-known destinations." (Respondent 4) and indirectly in

others:

> Our DDev program does not specifically focus on rural areas,
> but we do have a number of staff deployed in rural areas. However, a
> program like Oregon, does, I believe, focus on rural areas.
> (Respondent 1)

Because DDev is so closely tied to rural communities, many of the most important

offerings are framed around common needs and barriers within rural communities,

such as lacking capacity, resources, and local expertise.

> But really, to my best guess, the original definition [of DDev]
> was focused on emerging destinations that were within the early stage
> of the place lifecycle as a way to integrate them into the existing state
> tourism economy. The goal was to work with rural areas and bring
> them to a baseline of visitor readiness and understanding of their
> competitive advantage, or assets. At a state level the tourism industry
> has known travel locations and existing travel patterns and this
> becomes a strategy to disperse visitation while also bringing new
> partners into the conversation. (Respondent 3)

> The real struggle with our Destination Development work is the
> continuation of the work. Often smaller communities don't have a
> dedicated tourism person on staff, or that person wears multiple hats,
> it's often on the shoulders of maybe one or maybe two people. If
> there's a tourism board, we're lucky. To have more structure would be
> immensely helpful for the impact of our work. (Respondent 4)

The entire concept of Destination Development emphasized the 'creation' of

tourism supply and product, which inherently gravitates towards rural areas, as they

have the room and potential for 'creation':

> I would say across the board a big defining feature of a destination
> development program is to create a destination where there wasn't

one prior. Specifically focused on rural destinations and those lesser-known destinations. (Respondent 4)

...talking to our rural destination partners, rural partners in general - communities that might never have thought to integrate tourism into their local economy. (Respondent 4)

How do you bring additional geographies into the tourism industry from a visitor readiness standpoint? (Respondent 3)

While not directly articulated within the interviews, the conceptual relevance of 'peripheral' regions seems to emerge as a key element of the rural framing behind DDev. Successful urban destinations have a greater freedom to organize and plan endogenously, as they often have the resources, momentum, and sheer scale:

A big city DMO might just create their own programs and 'recreate the wheel'. But in small communities with limited resources, maybe one person in your DMO or even if you have more, there's a strong desire to be able to tap into resources the state offers. (Respondent 5)

While the rural communities with fewer resources would be the primary recipients of state capacity support, in some cases, 'successful' rural destination will not experience the same barriers and needs as struggling rural communities:

...there's [Success Rural Destination X] but then there's seven other smaller communities that all see the power of tourism 30 miles away and they don't understand how they can incorporate that into a smart strategic way to develop the area, products, and assets they have in their community as well. (Respondent 4)

...places that maybe aren't 'getting the love.' (Respondent 3)

[One benefit] is to spread out the revenue or economic impact of tourism within the state, maybe to areas that are getting less of an economic impact currently. And $100 in a city like [Seattle or New York] does not mean as much as in one of the rural areas of a state. (Respondent 3)

They don't have the community resources to pay something like $2-2,500 [as a workshop fee]. (Respondent 2)

These comments seem to point to an important recognition of the heterogeneity within rural communities, with the demand for DDev services perhaps being greatest in *peripheral* rural communities. So, in some ways 'rural' may, at

times, be an umbrella term that is ultimately addressing some elements of peripherality. On the other hand, while smaller rural communities that wanted development support often created impetus and demand for DDev programs, there was also a pressure from mature rural destinations to ease and manage their high volumes of visitors:

> […] one of the tenets is really around dispersion of travelers. And so, the DDev program was built as a response to the challenge that we have a lot of very popular destinations around the state, and what we heard loud and clear from our tourism partners is that we need to have a dispersion strategy and tactics tied to that. (Respondent 4)

But the primary emphasis often returns to helping communities that would otherwise struggle to endogenously develop as a successful destination.

Due to the rural emphasis present in many DDev activities, a particularly noticeable relationship with the impacts of COVID-19 emerged within a number of the themes. A later section addresses COVID, but it is important to recognize that the COVID/DDev intersection is closely related to the rural nature of DDev work.

> The counties where we've worked, one being the first place we ever did the program, people have been flocking to these really rural destinations because it's a place where they can easily practice social distancing - It's a way of life. The first community we did the program in was up 46% over last year. (Respondent 2)

> A rural place might normally get 10 visitors a day, and then this past year they were getting like hundreds of visitors a day. Places that were more dispersed, distributed, and more rural had large increases of visitation. (Respondent 5)

Destination Development and Marketing

In discussing the understanding and definition, both personal and organizational, of Destination Development the single most common theme was describing it *in relation* to Marketing. Since marketing has been the traditional emphasis within tourism practice, particularly in domestic non-international-CBT settings, alternative approaches to tourism development that do not hold marketing at center stage must position themselves in relation to the marketing norm.

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In some cases, DDev was positioned as explicitly *not*-marketing, and vice versa:

> It's typical for community groups to jump right into marketing, branding, creating a logo, a tag line - all of that stuff. It's the fun stuff, but I don't see it as destination development. (Respondent 2)

One respondent described how they explained this relationship between marketing and development to their program participants:

> I try to explain to communities that the development work is like the hard work of cleaning your house and getting it ready for company. It's making an inventory of all your assets, assessing them - what shape are they in, and how prepared are they to entertain and welcome guests in the way guests expect to be welcomed... When you actually market you are issuing an invitation for visitors to come check you out and everything you have to offer. The visitor is going to assume that everything is ready for them to do that, and in a lot of cases that's not true in existing communities. (Respondent 2)

While this could indicate an antagonistic relationship with more traditional marketing approaches, despite DDev's efforts to position itself as distinctly separate from marketing there was a universal belief that both Marketing and DDev work were important compliments – not substitutes- and that both were necessary to support tourism communities. In situations where a community and state had aging tourism infrastructure and product, DDev was positioned as a way to improve old and introduce new tourism supply, otherwise the destination would risk losing demand, much like the Stagnation phase the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) predicts.

> Our state is a very old state, our tourism product is old. Many people think of us as [specific destination images]. If we didn't create more than just sightseeing opportunities for all these things, these iconic things that people come to see, and get into creating more experiential product then we're not being competitive. (Respondent 2)

> [If we don't do DDev] the state will ultimately really have nothing to market… (Respondent 2)

> From a State Tourism Office perspective, at the end of all this work they're better prepared to market much more effectively. The STO has complained for years that they're spending money on the regions but it's not as effective as it could be. So, if you enhance your

product, you share your readiness and your preparation for visitation, then you can market much more effectively and with better results. (Respondent 2)

>Destination Development is a more deliberate partnership between the marketing side of tourism and development. (Respondent 1)

And in some cases, a more cyclical relationship between Development work and Marketing was described,

>As tourism partners start to be successful at marketing... the next question is 'What next?'... You get to the point where you've already marketed the assets you have and begin to see an opportunity to develop or enhance visitor experiences as a way to stay ahead of the curve. And further along the development cycle, you begin to observe wear and tear on the assets you started marketing and an opportunity exists to leverage Destination Development tools and resources and focus them on visitor management. (Respondent 3)

DDev programming was seen as a way to create community and state understanding around authentic marketing, essentially "How do you accurately market a destination? How do you actually promote a place?" (Respondent 3) and achieving a goal of 'Visitor Readiness' that would improve the visitor experience, improve the efficiency of marketing spending, and help a community prepare to mitigate negative tourism impacts. Examples include:

>Marketing is where everybody wants to go, but they try to invite people before they've prepared for the visit, which can oftentimes waste dollars because if people come once and it isn't what they expected they'll never come back. (Respondent 2)

>I try to explain to communities that the development work is like the hard work of cleaning your house and getting it ready for company. It's making an inventory of all your assets, assessing them - what shape are they in, and how prepared are they to entertain and welcome guests in the way guests expect to be welcomed. (Respondent 2)

And after achieving a baseline of visitor readiness, a shift to marketing could more effectively and seamlessly occur, usually through connecting stakeholders with other STO programs, one respondent noted that a function of their DDev program was to prepare businesses and industry partners for marketing and then plug them

in to marketing programs. Overall, there was continued recognition that tourism supply was necessarily tied to destination demand:

> At the end of the day, having an awesome destination is key to success. Without a strong destination you can't really market effectively. It's hand in hand: you want to support a high-quality destination experience so that you can effectively market. (Respondent 5)

It was noted that the ultimate goals of destination development or destination development sought to achieve the same thing: economic benefit for communities through tourism taxes and tourism spending: "Our number one goal is just to drive traveler spending to these lesser-known destinations around the state and help them improve their local economy and to bolster their activities with that tourism tax revenue and sales tax, lodging tax, etc." (Respondent 4) While DDev work makes efforts to carve a distinct identity, it still squarely falls within the purview of what traditional marketing offices seek to provide for the state, just through a modified path.

Overall, there seem to be three key facets of tourism that state offices engage with: marketing, development, and sustainability/management. While all three are closely interconnected, if one subsumes the others some key elements can be lost. Depending on how it is employed, Destination Development seems to rest *between* marketing and 'management.'

One respondent noticed that the integration of development and marketing corresponded with the naming shift regarding 'DMO', "Our state started seeing that development and tourism marketing combining about 20 years ago. And that was about the time you started hearing the change from DMO meaning 'Destination Marketing Organization' to 'Destination Management Organization'" (Respondent from 'Innovator' state).

