RE-CONCEPTUALISING THE HOST: THE ROLE OF BROKER-HOST NETWORKS IN THE ORDERING OF TOURISM

by

Lynn Beard

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Supervisors: Dr. Caroline Scarles; Professor John Tribe

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Declaration

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Abstract

As a concept deeply embedded in social and cultural practice, the host-guest relationship has been identified as a key paradigm in tourism research, where the relationship has traditionally been seen as an unbalanced binary involving powerful tourists and disempowered locals. More recently, the value of the concept of host has been challenged in the context of increased global mobility and commercialised relationships between tourists, industry providers and local communities. Despite this, it remains a key sensitising concept in our thinking about hospitality and tourism. As such, it is still regularly, and perhaps sometimes uncritically, employed in the literature in association with other concepts, including ‘community’, to express relationships between tourism producers and consumers, and ‘stakeholder’ when the context relates to relationships of policy and practice involved in the production of tourism.

This study contributes to tourism theory through a re-conceptualization of the role of host in light of postmodern developments in tourism and hospitality research, focusing on the processes of mediation between different actors which shape the way tourism is created and performed. It uses actor-network theory (ANT), to investigate the often-overlooked role of various categories of brokers, formal and informal, human and non-human, who operate within and around tourism.

Developing the concept of broker-host networks, it examines two key areas of association: the multiplicity of people and organisations providing and using tourism services, and the hybrid environments in which these operate, using a case study design with an empirical focus on an established international and domestic tourism destination in North Wales. The narrative storylines show ways in which the broker-host concept is capable of generating questions about how tourism networks and tourism places travel through the formal structures of tourism policy, enrolling human and non-human actors which together perform the role of host on the ‘backstage’ of tourism.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PREFACE

This project began as a successful proposal for ESRC funding to explore the role of host using the actor-networks of tour operators involved in niche tourism in Sri Lanka. The plan was to follow the ‘actor’ known as ‘responsible tourism’ and explore how this idea is understood and practised by outbound tour operators in the United Kingdom and inbound tour operators in Sri Lanka. The methodological and empirical focus of this study was to be a case study involving three embedded cases of contrasting tours to Sri Lanka, in which I would participate as observer during a period of overseas fieldwork during the first part of 2014. Before this fieldwork, I planned to interview the relevant UK operators about how these tours, themselves conceptualised as actor-networks, were assembled, and how the operators ensured that the principles of responsible tourism that they espoused were carried through to the localities visited during the tours. I then planned to follow up my participation in the tours by interviewing the relevant Sri Lankan tour operators and identifying further brokers operating within and around these operators to shape the way tourism is assembled in Sri Lanka. These were likely to include government at several levels, plus NGOs and other third sector organisations working in the country.

Unfortunately, at the end of the first year of my PhD (August 2013) the ESRC found that it was unable to meet the cost of this fieldwork, so I was forced to re-site my study in a more accessible and less expensive location (the United Kingdom). To maintain my core funding, I needed to keep the same title and basic theoretical framework, but had to lose those elements that related to Sri Lanka: the idea of using the responsible tourism discourse and its interpretation between cultures as a focus, and the context of tourism as a means of development in the global South.

My search for a new focus led me initially to consider applying the same model to inbound tour operators in UK, but this, to carry the research through as planned, would have involved overseas operators sending tourists to UK as well. Unwilling to become involved in another funding debate, I began looking at some other key tourism brokers in UK to see if I could identify an appropriate theme. One of these brokers was Visit England, and while exploring their website, I found a reference to a campaign called From Field to Fork: mapping the local food web. This campaign was run by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, and emphasised, among other things, the importance of local food in maintaining the character of local communities and town centres, and hence their attractiveness as tourism destinations.
Sensing an opportunity to apply actor-network thinking to these local food webs, I followed them up further, with a view to identifying one example in which to locate my case study. This provided me with a ‘material’ focus for my study, with ‘food’ as an actor, with its attached relationships, practices and discourses. One of these discourses was particularly interesting for me. I had read and enjoyed *In Praise of Slow* by Carl Honore (2005). The origins of his story lay in the Slow Food movement, which began in Italy in 1986, and became international when it launched the Slow Food manifesto in 1989. Slow Food later inspired Cittaslow, a movement which again started in Italy, but had the wider aim of improving the quality of life in towns by encouraging practices, not only in food production and consumption, but in other aspects such as transport and community living. Cittaslow is now also an international movement, with members in 28 countries. Each member country can award Cittaslow accreditation to towns of below 50,000 people. Cittaslow accreditation now has a status which enables such towns to attract funding, particularly in Europe, to support their activities, which includes as part of its manifesto, a commitment to develop tourism in Cittaslow towns.

So, my initial search on Visit England had led me to a formidable actor-network of people, things and discourses, in which tourism had emerged as an important effect. But I still did not have an empirical focus for my study.