This was noticed by other respondents as well, and it was added that rather than being entirely historical, such a shift is still ongoing,

The community engagement models we've employed are not necessarily new models. It was more a shift within the tourism industry, moving from tourism agencies that were mostly 'visitor bureaus', 'convention bureaus', and 'sales marketing' to ones that focused on engagement and development as a core approach. This was a shift for tourism, especially in the United States, and it's still a work in progress. (Oregon Representative)

And that such a shift is closely tied to recognizing additional tourism metrics,

I think more and more tourism is being looked at with a critical eye. Destination Development departments can be the tip of the spear - we're not just driving heads in beds and pushing as many people to your community as possible until you are completely at a breaking point. We're working to create balanced solutions - enhanced livability as well as a strong tourism economy. (Respondent 5)

The sentiment underlying this shift from marketing to management and development was associated with a recognition that un-critical growth is not always the most desirable choice and an emphasis on 'livability', as stated above.

Destination Development is Highly Multi-disciplinary

Tourism is related to nearly every other sector, such as local government, business entrepreneurship, parks and conservation, manufacturing, transportation and transit, housing, or main street businesses. Despite the intersectional nature of DDev to different fields of practice, it situationally has a weaker perceived relationship with tourism academia.

This multi-disciplinary framing aligns with an expected element within the research proposal, but while the overlap was described in academic and theoretical terms, the interview data points to a much more specific practical intersectionality, where agencies such as USDA, NPS, SBA, EPA, DOT and other economic, community, and social development organizations all have relevant programming for tourism stakeholders, which often needs to be sought out and *uncovered* as relevant to tourism to avoid redundancy and ensure a full range of programs to refer to. Programs such as SBDCs, CDBG funds, rural and agriculture support, trails and outdoor recreation can all be relevant to tourism partners, so instead of 'inventing a

new wheel' many DDev programs can excel by identifying current offerings, tailoring them for tourism, connecting with tourism, and *then* creating 'new wheels' to fill any gaps that remain.

Many of the STO DDev staff have professional backgrounds from outside of tourism marketing, which was seen as a strength, considering how multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral tourism development is: "In some ways having a 'non-marketing,' 'non-tourism' background was helpful because I could rock the ground rules, based upon my past experience" (Respondent 1).

Since DDev conceptually moves beyond the traditional tourism marketing paradigm, it rapidly grows to overlap many other sectors and disciplines. "Our DDev program originated out of a Governor's initiative that... encouraged - if not required- different agencies to work together" (Respondent 1).

The highly intersectional nature of DDev becomes particularly apparent when triple bottom line sustainability is discussed, as meeting economic, environmental, and social needs requires the involvement of this rapidly increasing network of sectors:

> ...But the goal is to really create a sustainable community that's economically, environmentally, culturally, and socially pleasing to residents, to existing businesses, and that has the attraction power for new visitors, new residents, and new businesses. So it's an economic development goal, but also a sustainable goal. (Respondent 2)

> I see destination development as a long-term process with grassroots volunteers convening a group of leaders. Usually, we require that our leadership groups be made up of municipal leaders, businesses, nonprofit volunteers, and residents. (Respondent 2)

> ...School enrollment is tracked because one of the goals for a lot of these communities is to attract new residents and keep their schools alive. (Respondent 2)

This continues to expand reach when the importance of 'livability' and 'quality of life' are recognized as fundamental elements of tourism development, along with the inclusion of concepts of place. The 'recipe' for optimal visitor experience in a

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destination becomes so massive that it cannot be adequately managed by a narrow understanding of 'tourism'. Examples include:

> We know what our visitors, or visitors in general, like. They like to experience authentic authenticity. Those local destinations, whether it's food, culture, music, or outdoor recreation. So that's a reason to focus on downtown areas. (Respondent 1)

> ...And I realized that some of the best tourism destinations, in fact, the majority of tourism destinations are also walkable communities. (Respondent 5)

> … we're not just driving heads in beds and pushing as many people to your community as possible until you are completely at a breaking point. We're working to create balanced solutions - enhanced livability as well as a strong tourism economy. (Respondent 5)

Furthermore, the 'development' approach of DDev requires awareness of all agencies that provide funding, expertise, and capacity support, which often emerges from sectors and industry organizations that aren't explicitly labeled as 'tourism':

> It's key to cultivate partnerships... The more partnerships you have the more resources you can give to your constituents. (Respondent 1)

> Something that works well is to get the pulse on some other agencies that are doing community development, see what they're doing, what programs they have and how a tourism development program can integrate with their existing programming. (Respondent 1)

> One of the first steps to planning a program like this would be sitting down with traditional economic development to get a read on what their take on tourism is. (Respondent 1)

> Right now in our state, the EPA and EDA are putting on a seminar for a community. I attended some sessions and they're focusing on community development of recreation as a basis for destination development. They're using a completely different process, which is fine. There are a lot of different organizations out there doing something similar but in a different way. (Respondent 2)

Further examples were provided such as community development organizations managing Community Development Block Grants, and business development agencies: "We're working with non-traditional tourism agencies like the

Community Development (the CD) or business assistance programs to help get those

businesses started" (Respondent 1).

It was pointed out that from a practical, political perspective tourism needs to

recognize how intersectional it is and make sure it is 'at the table' of the full range of

development discussions, otherwise tourism leadership won't have a say in how

things develop outside of the traditional purview of tourism being limited to hotels

and tourist activities:

> You want to be part of the process to support quality public
> transportation to get to your convention, your convention center. You
> want to support walkable, safe streets so that when people are
> downtown they're not facing dangerous traffic situations and not
> feeling threatened by people on the street. For a tourism agency, it
> may just come down to the level of influence. The end game may be
> that if you don't get involved with this you have no influence on what
> happens to your community. (Respondent 5)

While the field of tourism academia did not seem to have much directly

relevant, or practically accessible, content for DDev practitioners, academic

resources have played a role in some cases, and there is still a belief that academic

institutions and literature can play a role in supporting DDev efforts, but generally on

a more intentional case by case basis, such as:

> …Other literature might be helpful for somebody coming out of
> academia, but for most people much of the academic literature is not
> all that practical. (Respondent 2)

> ...I was a big advocate for having our work be tied to and going
> through a university. There was such a strong educational component
> to it that I wanted to present, create, and be able to distribute and
> share with our partners. I knew from what I'd been hearing that it was
> important to kind of level up folks' understanding of the impact of
> tourism, the possibilities therein, and opportunities for community
> improvement and other things like that could be brought about
> through tourism. (Respondent 4)

It was noted that NGOs serve as a primary vehicle for translating academic

knowledge into practice for government and practitioner sectors, but NGOs are

particularly active in international development discussions, which has contributed to

the dearth of direct academic involvement in domestic tourism practice:

> From a global standpoint I'd say Destination Development is the US Travel Industry's way of saying 'Community-Based Tourism' development. (Respondent 3)

> I'd say that over the years, we haven't done as much work with universities and international destination consulting firms; this is something we're interested in right now. We're doing an evaluation program with a well-known tourism university, and talking to some international firms about providing us with some guidance. (Respondent 5)

Destination Development as Facilitation and Networking

Due to the highly intersectional nature of DDev, and tourism itself, serving as a facilitator and networker for 'all things tourism' comes to the forefront. Communities, industry, and even other agencies need the support of an entity that can point them in the right direction. This corresponds with academic discussion around DMO roles shifting towards networking and leadership, as future paradigms for tourism leadership organizations (such as STO or Local Tourism Offices - LTO) that move beyond the previous shift from marketing to management.

The STO DDev role as networkers and facilitators was explicitly articulated several times during the interviews, and indirectly described at other times. Additionally, different forms of networking were articulated, mirroring literature on the topic. Some networking served to create internal bonds for community members, leaders, and tourism practitioners:

> … all starts from local support and grassroots effort; those are the true constituents you're trying to serve. (Respondent 4)

> One of the regional staff in the southwest part of the state knows every single politician in the whole region. When you're out with her, it's like, "Hey Becky" - "Hey Representative so-and-so." I think that's something little different than other programs - the familiarity with people because our staff are living in the coverage areas. (Respondent 1)

Other forms of networking focused on extra-community bonds and the importance of connecting destination communities both with external resources,

including other communities that were aspirational models, or destination peers at

the same stage of 'growth':

> In [County X, there's a very successful rural destination] but then there's seven other smaller communities that all see the power of tourism 30 miles away and they don't understand how they can incorporate that into a smart strategic way to develop the area, products, and assets they have in their community as well. (Respondent 4)

The presence of cross-community networks can serve to diffuse knowledge,

but also plays a key role in regional collaboration when individual communities might

be too small to serve as a full destination on their own,

> You can't make every town in a state into a tourism destination. We prefer to work with the [larger] destinations and get the 'core' community to reach out to surrounding towns and work more regionally. (Respondent 2)

Due to the large emphasis on facilitation work within DDev activities, there

were some comments that cautioned against *over*emphasizing facilitation to the

detriment of implementation. These concerns are tied to several other themes and

will be discussed a bit deeper in later sections:

> Something that typically happens at the end delivering a program […] is "good luck! We have done our part, the ball is in your hands, please do your best" and I have so many issues with that. In the arc of state resource allocation, you have three different spending categories: 1) program design – application receipt, award delivery, background research, and content customization; 2) program delivery – partner engagement and report delivery; 3) project implementation – execution of activities that develop or enhance visitor experience and access to resources to advance projects. Unfortunately, the majority of organizational and partner resources are focused on program delivery and that leaves little opportunity for successful project implementation. This knowledge led to the availability of implementation funding; however, the arc needs to continue to bend more towards implementation. (Respondent 3)

> We don't want it to just be a process to connect people, and nothing gets done. We need to focus on making impact on the ground. (Respondent 5)

The importance of networking within and between communities, and vertical

connectivity to resources and agencies played a role in perspectives about the

resilience of tourism communities and COVID, in light of difficulty with evaluating

and objectively attributing DDev benefits and outcomes:

> Outcomes are challenging to measure, especially in the short-term. But I will say that the more they're tied into the tourism system the more connectivity they have. (Respondent 5)

> It's key to cultivate partnerships. Like I said before, our job is really being facilitators that connect people to those resources. The more partnerships you have the more resources you can give to your constituents. (Respondent 1)

Management and Sustainability

Whether, and when, Destination Development is 'Sustainability' or

'Destination Management' is somewhat ambiguous, particularly when accounting for

the wide range of impacts or outcomes. This can occur due to scales of focus and the

wide variety of activities employed by DDev but is compounded by a continuing

ambiguity around 'Destination Management' and 'sustainability', particularly within -

but not limited to - practitioner spheres. The complicated nature of this emerges

when certain *elements* of an approach have close ties to sustainability. Dispersion of

visitors can primarily be shifting where the impacts are happening, but since certain

types of sustainability impacts can occur in a compounding 'threshold' way, simply

diffusing the impacts could largely keep that threshold from being reached and

drastically reduce the actual negative impacts. The question would then be whether

this dispersion is happening in a way that 1) identifies whether these 'shifted'

impacts will *not* reach impact thresholds, and 2) intentionally and holistically sets

systems in place to prevent and mitigate these negative impacts if they *will* reach an

impact-threshold.