At this point my own background entered the story. Growing up in Wrexham, in North Wales, I regularly visit my family who still live there. Coinciding with one of my visits, I noticed that two neighbouring towns were both involved in Cittaslow (remarkably, two of only six in the UK). The first one, Mold, had achieved Cittaslow status in 2006, and I noted from its website a commitment to tourism development as part of its Cittaslow charter. The second, Llangollen, had just announced its successful application for Cittaslow status (September 2013). Digging around on the internet, I discovered that the town had also launched a Slow Food group at the same time. By chance, the annual Llangollen Food Festival was taking place on the weekend of my visit (October 2013), so I attended the festival where I was delighted to discover that Slow Food Llangollen was an exhibitor. I made contact with the group members, had a meeting with the leader of the Slow Food group who agreed to help, and the actor-network of my project was established.

My revised project proposal was approved by ESRC in November 2013.
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<td>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (UK Protected Area Status)</td>
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<td>DCC</td>
<td>Denbighshire County Council</td>
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<td>DDP</td>
<td>Destination Denbighshire Partnership</td>
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<td>DMP</td>
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Chapter 1  INTRODUCTION: RE-CONCEPTUALISING THE HOST

…the binaries that once supported an understanding of tourism collapse because every place is ordered by everyday and touristic structures that combine rather than separate. (Franklin, 2012: 44)

Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look. (Blumer, 1954:7)

1.1  Overview

As a concept deeply embedded in social and cultural practice, the host-guest relationship is a key paradigm in tourism research (Chambers, 2007, Cohen and Cohen, 2012). The relationship has conventionally been seen in sociological and anthropological traditions as an unbalanced binary involving powerful tourists and disempowered locals (Smith, 1989), gazers and the gazed upon (Urry, 1992). More recently, the value of the concept of host has been challenged in the context of increased global mobility and commercialised relationships between tourists, industry providers and local communities (Arramberri, 2001; Sherlock, 2001; Lashley, Lynch and Morrison, 2007). However, despite this, it remains a key sensitising concept (Blumer, 1954) in our thinking about hospitality and tourism. As such, it is still regularly, and perhaps sometimes uncritically, employed in the literature in association with other concepts, including ‘community’, to express relationships between tourism producers and consumers, and ‘stakeholder’ when the context relates to relationships of policy and practice involved in the production of tourism.

The ‘cultural turn’, a post-structuralist shift in thinking evident throughout the social sciences (Ray and Sayer, 1999; Barnes, 2005), saw, among other things, a change in focus from production as an economic activity, to the role of consumption in what came to be known as the ‘experience society’ (Featherstone, 1991; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Bauman, 2007). This ‘turn’ has had particular salience in tourism studies, where it has engendered a body of research drawing attention to tourism’s role in the ordering of society (Franklin, 2004). Much of the research which has emerged as a result of the cultural turn in tourism has focused on the tourist, and on
how tourism is experienced by the tourist, in ways which conceptually leave little space for those who ‘produce’ tourism, and often explicitly exclude them. The evolution of post-structuralist approaches has also tended to reinforce the segregation of tourism research into either management or social sciences ‘fields’ (Tribe, 1997) of tourism knowledge, with the result that research on industry practitioners has in the main been the focus of management or systems-oriented approaches, and there has been less research on the effects of ordering created in relationships between those who work in tourism. However, the more recent expansion of tourism research into new interdisciplinary areas has highlighted the fluidity of the boundaries between these two fields, with the cultural turn characterised as one of several knowledge ‘cloud’ networks in which new approaches to tourism research bring dynamism and mobility to the knowledge ‘fields’ of tourism (Tribe and Liburd, 2016).

The ideas embodied in the cultural turn were translated into tourism through innovative economic and social approaches in which culture and economy were theoretically de-differentiated at and between scales from global to local. This provided ‘a framework which conceptualizes tourism as a nexus of circuits operating within production-consumption dialectics enabled by the processes of negotiated (re)production’ (Ateljevic, 2000: 371). The idea of fluid and interrelated tourism production was also developed by Pritchard and Morgan (1998) in their discussion of the role of the ‘circuit of culture’ through which powerful tourism imagery and identities are mediated. Within these ‘circuits’ of tourism production, we therefore see a move towards a focus on understanding the processes of mediation - a conception which ‘offers boundless opportunity for the re-consumption of conceptual gazes and theoretical practices’ (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004: 299).