In some of the interviews, the topic of 'sustainability', particularly along lines

of conservation and equity, was less salient, but one office had introduced a

structured 'management' workshop to their offerings that explicitly existed to help

communities deal with sustainability and over-tourism through educating, training, and providing tools on management practices.

Individual forms of sustainability include examples such as using rural tourism to both disperse visitors away from over-visited areas and funnel visitors to areas that have room to grow, championing walkability, or inducing local entrepreneurship (Table 4.3), but these individual elements do not necessarily lend themselves to a full sustainable 'system':

Table 4.3 *Examples of Management and Sustainability Elements*

Inclusion of Sustainability in Mission
"Destination Development serves to create robust, sustainable destinations and tourism economies that offer authentic world class experiences for travelers and that preserve, enhance and celebrate the local landscape and culture. (Respondent 5)
Dispersion *away from* high-traffic areas
"I think more and more tourism is being looked at with a critical eye. Destination Development departments can be the tip of the spear - we're not just driving heads in beds and pushing as many people to your community as possible until you are completely at a breaking point. We're working to create balanced solutions - enhanced livability as well as a strong tourism economy." (Respondent 5)
Dispersion *to* low-traffic areas
"[One benefit] is to spread out the revenue or economic impact of tourism within the state, maybe to areas that are getting less of an economic impact currently. And $100 in a city like Seattle or New York does not mean as much as in one of the rural areas of a state." (Respondent 3)
Providing communities with tool to reduce economic leakage
"Our ultimate goal is to increase travel visitation and revenue generated by people visiting our state's communities." (Respondent 1)
Incorporating 'Stewardship' and 'Regenerative' Tourism
"Some work is really about developing new products, and a fair amount has moved towards shoring up product or making experiences more sustainable, regenerative, etc. trying to work towards the stewardship of those experiences." (Respondent 5)
Sustainable Urban Design, including Walkability
"And I realized that some of the best tourism destinations, in fact, the majority of tourism destinations are also walkable communities. (Respondent 5)
Crisis Resiliency
"The vast majority of our [Tourism Plan] findings are still very valid, and in some cases even more relevant now that we've gone through COVID." (Respondent 1)

The complexity emerges when considering if, for example, a DDev program was dispersing visitors away from over-visited communities, into under-visited communities- but the 'under-visited' community scale was not necessarily providing support around equitable housing, cost of living mitigation, local conservation, etc. Then at the *state* scale the program could be considered a strong step towards sustainability, but at the under-visited community scale the sustainability impact might be much more limited. In that case, where does this position such a DDev program in relation to sustainability and destination management, as featured by a respondent:

> The concept of rural economic development is absolutely a core tenet [for DDev programs to be built around]. The only set of nuance being that economic development seems limiting at this current juncture. It's missing things like ecological development, like conservation and preservation of natural areas, and protection of residential quality of life. So the whole concept of 'are we doing this as economic development?' is important but I wouldn't limit the scope to only being economically based. (Respondent 3)

Another point raised was that a primary 'sustainability' emphasis can situationally dissuade US communities (particularly rural areas that are seeking growth) from immediately seeing the relevance or benefit of certain development work. If something is labeled as a sustainability initiative (tapping into the domestic vs. International tourism theme) it may be only identified as relevant to a community that is bursting at the seams or can potentially be framed as an 'overseas' 'developing' country issue.

Destination Development approaches are associated with the paradigm transition from Tourism Marketing to Tourism Management, as evident in these quotes:

> Our state started seeing that development and tourism marketing combining about 20 years ago. And that was about the time you started hearing the change from DMO meaning 'Destination Marketing Organization' to 'Destination Management Organization'. (Respondent from 'Innovator' state)

And the destination management piece comes into play. And that's where the development side of things comes into play as well. (Respondent 4)

But this transition is largely incomplete, and while it seems to have caused a thorough shift in tourism *academia* and practice in specific (often better funded, innovative, and proactive) tourism offices, it seems to have only slowly diffused to wider numbers of offices and arenas of practice.

While DDev is strongly associated with Destination Management, there remain questions about how attentive to sustainability and management principles destination development actually is: "But what's absolutely missing from that conversation is tourism management. If you say you are developing a destination I don't know if it inherently means you are also managing or maintaining it" (Respondent 3).

Part of this uncertainty emerges from the inherently ambiguous nature of destination management and sustainability principles themselves, particularly in implication for practice. Something that is a form of sustainable management at a *state* level may become more nebulous at a local level. For example, the dispersion of visitors away from over-impacts tourism areas is a key tactic for reducing negative tourism outcomes "...one of the tenets is really around dispersion of travelers. And so the DDev program was built as a response to the challenge that we have a lot of very popular destinations around the state..." (Respondent 4) and developing capacity and resources to establish local tourism destinations "[driving] traveler spending to these lesser known destinations around the state and help them improve their local economy and to bolster their activities with that tourism tax revenue and sales tax, lodging tax, etc." (Respondent 4) is a key sustainable management tactic for improving equitable economic impacts.

Since DDev programs often hold sustainability as a key pillar, one respondent suggests two key points:

> ...the goal is to really create a sustainable community that's economically, environmentally, culturally, and socially pleasing to residents, to existing businesses, and that has the attraction power for new visitors, new residents, and new businesses. So it's an economic development goal, but also a sustainable goal. (Respondent 2)

Sustainability will ideally be accounted for through visioning and facilitation……

> ...they look at what their preferred future is and in the process of doing that they often come to the realization they're not ready for a lot of what's likely to be coming. And it brings it down to the practical level. This is who we are, this is where we are, if that's what's coming in the future we've got a lot of work - and that's where we start. (Respondent 2)

Local communities may be less interested in long-term potential negatives, particularly, if the local community itself has not experienced negative impacts from 'overtourism' or does not have nearby communities serving as salient 'overtourism' examples. States that had a higher volume of communities voicing concerns around negative tourism impacts tended to have more concrete offerings and distinctions around sustainability and destination management, including:

> In our [DDev Program] strategic plan we talk specifically about 1) areas with high use or high impact, then 2) what we call 'gap areas' where there is room to grow, where there is capacity, a lot of times these areas could just use more development support. We've started to move from just supporting destinations to develop visitor experience to bifurcating our work a bit more. Some work is really about developing new products, and a fair amount has moved towards shoring up product or making experiences more sustainable, regenerative, etc. trying to work towards the stewardship of those experiences. (Respondent 5)

Uncertainty can be compounded when some tourism sustainability practices, often being created in an international development context, may not be immediately relevant to domestic destinations, "...though the GSTC framework, Early Adopter, and destination certification is a bit broader in scope than what states should really be focusing on- and the criteria is a little bit irrelevant to at times to the type I've worked with US." (Respondent 3) and can in some cases causes communities interested in economic growth to see the 'sustainability' label on tourism as a negative:

> …think about where tourism is growing fastest in America –
> rural regions that have depended heavily on their natural resources for
> their economic survival. If you meet these communities with a
> complicated sustainability message right off the bat it can often be a
> non-starter due to existing perceptions or long-held values of what
> sustainability means to them. (Respondent 6)

International Tourism vs. Domestic Research

This theme overlaps readily with the situational, perceived lack of relevance

to tourism academia for the purposes of informing DDev programs and supporting

successful tourism in local communities. Tourism research is more present within

international spheres, particularly when discussing 'developing' countries (Zielinski,

Jeong, Kim, & Milanés, 2020). This corresponds with some early literature review

findings about an emerging academic discussion around the seemingly arbitrary

distinctions that create compartmentalization around 'domestic' and

'international/developing' settings (with CBT used as an example), reducing the

penetration of tourism academia into US tourism practice.

NGOs were proposed as a primary vehicle that translated tourism academia

into tourism practice "Sustainable Travel International and Solimar International, are

examples of several NGO partners that sit in between the academic world and the

state or national government world" (Respondent 3) but NGOs are frequently absent

from domestic US settings. Despite this breakdown in information flows between

domestic/international settings, there is strong evidence that the concept of DDev

has much in common with international tourism development, particularly that of

CBT frameworks. Yet this nexus of CBT and DDev is less in the foreground as DDev

programs flow away from early DDev models:

> The Global Sustainable Tourism Council Early Adopter program
> that turned into the Rapid Destination Diagnostic Program [was related
> to DDev]. Though the GSTC framework, Early Adopter, and destination
> certification is a bit broader in scope than what states should really be
> focusing on and the criteria is a little bit irrelevant at times to the type
> I've worked with in the US. (Respondent 3)

I'd say that over the years, we haven't done as much work with universities and international destination consulting firms; this is something we're interested in right now. We're doing an evaluation program with a well-known tourism university and talking to some international firms about providing us with some guidance. (Respondent 5)

Community Based Tourism

As a continuation of the International vs. Domestic tourism theme, it was found that DDev has key similarities to Community Based Tourism (CBT) in practice. Even explicitly described as such, "From a global standpoint I'd say Destination Development is the US Travel Industry's way of saying 'Community-Based Tourism' development." (Respondent 3). The overlaps were found to be understated in some states, possibly due to a 'Founder effect' that occurred through Oregon formative work on the nascent version of DDev. While the relationship to CBT models was only clearly articulated in a few of the office, there was a common set of descriptive language used around asset-based development strategies, that stands out as being closely related to CBT principles.