This study proposes one such agenda, extending discussion of the social relations of tourism production which have hitherto focused largely on tourists, into relationships between brokers within and around the industry itself. Attempts to understand such links have populated the literature, and tourism research has adopted differing paradigms to approach this issue, from structural models, through network and systems theory, to stakeholder theory and value chain analysis. The dominant form in these approaches is to identify the structure of the network and the identity of its actors, and then to study relationships between them. This has become a well-established model for the study of many tourism issues and phenomena, and forms the basis of much tourism planning, particularly in destinations, where these models are seen as an effective
way of representing ‘stakeholders’ involved in tourism development. However, despite the fact that many of these approaches have made significant contributions to business and policy-oriented approaches to tourism, most, almost inevitably, fall down on the rapidly-escalating complexity that emerges as soon as they move beyond the level of the local.

Such models therefore have a tendency to oversimplify what are inherently complex relationships, representing static ‘snapshots’ of how relationships between different actors operate, rather than asking how such relationships are forged, and then maintained or broken down. Seeing tourism as an ‘an active ordering of modernity and not …..merely experience or consumption’ (Franklin, 2004: 278) represents a significant paradigm shift in tourism studies. Franklin asserts that asking what tourism does, rather than what it is, engenders a focus on process rather than structure, and encourages questions about how tourists become tourists, and ‘how tourism orders other objects and people in the world as well as the ordering effects that they in turn create’ (Franklin, 2004: 278).

Adopting a ‘tourism as ordering’ ontology, this study therefore uses ideas from actor-network theory (ANT) in which relationships between actors, who may be human or non-human, are dynamic rather than fixed, and in which relations of politics and power continually shift to create orderings which ensure the stability of such networks. Networks thus formed are in a process of continuous change through a series of translations, defined as ‘the processes of negotiation, mobilization, representation, and displacement among actors, entities and places’ (van der Duim, 2007a: 966). Rather than seeing actors as intermediaries, defined as that which ‘transports meaning or force without translation’ (Latour, 2005: 38), meaning in ANT is ‘transformed, translated, distorted and modified’ by mediators, whose contribution is dynamic and unpredictable. This, Law (2004) argues, although ‘messy’, is nonetheless a more accurate reflection of the workings of ‘the social’ than accounts in which intermediaries perform specific roles in pre-existing structures.

Although many, including some of its early proponents in sociology (Latour, 2005; Law, 2003; Law and Hetherington, 2000) assert that ANT provides a methodological toolbox rather than a theory, it embodies ways of thinking which have proved attractive to those who have sought an approach which better reflects the way tourism creates ordering effects in the social world. This study therefore characterises the host as an actor-network, identifying different actors involved in the creation, delivery and performance of tourism to focus on the processes and interactions which
enable such relationships to form, stabilise or break down. It suggests that these actors include the various types of brokers, both formal and informal, who operate within and around the tourism industry (Cheong and Miller, 2000; Jennings and Weiler, 2006), enmeshed in networks which also include the ‘things’ that populate tourism, and the narratives and discourse of tourism practice.

The context of this study is therefore the actor-network, characterised as ‘tourismscape’ by van der Duim, Peters and Wearing (2005), in which the performance of host takes place in tourism. Although in ANT the idea of context is regarded as fluid, seen to emerge from an understanding of relationships rather than identified as an a priori exercise (Latour, 1986), it is necessary to identify a starting point around which the empirical dimensions of context coalesce. The study therefore uses an established tourism place, Llangollen in North East Wales, UK, as a starting point, and its successful application to become a Cittaslow town in 2013 as the point of entry. From this point, the study establishes the key actors in the town involved in the bid, and traces their relationships with tourism brokers in the town and beyond using the sampling method known as ‘following the actors’. The collection of material took place over a period of eighteen months, ending in August 2015.

1.2 Aim and objectives

Aim

The aim of this study is to contribute to tourism theory through a reconceptualization of the role of host.

Objectives

1) To critique the concept of host by exploring how different understandings of the nature of host underpin practice in the production of tourism.
2) To adopt ideas from actor-network theory to critique the different roles of tourism brokers and the dynamic nature of broker relationships in the performance of host.
3) To investigate the nature of identity and power as effects in forms of mediation occurring within broker relationships
4) To use these ideas to develop a conceptual framework based on broker-host networks.
5) To use this framework empirically to explore new theoretical insights relating to the tourism host.

1.3 Contribution

The contribution of this study is threefold:

1) It contributes to tourism theory by providing a new concept, the broker-host network, based on ANT thinking, which highlights the role of host as active, relational and emergent in tourism actor-networks.

2) By developing this theory through an empirical case study based on a tourism ‘place’, it highlights practical issues of destination management, and particularly the role and performance of ‘stakeholders’ which can meet calls in the literature for a more relational approach to tourism management issues.

3) It presents an original methodological contribution, the identification of five ‘character traits’ of the ANT researcher, which emerged from reflection on the use of method during the course of this research.