Issues such as local ownership and authentic community heritage were addressed:

Destination Development needs to be applicable and suitable for the locality. A while back, big box venues were interested in coming and setting up in the region. But we said, 'no thank you' as to not have a 'Hollywood', if you will, facility or attraction in the area. Any destination needs to be appropriate for the community and the community's history and heritage. (Respondent 1)

Classically, we have helped them understand what their destination really offers. To help them articulate their vision for tourism. What are the experiences your destination offers and is known for, and wanting them to be authentic. Not straying away from who they actually are, rather focusing on how you want to see tourism look and play out in your community? (Respondent 5)

And the education, assistance, and capacity support integral to CBT designs were frequently addressed by participants. "My belief is that we need to provide the education, the technical assistance to as many folks that need it and as many

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communities that request it..." (Respondent 4) Along with the bottom-up grass roots

core of CBT as stated by:

> I would say it's not an outward effort looking in. Destination Development has to be an inward start and build it from there. It all starts from local support and grassroots effort; those are the true constituents you're trying to serve. (Respondent 4)

> Responses at times even mirrored the critiques and discourse around CBT

within academic literature that questioned its efficacy and ability to be successfully

implemented in a sustained manner:

> ...but at the end of the day I don't want this work to be an end product, fancy strategic or marketing plan that sits in a beautiful PDF on a shelf. I heard time and time again that there need to be some dollars awarded to these communities to keep going and push the needle forward... (Respondent 4)

Asset Based Development

There were commonalities noticed in descriptions of DDev programs that

overlapped with the concept of Asset-Based Development, in some cases the DDev

efforts of certain state offices were explicitly described as 'asset-based development.'

There was a general emphasis on asset based economic development, but some

mentions of community development as well. Additionally, similarities were noticed

between the concepts and practices of ABD and CBT, but the primary literature

review encountered no explicit connections between ABD and CBT in tourism

academia.

The importance of using existing assets and aligning with the heritage and

direction of the community were a constant theme, articulated by every respondent,

for example:

> ...What are the experiences your destination offers and is known for and wanting them to be authentic. Not straying away from who they actually are, rather focusing on how you want to see tourism look and play out in your community? (Respondent 5)

> ...a smart strategic way to develop the area, products, and assets they have in their community as well. (Respondent 4)

>...bring them into the tourism industry with a focus on getting them to a baseline of visitor readiness, to a baseline of understanding their competitive advantage, or assets. (Respondent 3)

>...We try to frame it according to the direction the community is already headed... (Respondent 2)

>...In other words, using what is already in the community, whether it be a cultural asset or a physical asset such as outdoor recreation as the basis for helping restructure those economies. (Respondent 1)

It is possible that the frequency of 'asset' phrasing is a coincidence (or convergent in some way), but exploration of the Asset Based Development literature seems warranted, it could be possible that development practitioners are encountering ABD content that is serving as a useful practical foundation for DDev work, but it has been underrecognized by tourism research. Perhaps ABD approaches have filled a vacuum that had not been met by tourism literature?

Oregon and 'Founder Effect'

With a reply like "The term Destination Development really feels to have originated within Travel Oregon, probably around the late 2000s, before 2010." (Respondent 3) there seems to be evidence that Oregon was, or is perceived as, the primary innovator behind the current concept of 'Destination Development.'

Additionally, Oregon was the most salient and top of mind example of a state doing this kind of work. Informants frequently phrased replies as 'Oregon and other offices', which would seem to indicate a sharp awareness of Oregon, and a clear awareness that other offices (besides Oregon) are doing this work, but the specific identity of those offices were fuzzier. For example:

>Our DDev program does not specifically focus on rural areas, but we do have a number of staff deployed in rural areas. However, a program like Oregon, does, I believe, focus on rural areas. (Respondent 1)

>The Oregon Tourism Studio could be considered one of... 'the Gospels' of Destination Development. (Respondent 3)

So as a tourism office we knew other offices had these
programs like Oregon and other states, and other destinations around
the country. (Respondent 4)

While consistent examples of STO collaboration were present between all

offices, Oregon served as a common denominator and had worked directly with each

of the other STO cases to advise them on DDev practices and participate in events

such as governor's tourism conferences.

The key role that Oregon plays seems to have created some manner of

'Founder effect'. Oregon began developing its DDev offerings around fifteen years

ago, and during that time the program founder extensively reviewed academic

models of tourism development, including CBT, and themself had experience

employing these models in international tourism development settings. This seems to

provide evidence that the foundation of US DDev work is implicitly built upon

academic models like CBT, but the articulation of this influence has become less

obvious as subsequent states modeled and informed *their* programs on an 'Oregon

model:'

The community engagement models we've employed are not
necessarily new models. It was more a shift within the tourism
industry, moving from tourism agencies that were mostly 'visitor
bureaus', 'convention bureaus', and 'sales marketing' to ones that
focused on engagement and development as a core approach. This
was a shift for tourism, especially in the United States, and it's still a
work in progress. (Oregon Representative)

[Oregon's model] spent time at the outset taking a close look at
what other community-based tourism models were out there…
(Respondent 6)

Program Activities and Elements

Common themes of DDev activities emerged throughout the research.

Additionally, much of the terminology for these categories of activity were consistent

across the different STO. Such category terms included: convenings, visioning,

action planning (in contrast to master or strategic planning), funding, assistance,

education, and information. While this was originally positioned as one of the primary

research goals, greater emphasis was shifted towards understanding the context, meaning, and history of Destination Development as the interview progressed. A dedicated effort to tackle the building of DDev activity frameworks is a key next step for future research, as the creation of a taxonomy of activities for DDev programs could prove a useful resource for spreading best practices.

Table 4.4 lists the most common activities and elements of DDev offices that were mentioned in the interviews. In some cases, slightly different labels or terms were used but often as similar concepts simply described by different names.

Table 4.4 – *Common Destination Development Activities*

Activity	Example
Facilitation	• Community workshops • Convenings & charrettes
Networking	• Strategic action groups – Horizontal network • State tourism networks – Vertical network
Technical Assistance	• Business planning through SBAs • Technical legal support for tourism regulations
Funding	• 'Gap' loans • Grants tied to completion of community workshops • Professional development scholarships and sponsorships
Education & Awareness	• Explanation of 'Overtourism' • Pros and cons of different visitor segments • Overview of popular 'product' trends • Tourism 'advocacy' resources for local leadership
Planning	• Community visioning • Action plans • Strategic and master plans

Other respondents provided insight about the process and structure of administering the activities, and in some cases discussed the methodology of DDev programming. The role of DDev programs as destination facilitators and networkers plays a particularly important role in determining particular DDev activities, as networking and facilitating are themselves activities, they identify additional activities and opportunities that can be presented to local destinations as resources, and once 'gaps' in state tourism (and supporting fields) programming is identified, if necessary, DDev activities can be implemented to fill said gaps:

> It's key to cultivate partnerships. Like I said before, our job is really being facilitators that connect people to those resources. The more partnerships you have the more resources you can give to your constituents. (Respondent 1)

Some respondents articulated concern with the accessibility of DDev programming and the importance of ensuring that it could have optimal reach and impact. This line of discussion had implications regarding the methodology and delivery of DDev programming, as different delivery methods such as on-site convening, webinars, or digital toolkits all have varying degrees of accessibility, along with other strengths and weaknesses:

> One of the limitations of [State X] programming from my perspective is that you've got a State Tourism Organization that has expertise and a knowledge base that they're making available to the general industry. However, the mechanism through which it is delivered is hard to access. A collection of tourism partners within [State], need to 1) apply to participate in the [workshop], 2) need to be awarded that [workshop], and 3) need to be sitting in the workshop that day in order to get access to the content. (Respondent 3)

A frequent topic was the important of designing DDev activities with attention to a full organizing-planning-implementation-outcome cycle. While facilitation, assistance, and community engagement are all key elements, these elements need to be part of a 'recipe' that creates tangible benefits for the communities that participate:

My belief is that we need to provide the education, the technical assistance to as many folks that need it and as many communities that request it, but at the end of the day I don't want this work to be an end product, fancy strategic or marketing plan that sits in a beautiful PDF on a shelf. I heard time and time again that there need to be some dollars awarded to these communities to keep going and push the needle forward. [re: matching requirements in grants] And really, the time and effort on the part of the community is their matching input. I was very passionate about the budgets of these communities, and their tourism budgets specifically are usually so small and miniscule I wanted to remove that barrier as well. (Respondent 4)

… Can we have a lighter process upfront, a destination assessment to identify key things - and we're not going to mandate or prescribe anything - but can we put more emphasis on the implementation, more money towards getting the projects done? (Respondent 5)

It was noted at one STO that there were three main priorities (funding, education, and technical assistance) community members identified as needs through listening sessions. The activities of other offices fell within these categories, but was explicitly articulated here:

When I was visiting with folks and getting a read of what their barriers to success were and what people truly needed to push the needle forward - money was top, the top priority and top challenge. Education was right underneath that. Technical assistance was right under that. (Respondent 4)

The identification of funding, education, and technical assistance is a helpful outline, because, as another respondent stated, it is important to start with 'foundational programs' when setting up a DDev programming, followed by specific activities within those categories:

What you want to do is set up your foundational educational content, then your convening programs as a way to test your content and gather input. From there you can release technical assistance and implementation funding to generate results and begin to measure success. It can take a few years to get started but once your programs are running, you're bringing people together, establishing visions, prioritizing work plans, and funding projects. (Respondent 3)

The importance of connecting DDev program offerings was also emphasized, positioning them in a basic sequential order based on the needs of the destination community participants and their level of capacity and degree of tourism awareness:

> If you're a destination that is at the early stages of the place
> life cycle and you want an understanding of 'what there is to do with
> tourism' [Program A] is for you. From there, it's do you want to
> advance a strategy, or just one of the businesses in the room wants to
> advance a strategy - you've got [Program B] or [Program C]. And
> then, you've done your 1:1, you're already in the middle-late stages of
> the place lifecycle, here's your 'workshops'. (Respondent 3)

There remains a wealth of information about the activities and programs operated through Destination Development departments to be gleaned through study specific to this aspect. Such research would be well supported through continued comprehensive review and analysis of STO website offerings and contacting and surveying other states offices using the emerging categories of DDev activity themes detailed in this section.