1.4 Chapter outlines

Chapters 2-4 form the literature review for this study. Chapter 2 examines the literature in tourism on the host, focusing on how the concept has been approached through the different disciplinary lenses (sociology, anthropology and geography) that have traditionally constituted academic approaches to the study of tourism. In drawing together these different approaches through a post cultural-turn focus on performance, it argues that the concept of ‘host’, rather than being rejected as outdated and irrelevant in today’s tourism, can be constructively investigated using an approach which focuses on the performance and enactment of host in networks of brokers. These networks of ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ in tourism hosting can be seen to exist as fluid and networked practices in and beyond the local and situated context of destination. The section concludes by suggesting that understanding these practices is the key to a reconceptualization of the role of host.
Chapter 3 considers the ways tourism brokers have been identified in the literature, beginning with a focus on two key themes: the traditional role of cultural brokers as chalk-face mediators in host-guest relationships, and the wider mediating role of brokers identified in the literature on the operation of Foucauldian power in tourism. It suggests that this latter perspective aligns with approaches which focus on the concept of ordering in relationships between different forms of broker operating within tourism networks, and goes on to explore some key ideas relating to mediation in tourism networks. It introduces some important themes from actor-network theory, which link the concept of mediation with the processes of social ordering, and explains the re-conceptualisation of the host as an actor-network, focusing in particular on the role of both human and non-human brokers in such networks. It ends by considering the different mediation practices of brokers involved in the networks of tourism hosting, and moves towards a justification for the use of an actor-network vision of ‘community’ as an empirical focus.

Chapter 4 synthesises the themes from the first two review chapters using actor-network thinking. It begins by discussing the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of actor-network theory (ANT), and explains the difference between ANT and other ‘network’ based approaches to the study of tourism. It then explores the three overarching concepts (ordering, mediation and multiplicity) on which ANT thinking is based, before going on to introduce a number of specific ideas through which ANT narratives are produced, with a particular focus on ideas about socio-material networks, and the implications of admitting non-human actors to the study. It develops this new understanding around the concept of broker-host networks, which characterise tourism networks as hybrid circuits of production, the ‘host’ as one such circuit, and tourism brokers as key backstage mediators within these networks. It identifies identity and power as key themes in understanding the nature of these networks, but takes an actor-network approach in characterising both as outcomes, or effects, rather than determining factors. Through this, the key ideas noted above are used to build a conceptual framework which demonstrates the relationships between tourism hosting and the everyday practices of brokers in host networks which are the subject of this study.

The context for this study is therefore the actor-networks of hosting, the people, things and discourses operating within tourism to perform the role of host. Chapter 5 explores the way context is generated in the study, and introduces the empirical focus as the starting point for entry into the network. It provides a description of an established tourism ‘place’, Llangollen, in North East
Wales, UK, highlighting some key demographic and geographical background, and outlining the key features of its existing tourism offering and its nature as a tourism place. It then introduces the key policy actors, and provides an overview of the ideas and narratives through which the policy landscape is constructed.

**Chapter 6** explains the research design and method choice for this study, and shows how these choices are reflected in analysis. Building on the philosophical issues discussed in Chapter 4, Section 6.2 discusses methodological issues relating to the researcher’s ‘hinterland’ (Law, 2004) of methodological choice, focusing on the importance of acknowledging that method is itself performative. In discussing how these relate to judgements about research quality, it highlights some key critiques of ANT as method, and considers how these can be answered in this study. Section 6.3 goes on to discuss the suitability of case study design for this project and concludes that a paradigmatic single case study using multiple methods to generate materials is an appropriate choice for a study such as this, in which generalisation to theoretical propositions is required. It then considers issues of sampling in ANT studies, which are based on a form of snowballing known as ‘following the actors’, and in particular the complex question of where the study ends. Section 6.4 examines the choice of three specific methods – documentary and multiple source analysis, interviews and observation – discussing how they were used together over an eighteen-month period in 2014/15. Section 6.5 discusses issues of analysis in ANT research, focusing on the use of ‘tokens’ (Latour, 1993) as actors in the analysis, and showing how both deductive and inductive approaches to analysis are combined in producing the narrative account. Chapter 6 concludes by drawing together the key themes and highlighting the significance of the original methodological contribution made by this study.

The narrative is presented as four ANT ‘storylines’ about broker-host networks, developed through Chapters 7-10. **Chapter 7** shows how broker-host networks evolve over time, and how they relate to a specific tourism ‘place’. This chapter identifies key touristic ‘tokens’, which appear subsequently throughout the chapter narratives in the different storylines, showing how broker-host networks are assembled and made durable through the ‘actions’ of both human and non-human brokers. **Chapter 8** uses two key ‘tokens’ identified in Chapter 7, and shows how an alternative narrative is possible as durable tourism networks within and beyond the town are traced through these non-human actors. **Chapter 9** traces ‘tourism’ through the webs of association found within Llangollen itself, and shows that despite a strong ‘local’ touristic
identity, few relationships of tourism practice can be found in the town. **Chapter 10** follows ideas about Llangollen’s tourism into the wider networks which constitute the landscape of tourism governance, and traces ‘Llangollen’ itself as a token through the different tourism narratives found in these networks.

**Chapter 11** draws together the key themes and discusses them in relation to the conceptual framework, highlighting ways in which the reconceptualization of host produces new opportunities for understanding how tourism ‘works’ in theory and in practice.
SECTION A: LITERATURE REVIEW
Chapter 2    FROM ENCOUNTER TO EXPERIENCE: THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF THE TOURISM HOST

…we have spent too much time…essentialising hosts and guests as fixed bodies…we need to pay much more attention to what they each ‘do’, differentially, vis a vis their own repertoire of roles, purposes and meanings (Hollinshead and Hou, 2013: 245).

2.1 Introduction

The encounter between tourist and host has been an important thread in sociological and anthropological approaches to tourism since The Tourist was described and theorised by Dean MacCannell in 1976, and Valene Smith first highlighted the impacts of tourism on host communities in 1977 in her classic work Hosts and Guests. These constructs, and in particular their binary characterisations of host and guest, have had a powerful influence on the way tourism has been both produced and studied (Sherlock, 2001; Picken, 2006; Chambers, 2007), with the result that the concepts of ‘host’ and ‘guest’ have become important sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954) in the study of tourism. This chapter charts the evolution and significance of the host-guest paradigm in tourism, assesses its critiques in light of recent developments in tourism theory and other social sciences, and identifies some key issues relating to the conceptualisation of the host as a context for empirical research.

2.2 The ghost of the host: sociologies of tourism

Modern Man is losing his attachments to the work bench, the neighbourhood, the town, the family, which he once called ‘his own’ but, at the same time he is developing an interest in the ‘real lives’ of others. (MacCannell, 1999: 91)

Encounters between hosts and guests are central to MacCannell’s model of tourism. The focus of his study - the tourist – is identified as an individual who is alienated from society and in search of authentic experiences of traditions and lifestyles lost in the era of modernity. Through encounters with ‘others’ (some primitive, some just different – as seen in his description of guided tours of American workplaces and factories) the tourist seeks to reconnect with what it means to be a member of their own community and society, and ultimately with self.
MacCannell’s tourist was an independent, adventurous spirit, probably male, middle-class, and living in the global North. Conceptually, he provided a counterpoint to the work of Daniel Boorstin (1961), who saw tourists as typical of the ‘grey, conformist masses’ of the 1950s (Featherstone, 2008). Boorstin’s masses travelled in large groups, cocooned by their tourist-industry minders, and oblivious to the ‘realities’ of the lives of the people they visited (Mowforth and Munt, 2009). Politically disempowered, and manipulated by the media (Mills, 1958) these tourists travelled for fun rather than enlightenment, entertained in environmental ‘bubbles’ by ‘pseudo-events’ set up for their amusement. Although the host is not a well-defined role in Boorstin’s study, it is interesting to note that he does acknowledge the existence of various forms of mediation in tourism, with a nod to the unspoken notion of experience rather than encounter, in a tourism product created by others for tourists, and a strong indication of the operation of power within the relationships between tourists and those more powerful individuals and groups who mediate their experiences.

The Tourist also builds on the work of Goffman (1959) on the nature of social space. Goffman identified a structural (and often physical) division of social establishments into ‘front’ and ‘back’ stage – the front being the meeting place of hosts and guests, where particular performances of self and place are enacted - and the backstage the place to which the hosts retired to relax and be themselves. MacCannell describes his tourist’s motivation as the quest to ‘go backstage’ to find the authentic lives of the hosts rather than the ‘front’ stage elements they chose to reveal. In MacCannell’s model, this quest is doomed to failure, as the hosts are always one step ahead - the tourist is persuaded by the host that they are being given access to the back stage, although it is in fact ‘staged’ so that they believe this. MacCannell extends Goffman’s theory by imagining not two, but six levels of transition from front to back stage, the first five of which are enticingly revealed to the eager tourist, who remains perpetually frustrated by their inability to access the final, the ‘real’ back-stage (MacCannell, 1999: 101).

The host in this work is an ill-defined figure, possibly a hybrid of locals and tour operators (although this is never explicit), and the nature of the relationship with the tourist is ambiguous. Resistance by the host is demonstrated in the form of staged authenticity, which requires mystification, ‘a kind of strained truthfulness…similar in most of its particulars to a little lie’ (ibid: 93) with an implication of ‘cheating’ – that the host-guest relationship is somehow ‘insidious’ (Cohen, 1988: 372). This suggests a specific set of power relationships, where the tourist’s access is controlled and subject to the choices of the host about what should be
revealed, although this is never made explicit in MacCannell’s original study. MacCannell later developed his ideas about tourism encounters, placing them in ‘empty meeting grounds’ between host and guest, cultural voids in which inauthentic experiences were produced and consumed beyond the cultural context of either groups (MacCannell, 1992).