Evaluation

A key theme for creating and improving DDev programs, and a DDev field 'need', was grappling with issues around evaluation. One office had the development of comprehensive metrics as a key goal, "The goal is that by the 5-year mark we will have a solid metric-based evidence-based tracking of impact established for all the [State DDev] programs" (Respondent 4). All the participants documented state and local metrics, but the difficulty is how to attribute any changes to DDev:

> We've got research that exists in terms of visitor spending,
> lodging and occupancy, average daily rates where travelers are going.
> We've got all this large research, Dean Runyon, on all [X] counties in
> our state, but do not really have something that truly connects the
> dots to our programs. (Respondent 4)

DDev is a long term and complex process, which makes it difficult to measure impact, "It's really difficult to evaluate something that's a long-term process" (Respondent 2) particularly when trying to attribute impact and outcomes to DDev rather than something else. Data were often correlated with other metrics, "We can

look at traveler spending year after year by county and roughly tie it to workshop locations and pull in anecdotally what people have created and their end results." (Respondent 4) but the offices were dissatisfied with it as a truly accurate figure. Most types of metrics were similar between states, however one state directly called attention to the fact they measure school enrollment, which stood out as a powerful reminder of how tourism plays a key role in resident recruitment:

> We're tracking things like meals and lodging, tax revenues [state]. The data for a period of years before the program and then see how that changed after the program. Visitor Information Center traffic is another data point, state park visitation. School enrollment is tracked because one of the goals for a lot of these communities is to attract new residents and keep their schools alive. Of course, we track website data, social media, TripAdvisor, standings, rankings, etc. And we use Arrivalist to track cell phone data. (Respondent 2),

but across the board the STO informants stated that evaluation was the big problem to 'solve' and often a next step, "...We're doing an evaluation program with a well-known tourism university, and talking to some international firms about providing us with some guidance. (Respondent 5),

> One STO would create evaluation snapshots of each long-term convening program to document what was done and measure participation:

> We'd have a contractor do an assessment up front to guide us in creating a destination report, to frame and guide. And then the contractor would do an evaluation process 6-12 months and further into the future of the destination. We'd look at things like a) how many people working on a project b) how many volunteer hours spent c) how much staff time we leveraged d) how much financial support was leveraged, matching funds, e) what projects were built - those kinds of things. […] (Respondent 5)

There were statements about the importance of selecting proper metrics, recognizing a tendency to 'teach to the test' and prioritize or emphasize elements that are considered metrics, as it was stated "If your metric is 'we brought x people together for X number of programs, you know, you'll focus all of your resource allocation there" (Respondent 3). This led to a recognition that metrics that

emphasized outcomes would create greater support for implementing said outcomes, as offered by several respondents:

> I do also think that destination development really needs to focus on the outcomes of our work and not just the process. (Respondent 5)

> You need to be demonstrating positive change to visitor experience. (Respondent 3)

> The bigger question is are we making tangible enhancements to visitor experience through the projects that are getting implemented? (Respondent 3)

A theme emerged in several interviews that while tourism marketing is commonly quantified and attributed to tax dollars and local economic impact - when making political (legislative) cases for the value of tourism, spending high amounts of marketing/advertising spend was sometimes disliked by officials, even when coupled with the common X marketing dollars create Y direct tax dollars narrative. In multiple cases DDev programs and activities were used as tangible examples of providing stories about providing direct community support and were situationally *more* valuable than the marketing dollar metrics. This was particularly amplified when activities were recorded in relation to specific legislative districts and constituencies and used to talk about 'what DDev did for your voters' in 1:1 talks with state politicians. In some case this was coupled with advocacy videos around concepts like the 'power of travel' to give a humanistic face to the tourism industry and its benefits. This has some useful strategic/political implications, as offered by a respondent:

> We keep a running spreadsheet of broken down into five different categories [of assistance we provide]. […] so if we get, you know, senator [so-and-so] saying, 'Hey, what have you done for our community.' We can get that answer, just like that. (Respondent 1)

COVID might provide an interesting opportunity for evaluating Destination Development programs, as such a 'system shock' could provide an opportunity to compare performance of communities (particularly rural) that have and have not

participated in DDev programs, since COVID has created large amounts of rural

tourism demand, "The rural areas in particular have seen - not necessarily growth

above pre-pandemic - but certainly better than some of the more urban areas" […]

(Respondent 1).

DDev participant communities may theoretically have greater resilience as

they have participated in a community tourism program engaged with tourism

educational content, "The vast majority of our [Tourism Plan] findings are still very

valid, and in some cases even more relevant now that we've gone through COVID."

(Respondent 1) and have greater connectivity to networks outside their community,

"Outcomes are challenging to measure, especially in the short-term. But I will say

that the more they're tied into the tourism system the more connectivity they have."

(Respondent 5)

Evolving Implementation and Outcome Focus

Somewhat related to the evaluation theme, one of the other key themes was

a growing emphasis on tangible outcomes from DDev work. Shifting funds from the

facilitation and coordination 'front' to the implementation funding 'back':

> Say you spend $50,000-100,000 on the process up front, but
> when it gets down to implementation you spend $10,000-$25,000…
> Can we put that on its head? Can we have a lighter process upfront, a
> destination assessment to identify key things - and we're not going to
> mandate or prescribe anything - but can we put more emphasis on the
> implementation, more money towards getting the projects done? The
> biggest innovations I feel like we've seen in destination development
> programming are shifting away from very demanding multiple day
> multiple month engagement programs, that while they do build
> amazing amounts of community trust and community connection, it
> can often leave implementation weaker than it could be. (Respondent
> 5)

Providing larger amounts of funding to implement actual community projects

was a salient goal. And in some cases, efforts were discussed around the concept of

templatizing community support and using a '100 question' framework that

emphasized intentional and targeted knowledge based on community trends in

interests and needs, as shown here:

> At the start of each project partners have to ask themselves 'what do we want to do and how can we do it?'. This leads them down a path of asking 100 questions and many of these questions are being asked by similar partners working on similar projects. Destination Development teams have an opportunity to observe trends in project implementation over time and develop templates that answer 50% of the questions being asked. These templates are design to leave out answers for what makes a destination unique so that the partners can continue to drive that discussion and take ownership of the output. (Respondent 3)

> [If you know the questions they'll have to answer] you can use some of your delivery time to answer those questions. The state answers 50 questions leaving the community with only 50 remaining. (Respondent 3)

Such a framework could help prepare for questions that tend to emerge

during the implementation phase, which could allow for preempting and addressing

some in the convening and education stage. It was stated that, "...every destination

is inherently different. However, once you're doing this work within a known

geography and you're committed to it, you start to identify some trends"

(Respondent 3). And another response described the value of 'plug and play'

opportunities:

> Destination Development departments do a better job when they have an understanding of what programmatic offerings or things that the state really wants, the communities around the state want, and then offer capacity and support to destinations by having plug and play opportunities. (Respondent 5)

Overall, there did exist a current emphasis on implementation and

practicality, as the main constituency the STO served were rural communities,

sometimes with minimal budgets and staff. Action Plans were often prioritized, "We

don't typically develop a tourism destination '15 year' master plan, rather a 15 year

'vision', with a shorter-term action plan" (Respondent 5). And, where budgets

allowed, dedicated and accessible grant funding was ideal, "...then an action

planning session that then connects them to $10,000 dollars of implementation

funding" (Respondent 3).

One state had a model that was considered a powerful example of an

effective way to create dedicated funds for achieving tangible outcomes,

> ...They would identify what's benefiting a community good and what gaps exist that could make positive change with the visitor experience. It could be maybe, "you'd be an amazing bike destination if you only had a brewery." The solution for that was a state funding loan program to get a loan to develop a new tourism asset that was a 'gap', and that destination would pay back through taxes. (Respondent 3)

Further details were provided about the model:

> We did a whole move through, I think, 25 communities. We'd go as a group to those communities around the state and so a very high-level Tourism Development Plan, and at the end of those workshops they could apply for a $10,000 grant - no matter anything- for implementing the outcomes of their tourism development. There was a 'hub and spoke' approach where the spokes with projects that could be done a) immediately, b) in two years, and 3) a five-year game changer. They could apply for dollars to implement any aspect of that. ('Hub and Spoke' respondent)

This may have some implications for equity, capacity, and possible conflicts

with the more traditional CBT thinking. A shift in focus to implemented outcomes

might cause a decreased emphasis on making sure the community 'understands' the

pros and cons of tourism and can truly 'own' the process. Additionally, a point was

made about the power dynamics of being positioned as a state tourism organization

and authority on tourism, "…But the communities can be very suggestable, if you

bring up a cool [project] idea, they'll say 'hey we want one of those'" (Respondent

5).