In seeking to define broad structural models to explain tourism behaviour within society, both Boorstin and MacCannell were ontologically very much of their time (Crick, 1989; Sharpley, 2008). MacCannell was the first to highlight tourism as valid subject for sociological attention, and his tourists were, in this context, a radical vision - positive, active figures who sought, in their quest for the authentic, to form direct relationships with their hosts and find out as much about their lives as they could, thereby bringing meaning to their modern existence. MacCannell also used his tourist to illuminate wider aspects of modern society. In Chapter 1 of The Tourist, he sets the scene by declaring that tourism is a form of cultural production, and highlights the role of different ‘mediums’ (including governments) in controlling this production: ‘Media at all levels and of all types are becoming increasingly interested in cultural production’ (MacCannell, 1999:25). Here, there is an acknowledgement that there are ‘others’ at work in the creation of tourism experiences, and that issues of power and control are in play, but who they are, and how they do this is not investigated or discussed.

From today’s perspective, MacCannell’s characterisation of the economics of cultural production, and more especially the people who work in it, is revealing:

Unlike industry, the important profits are not made in the production process, but by fringe entrepreneurs, businesses on the edge of the actual production. These can be ranged on a continuum from popcorn and souvenir sales through booking agents and tour agents to the operations that deal in motion picture rights or closed-circuit television hook-ups. (MacCannell, 1999: 28, *my italics*)

MacCannell therefore positions the people whose job it is to create tourism experiences as at best peripheral. Yet these same people (or at least some of them) are seen at work on the front-stage, and at rest on the backstage, ill-defined figures who nevertheless have the power to constrain the experiences of tourists, to resist and frustrate their need for encounter by concealing their true identity behind layers of staged authenticity. We will meet them again in due course.
2.3 **Traditional anthropology of the host: cultural impacts and myth creation**

In contrast with MacCannell, Valene Smith’s classic anthropological approach to the host-guest relationship, *Hosts and Guests*, emphasized the importance of culture in defining the nature of the tourism encounter:

…the greater the ethnic and cultural distance between the host and tourist personnel, the greater the confusion and misunderstanding the two groups are likely to encounter, and the less natural they are likely to act (Smith, 1989: 271).

As with MacCannell in sociology, Smith was among the first to recognise tourism as a valid subject for anthropological study, and as a result established the host-guest binary as a dominant paradigm in the growing field of tourism studies (Nash, 1981; Werner, 2003). It cast tourism primarily as an agent of cultural change, and focused predominantly on its unwanted impacts on host communities. These long-term cultural impacts include the commoditisation and transformation of local culture; acculturation – the adoption of the visitor’s culture by the host; and cultural dependency – when the power balance between the two is in favour of the ‘source’ culture (Sharpley, 2008). In her second edition of *Hosts and Guests* (1989), Smith considered the extent to which tourism and modernisation had contributed to cultural change at tourism sites since the first edition. She noted the change in the nature of tourism from a predominantly private enterprise to one in which government agencies were increasingly involved, with tourism seen as the solution to economic ills and development needs, and the increasing involvement of hosts as paid workers within a much-expanded tourism industry. She concluded that modernisation had been a stronger force for change than tourism, thereby setting tourism in a wider context of society and global influences than she had in the first edition, and in a later revisiting of the subject explicitly recognizes the globalization of tourism, and the role of those who act as ‘mediators’, working between the demand and supply sides of tourism (Smith, 2001: 276).

Although Smith does not analyse the role of these mediators in depth, the notion of cultural mediation has been an important theme in tourism anthropology, where cultural brokers are seen to provide a buffer between different groups – tourists on the one hand, and hosts on the other (e.g. Chambers, 1997). An evolving theme concurrent with this in anthropology has been the notion of tourism ‘myths’ – and the exploration of the contribution of the host in creating and
maintaining them (e.g. Selwyn, 1996; Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004). We return to both these notions in Chapter 3, as they have a key part to play in considering the wider role of mediators in tourism.

Although its chief proponent (Smith) recognised that the host-guest paradigm was on increasingly shaky ground in the face of globalisation and increased mobility, the broad appeal of this binary model, and in particular its focus on the tourist, and the tourism industry, as the locus of power, has underpinned an enduring dichotomy in the way tourism is studied, particularly in anthropology (Werner, 2003; Stronza, 2001). Werner argues that this led to tourists and hosts being treated differently by academics. Tourists were classified, their motivations investigated, and their experiences analysed, while studies of the host tended to focus on the impact of one culture (the Western tourist) on another (the ‘host community’) (e.g. Said, 1991; Pratt, 1992; Dogan, 1989), the commoditization (by the tourism industry) of ‘other’ cultures (Greenwood, 1977, 1982) and the cultural similarities between the processes of tourism and those of colonialism (Bruner, 1989).

However, a sea-change in anthropological discourse around the turn of the millennium saw a more critical approach which triggered a slow shift from cultural relativism to wider consideration of issues of power, control and ownership in the context of globalisation and increased mobility. In tourism studies, questions began to be asked about some of the earlier conceptions discussed above (Burns, 2004). Arramberri (2001:742/741) challenged three main features of the host-guest compact, a ‘premodern covenant’, that have perpetuated a ‘static and exclusionary vision of cultures’: the onus on the host to provide ‘protection’ for the guest; the requirement for ‘reciprocity’ if roles are reversed; and the duties implied in the relationship – the host has to ensure the wellbeing of the guest, who becomes a temporary member of the family, and abides by the rules of the home while they are there. In inviting the host (in theoretical terms) to ‘get lost’, Arramberri argues that because the relationship between host and guest is a commercial one, mediated by middlemen, the tourist is, in fact, not a guest, but a consumer of experiences, and the host is the provider, or producer, of those experiences.

Although firmly ensconced within the anthropological tradition, Selwyn also raised the issue of the nature of the host in the context of an increasingly mobile population, seeing the notion as problematic, ‘ultimately too simple a term in a complex world’ (Selwyn, 1996: 8). Other studies identified alternative ways of looking at power relations in tourism encounters. The mutual (if still binary) nature of the tourist-host relationship was described by Maoz (2006), a significant
study because it demonstrates agency on the part of locals in the destination, and in fact highlights the debunking of one of the great tourism ‘myths’ that ‘in successful tourist destinations, the natives are always friendly’ (Selwyn, 1996: 21). That ‘locals’ might not always represent the downtrodden hosts, needing to be preserved for the sake of their own culture was also recognised by Cohen (1988), who noted in various communities, both in Europe and in the developing world, that the performance of cultural rituals for tourism brought about a reassessment of their value to the local community. This more positive approach to cultural impacts is also seen in Cole’s (2007) longitudinal study of a minority community in Indonesia. Here, hosting the staging of local ritual as a tourist attraction showed that the community, far from witnessing a dilution of their culture, identified the opportunity to perform as a means of reinforcing and assisting its survival.

On the other hand, McNaughton (2006) notes a blurring of host identity, arguing, in her ethnography of seasonally migrant handicraft sellers in a Kerala beach community, that ‘host and guest are not innocent terms’ (ibid: 647). Her study shows that these workers, although seen as hosts in the eyes of visiting tourists, were outsiders, uninvited intruders, in the eyes of local residents, and subjected to various forms of harassment and violence as they tried to negotiate their annually-transient role in the host community. McNaughton’s analysis suggests the limited value of the host-guest paradigm in understanding and explaining the ‘exploitative relations and interactions occurring on the front line of tourism’ (ibid: 661), and argues that the paradigm should be ‘retired’ in favour of an approach which is better able to encompass relations of power and politics evident in the day-to-day experience of those who work in tourism destinations. The question of power relationships and the multi-faceted nature of the host in tourism destinations were also explored by Zorn and Farthing (2007) in their long-term study in a remote location in Peru. They found that, over the 30-year period of ethnographic study, locals developed strong communal organisation and links with supportive external mediators to ensure that the local community benefitted from tourism development in the face of attempts by non-local agents to control tourism development. The nature of wider networks of mediators such as these in performing the role of host is a key theme of this study, and will be revisited in Chapter 3.

Despite these conceptual difficulties in tourism, however, recognition of the roles of host and guest has been less of a problem in the social anthropology of hospitality studies. Although, as we saw earlier, Selwyn questioned the concept of host in the context of an increasingly mobile world, he nonetheless sees that the relationship between host and guest is ‘embedded in the
nature of things’ (Selwyn, 2000: 27), a means of articulating social structures. Andrews (2000) suggests that, although the two are conceptually deeply intertwined, tourism studies have focused, somewhat unproductively, on debating the binary nature of the host-guest paradigm, rather than examining it within the broader social and cultural context of hospitality. Hospitality studies have found it easier to accommodate these difficulties in a characterisation of the host-guest relationship as a ‘deceptively simple’ paradigm which represents both a social interaction and a commercial project (Germann Molz and Gibson, 2007:6). Instead of rejecting commercialised host-guest interactions as not hospitality, they suggest that it is more productive to explore further the way such ‘social arrangements between strangers’ are, in fact, commercialised and performed (ibid: 8). In this context, hospitality is seen as an example of ‘controlled exchange’, where power relations are established, and understanding of how these relationships operate becomes fundamental to interpretation of the host-guest transaction (Robinson and Lynch, 2007: 141).