One respondent mentioned GSTC's Rapid Destination Diagnostic program "the

Global Sustainable Tourism Council Early Adopter program that turned into the Rapid

Destination Diagnostic Program [was related to DDev].", which seems to indicate an

awareness and perceived value to model frameworks, as long as they are flexible,

agile, and can be adapted for communities in a way that prevents top-down

prescription.

Destination Creation and Visitor Readiness

A common theme in the description and definition of what made something

DDev or not was that idea that one of the primary goals of DDev was to *create*

destinations and create community tourism economies:

> As [State tourism] starts to be successful at marketing... The
> next piece is how do you bring new assets into the conversation? How
> do you open other parts of the state? (Respondent 3)

> I would say across the board a big defining feature of a
> destination development program is to create a destination where
> there wasn't one prior. (Respondent 4)

> There's a recognition that unless we create new product and
> teach people how to do that, the product is just going to be the same
> old same old. It doesn't take too many years, or too many visits -
> people have been to this State multiple times and they come back, it's
> a popular repeat destination - they're always looking for something
> new and we have to get creative. (Respondent 2)

> Destination Development serves to create robust, sustainable
> destinations and tourism economies that offer authentic world class
> experiences for travelers and that preserve, enhance and celebrate the
> local landscape and culture. (Respondent 5)

This had some overlap with the TALC framework.

> If you're a destination that is at the early stages of the place
> life cycle and you want an understanding of 'what there is to do with
> tourism' [Program A] is for you. From there, do you want to advance a
> strategy, or just one of the businesses in the room wants to advance a
> strategy - you've got [Program B] or [Program C]. And then, you've
> done your 1:1, you're already in the middle-late stages of the place
> lifecycle, here's your 'workshops'. (Respondent 3)

But not all discussed elements neatly correspond with the TALC stages. This

'creation' emphasis is perhaps part of why sustainability and management themes

were somewhat inconsistent. With importance placed on getting a tourism economy

up and running, issues of negative tourism impacts may be further out on the

horizon. This would coincide with the greater presence of management/sustainability

talking points in states with well known, heavily visited places and their issues with

'overtourism' raising state agency awareness.

The phrase and idea of 'Visitor Readiness' was common and recurred as a

theme across interviews with multiple participants:

> But really, to my best guess, the original definition [of DDev] was focused on emerging destinations that were within the early stage of the place lifecycle as a way to integrate them into the existing state tourism economy. The goal was to work with rural areas and bring them to a baseline of visitor readiness and understanding of their competitive advantage, or assets. (Respondent 3)

> You go into a destination that's in the early stages of the lifecycle, getting back to the core definition of Destination Development, people that are typically not active participants in tourism or sort of lack a knowledge base for what tourism is, what it's comprised of what makes someone visitor ready. (Respondent 3)

This may seem to serve as a useful term for strategically communicating the

distinction between tourism marketing and development, as 'Visitor Readiness'

allowed for a strong talking point (overlapping with the Marketing theme) about why

development work was important to optimize marketing work,

> From a State Tourism Office perspective, at the end of all this work they're better prepared to market much more effectively. The STO has complained for years that they're spending money on the regions but it's not as effective as it could be. So, if you enhance your product, you share you readiness and your preparation for visitation, then you can market much more effectively and with better results. (Respondent 2)

> At the end of the day, having an awesome destination is key to success. Without a strong destination you can't really market effectively. It's hand in hand: you want to support a high-quality destination experience so that you can effectively market. (Respondent 5)

Both at a state and local level a common trajectory of themes seemed to

emerge along the lines of 1. Community Organization, 2. Visitor Readiness, 3.

Marketing, 4. Product Expansion, and 5. Impact management. This should be more

clearly analyzed in relation to the Tourism Area Life Cycle and other destination

models, as it might provide useful information for how to evaluate communities and mobilize the most appropriate resources most efficiently.

COVID-19

COVID-19 has hit the tourism industry particularly hard, and shaken the belief in tourism as an economic pillar while also creating a greater awareness of tourism needing to be adequately supported and understood. While international visitation numbers have dropped, COVID has had an interesting effect on rural and domestic tourism. Due to DDev's close relationship with tourism education and rural tourism destination, all the interview participants were paying close attention to COVID and believed that DDev work was made that much more relevant by the global pandemic, "The vast majority of our [Tourism Plan] findings are still very valid, and in some cases even more relevant now that we've gone through COVID." (Respondent 1) and had noticed a variety of trends in rural tourism growth as illustrated by:

> A rural place might normally get 10 visitors a day, and then this past year they were getting like hundreds of visitors a day. Places that were more dispersed, distributed, and more rural had large increases of visitation. (Respondent 5)

> The counties where we've worked, one being the first place we ever did the program, people have been flocking to these really rural destinations because it's a place where they can easily practice social distancing - It's a way of life. The first community we did the program in was up 46% over last year. (Respondent 2)

A point was made that indicated a more complex, ongoing interplay between rural and urban tourism,

> The rural areas in particular have seen - not necessarily growth above pre-pandemic - but certainly better than some of the more urban areas. Interestingly, after 9-11, in the rural communities, there was a huge increase of people wanting to get away from urban areas. (Respondent 1)

This draws attention to the possibility of *rural* tourism being more insulated from certain categories of crisis situations that have greater impact on urban or otherwise 'dense' areas, with COVID as a recent example.

The interviews identified a wealth of information about the perspectives, activities, and needs of DDev programs across a range of STOs but provided evidence that there may very well be a greater number of offices offering services and programs that could practically be considered DDev but may be operating under different titles. It was discovered that while Destination Development is often described in contrast to Destination *Marketing*, there is a commonly held belief that they are complementary efforts, not substitutes. A relationship between DDev and international and academic tourism models was identified but was a slightly obscured one. The largest domestic development influence on DDev seems to have been state Rural Development work and Destination Development ultimately occupies a highly intersectional and multidisciplinary space that thrives on high degrees of networking, facilitation, and stakeholder coordination.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research was inspired by interest in a growing practitioner approach to tourism development and state tourism management known as Destination Development (DDev). Several innovative and award-winning State Tourism Offices (STOs) have created popular models for developing local tourism capacity, catalyzing product and tourism experience creation, and optimizing marketing spending through effective local planning. Practitioner interest in the DDev approach has been spreading and gaining national recognition, albeit in specific spheres.

In many ways these DDev approaches parallel contemporary best practices found in tourism academia; however, the states, offices, and programs using DDev are virtually absent from tourism literature on such topics, despite the apparent wealth of practical information and insight the programs might be able to provide. The study of US states and their DDev programs needs to begin somewhere. This exploratory inductive approach was adopted to conduct interviews with key staff at several STO DDev programs to guide the course of the research and allow for the creation of a sharper understanding of DDev that could encourage further research using deductive and theoretical approaches.

Due to a great deal of practical overlap between interview topics, the Research Question categories have been simplified into four broader sections for the purpose of discussing findings.. The four topics focus on 1) the definition of DDev, 2) the emergence of DDev, 3) the elements of DDev, and 4) the creation and improvement of DDev programs. The review of these four topics is then followed by discussion of implication and suggestions for future research.

Describing and Defining Destination Development

It was found that DDev is strongly recognized as a distinct field of practice. It has only recently become more clearly articulated, codified, and labeled in a way that

explicitly signals whether certain activities are DDev work. This lack of clear

codification has made tacit knowledge critical, as DDev is still largely practice-based,

with practitioners often using context and content of descriptions to identify when it

"feels" like somebody is doing DDev, often without the presence of a DDev label. The

concept of tacit knowledge corresponds with research into communities and

networks of practice, which recognizes that knowledge exists in varying degrees of

codification and, in some cases, can *only* remain uncodified and tacit (Duguid, 2012).

Use of the DDev label has been growing, but there might be a large amount of

undiscovered DDev-relevant work being done under different labels or names, or

that is unlabeled altogether.

In many ways DDev transcends not just the traditional responsibilities of tourism,

but the conceptual traditions of tourism as well: ideas of "destinations" are closely

tied to community ownership, perceptions of authenticity, resident quality of life, as

well as broader ideas of place and quality of place. Accordingly, the term

"destination" can reflect the multisectoral nature of community tourism, allowing for

a recognition that metrics, outcomes, and stakeholders transcend a narrow view of

tourism (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). These disciplinary intersections mirror those

occurring in academia, with topics such as Human Geographies and social justice

arguments about equitable development and community empowerment, as discussed

by authors such as Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) and Tosun (2000). The practical

difficulties that emerge from this high degree of intersectionality are evident in the

struggle to articulate or codify the knowledge base of DDev work.

Many different sectors now seem to be doing similar work, but under different

banners. Similar to how early DDev practitioners listened keenly for descriptions of

DDev work using another or no label in order to develop innovative models to serve

the communities within their states, modern DDev practitioners must look for related

programs and practices in multiple sectors in order to identify what resources might

serve tourism communities despite not being explicitly labeled as tourism-facing. Without a clear understanding of what relevant services exist under all the possible agency banners, there is a high risk of creating redundant programs or missing out on possible community support opportunities and resources.

Due to the highly intersectional nature of modern tourism landscapes—a complex mix of nebulous, unlabeled resources and community tourism development in different states— respondents stated that networking and facilitation is considered a pivotal element of DDev. This confirms the recent academic discussions around Destination Marketing/Management Organizations (DMOs)s and the growing importance of their roles as networkers and leaders (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008), as well as the role of governance, which is described by Ruhanen (2013) as catalyzing, facilitating, and supporting. At a community scale, "horizontal networking" (Cawley and Gillmor, 2008) connects stakeholders with one another into action groups that can maintain momentum. At a state or regional level, "vertical networking" (Cawley and Gillmor, 2008) connects individuals and organizations across communities so that there is greater awareness of resources, allowing diffuse practices to emerge.