This shift in anthropological perspective is also demonstrated by Bruner (2001), whose move from a position of cultural relativism (seen in his earlier work) is exemplified in his exploration of how different social and political contexts can be reflected in different forms of tourism production. This work introduces one of the central ideas of this study, that of ‘backstage performance’ as multiple. Bruner demonstrates this empirically using an analysis of three different processes of tourism production relating to performances by Maasai tribal dancers in Kenya: the first, a traditional ‘tribal’ performance by Maasai warriors, produced and orchestrated by a white settler family for predominantly European tourists; the second, a post-independence facility produced by the Kenyan government to showcase Maasai culture alongside other tribal cultures, aimed at domestic tourists, local schools and families; and the third, a joint venture between Maasai landowners and overseas tour operators, in which the Maasai perform as dancers and hosts and mingle with tourists in a safari lodge performance space designed as an ‘Out of Africa’ Sundowner cocktail party. These three examples, Bruner suggests, demonstrate the way host-guest binaries are dissolved in postmodern tourism production, often hiding a ‘vast behind-the-scenes picture’ (ibid: 894) of power, politics and governance, illustrated in the third of Bruner’s examples by the concealment of the fact that the tourism enterprise concerned is a profit-making joint venture in which the Maasai have a significant holding.

Bruner asserts that tourism forms such as the Sundowner experience are the creation of the global tourism industry, a response to the demands of a global market place, and a product of a
globalised form of ethnographic writing, a theme which has come to dominate large areas of postmodern tourism research which focuses on ‘institutionally grounded imaginaries implying power, hierarchy and hegemony’ (Salazar, 2010: 7). However, within this academic focus on global tourism imaginaries, Salazar suggests that there has been a neglect of the human actors:

Who are the tourism workers circulating tourism imaginaries and appropriating them? How do they replicate, sustain and contest tourism fantasies in their own narratives and practices? How are images and ideas of tourism transformed by the process of their circulation? (Salazar, 2010: 15)

Salazar’s ethnographic study looks at two groups of tour guides, one from Indonesia and the other from Tanzania, actors who would formerly have been classed, in anthropological terms, as members of the host, or local community. He goes on to explore how ‘globalising imaginaries and master narratives’ are shared in the production of destinations, and how the actors at work on ‘stages’ which are independent of space and time work together to regulate, control and monitor how this takes place.

These more recent anthropological studies acknowledge that in commercial hospitality and tourism, consumption and production is the link between host and guest, and that being a host involves a ‘shared capitalist context’ (Sherlock, 2001), bringing the host into the category of those who earn a living in tourism, and acknowledging more explicit relations of power in the performance of the role of host. Performing the host becomes an overtly political act, suggesting that the ‘backstage’ (as described earlier in the work of Goffman and MacCannell) is more than just the place where off-duty locals go to relax, but consists of the many different layers which make up the political and cultural backdrop, populated by offstage actors whose practices and performances combine to create the tourism experience. We return to these issues in Chapter 3.

The next section explores further the idea of ‘place’ in the backstage of tourism.

2.4 Geography and tourism: the host as place?

Places are…not so much fixed but are implicated within complex networks by which hosts, guests, buildings, objects and machines are contingently brought together to produce certain performances in certain places at certain times (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 214).
Tourist places are produced in complex relations where the material production of place intersects with imaginative place production and this is organised through mobile and territorial networking practices (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen and Urry, 2004: 25).

With an overriding focus on environment and place, early geographies of tourism moved from description of the phenomenon as an industry in destinations or regions, to positivist models conceptualising either environmental impacts, or how tourism destinations worked (in particular the TALC model: Butler, 1980). Hall and Page (2009) suggest that it was the broad appeal of this widely-cited model as a planning tool that led the geographical study of tourism in the direction of a business-based approach, with a focus on planning to minimise environmental and social impacts in destinations.

In parallel with this, however, more humanistic approaches in human geography began to challenge such models, and to focus instead on the idea that space becomes place through the understandings, meanings and practices of those who occupy it (Tuan, 1990; Massey, 1993). Tourism has come to be regarded as one such practice, and ideas have emerged from different branches of geography which provide varied perspectives on the spaces and places of tourism and, more significantly for this discussion, those who operate within them. At the core of these approaches is the notion of places as fluid and dynamic centres of meaning, created and performed by those who pass through them (Cresswell, 2004). For tourism, this means both tourists and those who live and work in destinations (Rojek and Urry, 1997; Coleman and Crang, 2002; Bærenholdt et al, 2004).

In these changes in geographical understanding, which have accompanied increasing mobility and globalisation, we begin to see an overlap between the approaches of geography and sociology, building on the work of Goffman and MacCannell, cited earlier, on performativity of the social, and between geography and anthropology in the emphasis on the importance of culture in shaping the way tourism is both produced and consumed. In particular, cultural geographers such as Crouch (1999, 2002), Edensor (2000, 2001) and Crang (1997) explore the ways in which both tourists and those