DDev was largely positioned as focusing on the *creation* and *improvement* of destination communities. "Creation" relates strongly to rural development, as a destination is created only where there was not one previously—commonly in rural, less-developed areas with lower degrees of visitor awareness. The *improvement* of destinations expands this scope into more established communities and pre-existing tourism regions. For sustainable and responsible DDev, *creation* was emphasized for areas that had room to grow, recognizing a role for carry capacity and limits of acceptable change. The importance of physical and geographic capacity sometimes created a focus on regional scales rather than individual communities. Regional scales could be considered a step between states and local community. They allow for the organization of destination regions that are structured around similar tourism

experiences (such as skiing) or destination image and similar aesthetics (such as a coastal region), corresponding with a resurgence of regional planning and development as described by Calero and Turner (2020).

The supply-side emphasis of preliminary DDev definitions was echoed by study participants, but there was a universal recognition that marketing and development are intertwined and highly complementary practices, rather than substitutes. A strong destination is needed for effective promotion, and effective promotion is still needed even in a strong destination. This emphasis on tourism supply and product experience corresponds with literature on destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) and tourism product development (Benur & Bramwell, 2015).

DDev was found to be closely related to traditional tourism marketing efforts, though often positioned explicitly as "*not*-marketing." DDev programming was closely tied to marketing, as most activities were supported afterwards with marketing, and without a strong product or destination, marketing was less effective, less cost efficient, or even counterproductive. Additionally, strong tourism planning efforts require an understanding of target visitor segments, their behaviors, and their desired experiences if development plans are to be implemented effectively. While marketing can be seen as a step that occurs *after* "visitor readiness" and DDev programming, an accurate understanding of tourism demand must be present in the early stages of any DDev work (visioning, convening, product development, etc.) to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes. This process parallels marketing and development planning models, as posited by Hall (2008) and Gunn (2002), but with an added layer of greater attention to community capacity and self-direction.

While destination management, stewardship, and sustainability were top of mind for all the STO informants, the exact nature of the relationship between DDev programming and sustainability was more ambiguous. It was pointed out that

"destination management" and "sustainability" often mean different things to different individuals, communities, or organizations, and in a field such as DDev that is already nebulous and only loosely codified, this ambiguity is amplified. While specific activities can have sustainability as a goal or outcome, this also depends on what the understanding of sustainability is, as even if *parts* have a sustainable goal, or a management goal, what does that mean about the 'whole'?

Destination Development Emergence

DDev looks to have emerged from, and in many cases, retained strong ties to, the field of rural development. Rural development has a particularly strong legacy in the United States due to the history of economic restructuring, the farm crisis, and shifts in manufacturing and extraction trends (Brown, 2006; Luloff et al., 1994). In most cases it seems as though DDev is taking traditional rural and economic development practices and applying them through the lens of tourism, while much tourism leadership in the US still revolves strictly around promotion—a finding that supports the assertion by Pike and Page (2014) that tourism planning literature has relatively low penetration into tourism development and marketing practice—with states that offer DDev programming seeming to be in the minority.

All the studied DDev programs emerged from an early relationship to rural development initiatives. Some were organized by a governor's initiative to support rural communities, which supports literature that finds leadership and "change agents" to be powerful for creating practical shifts, if only as gatekeepers that encourage others (Moscardo, 2008). One emerged from the outdoor recreation industry banding together and identifying a lack of support programs for developing outdoor recreation and tourism, which created demand for the STO to create a development position within their office. While most have maintained an official focus on rural communities, one STO positioned their work around main-street-type

development and, while rural communities were included under the statewide umbrella, there was less of an official emphasis.

Paired with the catalyst of rural development initiatives, community listening sessions or similar efforts were conducted by the studied STOs to evaluate the needs and demands of rural communities, echoing values enshrined within CBT (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018), along with ABCD and broader Community Development work (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012). Programming was then developed to meet the needs that were identified. Despite being administered by the STO, the process seems to be a very bottom-up framework, and arguably might be a powerful message on identifying common rural community needs. Some additional common motives were improving and diversifying aging tourism supply and place brand, conservation and outdoor recreation sustainability, and diversifying away from extraction and agricultural economies.

In some studied states, DDev programming emerged as a way to drive visitors away from the most popular destination communities, ease their burden, and distribute tourism spending more widely, in alignment with tourism management and sustainability planning as discussed by Hall (2008). In other cases, DDev programming emerged in response to smaller communities seeing nearby successful tourism communities and wanting to also benefit from tourism, but while approaching it with greater caution due to awareness of the potential impact of "overtourism." The emphasis of DDev does tend to remain oriented around the creation and development of destinations, with fewer resources dedicated to addressing "overtourism" until high visitation becomes a more tangible issue.

Tourism literature discusses the conceptual relevance of peripherality (Moscardo, 2005), and how an un-nuanced understanding of rural communities can lead to assumptions of homogeneity (Vaugeois, 2018). The interviews in this research provided evidence of this dynamic, as some rural communities had drastically

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different capacity and resources needs than other rural communities, while some non-rural-but-peripheral communities had more needs in common with peripheral-rural communities.

Due to a dominant high-level emphasis within tourism academia on international and developing destinations, coupled with largely international-serving NGOs operating as the primary channel between tourism academia and practice, DDev in the United States seems to have emerged as a domestic microcosm. It is largely removed from the gaze of tourism academia and theory, despite a decade's earlier emphasis on rural US tourism development (Brown, 2006; Gartner, 2004; Luloff et al., 1994). Despite this delineation, a clear exploration of the intersections of DDev and international tourism development would likely benefit both approaches.

Within the United States, DDev seems to be most closely associated with the state of Oregon, which developed DDev offerings out of rural and sustainable development programs over the past two decades. The Oregon STO has directly collaborated in one way or another with every participant STO in the study and was the only STO that all respondents were particularly familiar with.

Destination Development Program Elements

Distinctions can be drawn between a) knowing *what*, b) knowing *how*, and c) having the *skills and experience* to execute the effort successfully. Some DDev activities can simply serve to raise awareness about *what* needs to be done. For example, local DMOs should make sure that they are aware of their local assets. Other DDev activities will dive deeper into *how* a particular activity can be done, expanding on the need for a local asset inventory and detailing the process for how to draft such a review. But even with the *what* and *how* being articulated, it's possible that experience and practice may be lacking, and the person or group conducting the analysis would have trouble deciding the appropriate information to include, sources of information, optimal synthesis of the information, and conclusions

that could be drawn. To some extent, this bare framework from awareness to successful implementation might lend itself to a categorical outline for classifying DDev activities to identify gaps or unique strengths in DDev offerings in different offices. A key element of a DDev activity framework would be structured around the categories of delivery *method* (such as convenings and toolkits) and *content* (such as education, advocacy, and product development). By combining different methods with different contents, a more comprehensive outline of DDev activities can be created, and gaps can be identified. Content needs could be informed by participant and stakeholder listening sessions along with needs and asset assessments supplemented with academic literature that identifies tourism success factors, such as Dodds, Ali, and Galaski (2018), Moscardo (2005), and Zielinski et al. (2018).

Activities within DDev programs are commonly tailored to the unique needs of the community, corresponding to aspects of their current position in a Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (TALC). This creates a need for effective diagnostic criteria identifying the life cycle stage of a community and offering clear insight into the types of programmatic interventions that are most appropriate in order to allow for greater customization of DDev activities, echoing a need posited by Vaugeois (2018).

Education and tourism advocacy is important to convince local communities of the practical value of sustainable, equitable approaches to tourism. Tourism support and planning should be clearly focused on community outcomes with the recognition that sustainability and conservation can be less top-of-mind for communities that have not yet experienced many negative impacts from tourism, a reactive sentiment that can reduce the likelihood of proactive sustainability approaches.

Creating and Improving Destination Development Programs

The three most common themes from the research providing suggestions to improve DDev programs revolved around: 1) optimizing evaluation metrics and the ability to attribute destination outcomes to DDev activities, 2) placing a greater

emphasis on outcomes, implementation, and the ability of communities to maintain momentum and have resources to effect real change, and 3) ensuring a strong demand exists for a more formal DDev network of practice that could create greater awareness around the tactical approach, along with effective benchmarking and streamlining practitioner collaboration.

A theme that emerged early in the research is a strong community of practice underlying work that DDev staff do. Yet, one of the common hallmarks of communities of practice, related to a historical term "invisible college," is that much of the knowledge is tacit and professional networks and structures can often be implicit, circumstantial, and largely unformalized (Duguid, 2012). The field of DDev within the United States seems to fall within this category, and while there are many similarities between program models, emergence, and needs, they can exist in a somewhat unarticulated space. A common theme in the interviews was demand for a more formalized DDev network that would connect practitioners and outline which states are doing what and how—once again echoing the recognition that strong networks are pivotal for successful tourism (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008).

Due to this nascent formalization, it is an acknowledged limitation that this research often relied on the specific phrase "destination development" being directly articulated on STO websites, which created an initial list of seven. The findings indicating the existence of a largely tacit community of practice would seem to imply that a greater number of offices are doing similar work already, or are interested in creating DDev programs, yet are using a different name. Using a more descriptive understanding of what DDev is could help identify more STOs with similar programmatic offerings under different names, and perhaps even allow DDev professionals to contact these offices and offer the term "Destination Development" as a designator to further place practitioners on the same page.

The theme around optimizing implementation may indicate relevance for the approach known as Human Centered Design Thinking, which emphasized rapid prototyping, needs assessments, and creativity (IDEO U, n.d.) to inform the use of flexible, semi-templated frameworks to provide agile and rapid models for implementation that can increase outcome efficacy while also creating space and intentionality to adapt to the unique needs of different settings. This combination of adjustment for local needs around equity, socio-geographic characteristics, and templated preemptive thinking might strike a chord with the implementation outcomes of DDev programming.

Implications

The recognition that there is a distinct field of practice around DDev should encourage subsequent theoretical and deductive study. A sharper understanding of the DDev concept and related topics allows for a more structured approach, including the incorporation of academic theory and explanatory frameworks. This research sought to more clearly illuminate *what is*, a crucial step to pave the way for further inquiry around *why* and *how*.

Essentially, DDev can be understood as Community Development (Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012) through tourism. Community solidarity, stakeholder engagement, and community benefit stand out as key elements of both DDev and Community Development; DDev just uses the specific lens of tourism. A beginning definition for DDev might read, *"Destination Development is Community Development through tourism, with an emphasis on planning, product development, and capacity building. These goals of sustainable community benefit are achieved through education, training, and technical assistance facilitated and implemented through strong stakeholder action groups and networks."* In practice, this often then manifests in rural or peripheral destinations, both at community and regional scales,

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that would benefit most from the development or management support that DDev offers through programming.

One finding reinforced the perceived rift between international and domestic tourism approaches in the United States, particularly illustrated by the treatment of Community Based Tourism (CBT) literature. Recent literature has posited greater overlap between CBT in "developing" and "developed" countries than is generally articulated by tourism literature (Zielinski et al., 2020). Contemporary discussion of international CBT has begun to emphasize successful implementation, outcomes, and operational longevity (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018); a group of topics that are particularly important to the experiences of domestic US STOs and their operation of DDev programs. With this research discovering that the fifteen-to-twenty-year tradition of DDev work in the United States emerged out of CBT and international tourism models, a reevaluation of the relationship between models of tourism development systems in international/domestic and developing/developed destinations would be valuable.

Tourism academia has long recognized the importance of factoring community quality of life and ecological conservation into discussions of tourism, particularly through a triple-bottom-line approach (Hall, 2008). But the penetration of this sentiment is sporadic and inconsistent across many DMOs (Pike & Page, 2014), often emerging as a reactive ad-hoc effort in response to specific strains, such as complaints of "over-tourism." Adopting certain interventions, like a leave-no-trace mantra, may do little to help communities that are struggling with more structural issues, such as developing successful local businesses to capitalize on visitor flows, housing markets that are booming and causing equity concerns through increasing cost of living, or institutional causes of over-tourism that cannot be addressed through visitor behavior change campaigns. State-level DDev programs provide key insight into particularly comprehensive examples of capacity building, sustainable

development, cross-sector collaboration, and rural economic resiliency, and seem to be operating on the cutting edge of practice-based tourism development innovation (Hall, 2008). These are topics that have only increased in importance during the pandemic, especially with the sentiment among tourism academics that COVID-19 is a pivotal moment for introspection that may adjust the course of future tourism practice (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). The mechanisms through which STOs and other DMOs shift their focus from marketing to management and development can be explored through the lens of DDev programs. In several cases, demand for DDev has emerged independent of a top-down sustainability and conservation directive, with DDev emphasizing economic diversification as a way to update tourism product to remain competitive as a state destination.

Future Research

Because this research was exploratory and descriptive, there is a large volume of future research that can and should be conducted to verify and expand on these preliminary findings.

The relationship between COVID-19 and DDev programming warrants dedicated inquiry. There was evidence from the interviews that community participation in DDev activities may have increased community resiliency, supported COVID recovery, and better prepared communities to capitalize on the shift towards rural demand that accompanied COVID and COVID recovery. Additionally, COVID might provide a useful case study to test evaluation metrics for more effectively measuring outcomes attributable to DDev interventions, for purposes of internal program review and to provide evidence for external political value. Understanding whether communities that participated in DDev programming such as visioning, workshops, action group creation, and action planning were impacted differently by COVID, or had differential recovery patterns, might be useful to illustrate resiliency benefits provided by DDev.

As DDev is still in a formative stage that requires efforts to unify its practitioners and clarify its conceptual position, the field might benefit from the dedicated study of the emergence of a related field, such as Community Development. Community Development grappled with issues of conceptualization, cross-disciplinary intersectionality, and ambiguity—topics that parallel what DDev seems to be currently experiencing (Bhattacharyya, 2004). A related topic is the presence of dedicated professional organizations such as the American Planning Association (APA) and its associated AICP accreditation. DDev has many similarities in practice to professional planning, and a strong understanding of how the APA was formed and the benefits of operating a practitioner accreditation might have useful implications for understanding important next steps and possible models for refining a community and network of practice around DDev.

The TALC model was mentioned in several interviews and has a useful role regarding pairing stages of development with specific community needs that can be addressed through DDev activities. However, the TALC seems to have some practical limitations when factoring in differing degrees of community potential around capacity, organization, and resources. Deeper inquiry into revised models of TALC and related frameworks with the intention of creating a more nuanced diagnostic model would be valuable; such models can help classify where a community is capacity-wise, which could inform greater customization of DDev programming to provide specific interventions where and when they would be most beneficial (Vaugeois, 2018).

The pivotal presence of Oregon as a key STO indicates there would be value in targeted research that uses Oregon's state DMO and its history as a singular case study into the emergence and spread of DDev practice in the United States. Oregon seems to have caused a domino effect in the development of DDev models and still occupies a role as a key innovative DMO in domestic "developed" tourism.

Lastly, future research should take care to incorporate scientific rigor along with theory (e.g., diffusion of innovation, systems, or community capital theory) for the purposes of conceptual and mechanical explanation. This work was highly inductive and explanatory, but has provided several key touchpoints that additional deductive-leaning studies can use as inspiration.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Christine Vogt
WATTS: Community Resources and Development, School of
-
CHRISTINE.VOGT@asu.edu

Dear Christine Vogt:

On 9/15/2020 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Destination Development Programs in the United States: Processes, Properties, and Elements
Investigator:	Christine Vogt
IRB ID:	STUDY00012494
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent Form, Category: Consent Form; • Interview Research Questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Email sample, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Recruitment 'Prospectus flyer', Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 9/15/2020.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Daniel Clasen
        Daniel Clasen

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL TEMPLATE

Hi _____,

My name is Daniel Clasen. I'm a graduate student at Arizona State University and conducting research on the emergence and nature of Destination Development programs. I'll be conducting interviews starting this September and was hoping you and the _____- Office of Tourism could participate.

I was excited to notice that _____ offers Destination Development services and resources. [Elaboration on why this office is selected] making ____ uniquely well positioned as a primary participant.

Participation would generally start with an informal video-call to discuss preliminary details, followed by at least one 1–2-hour formal video-call interview. However, there is room for flexibility to adapt the research methods to your organization's needs.

Attached is a document with more details about my research. Please let me know if you would be able to participate, so we can touch base about dates and next steps.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing more about your work!

Daniel

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOL

Response:

1. Informant consent is obtained (Student will email consent form)
2. Key informants will be contacted to establish dates of availability for participation (Student will contact and establish dates)
3. A primary 45 to 90 minute video-call interview over Zoom will be conducted. Based on informant consent, the video call will be recorded through Zoom's 'record meeting' function which saves the file as an audio/video file and a separate audio-only file. A backup device (cellphone) will be used to audio record the Zoom interview as well- in case there are any technical problems with the primary zoom-based recording. (Student will conduct interview).
   a. Note: Zoom video recording will only be used as an internal data file to review for themes, not as an external presentation. (If the interviews had been in person, only an audio recording would have been done. But since they are remote, Zoom video/audio seems to be the simpler, default, option.)
4. Informant may express interest in a follow-up interview. A follow-up interview may 1) continue addressing the same themes as the first interview 2) address or clarify a new set of themes that emerged from the first interview.

- Data collection will primarily occur from the last week of September 2020 to November 2020.
- Follow-up timeframe will extend to early Spring 2021.

Interview is semi-structured around the primary research questions attached.

Destination Development (DD)
State Tourism Offices (STO)

1. **Context:** How DD programs relate to broader literature and tourism knowledge, academia, and other programs?

2. **Why:** Why were these programs created (catalyzed) in each case? What is the 'purpose' of the program, as well as the purpose of the STO itself?

3. **What:** What activities do these programs entail? What are similarities and differences between the programs at different STO?

4. **How:** What does the process of creating, managing, and evaluating the programs looks like within and between cases?

5. **Evaluation:** How are benefits and outcomes measured? How is political and budgetary allocation value shown?

6. **Mobilization:** How can findings be interpreted and packaged so that it can help induce new programs, improve design of emerging programs, and improve the management of existing programs?

Additional themes or categories might emerge after the first interviews conducted, creating new topics of inquiry for any follow-up interviews or correspondence. What those new themes might be is unknown at this time.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

Destination Development Programs in the United States: Processes, Properties, and Elements

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Christine Vogt in the School of Community Resources and Development at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the nature and context of State Tourism Office Destination Development programs in the United States.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve at least a single video-call (Zoom) interview, lasting between 45-90 minutes – depending on availability. Follow-up interviews may be conducted if participants wish. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Participants will benefit from additional insight into the history and context of programs they are operating, potential benchmarking criteria, and increase awareness of additional resources for those designing or managing similar Destination Development programs. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Confidentiality will be maintained by not reporting names, contact information, or clear identifying information. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Due to the nature of the topic, and limited case population, it may be possible to identify some of the participant organizations, but specific information, statements, and findings will not be directly attributed to particular organizations unless explicitly discussed and consented. If there are any requests that particular information or details be kept out of the research report (even if unattributed), agreements can be made while discussing the consenting process.

I would like to audio and video record this interview though Zoom (video and audio), and a backup device (audio). The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the primary investigator, Dr. Christine Vogt, at christine.vogt@asu.edu, or Daniel Clasen at dwclasen@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name:

Signature: Date: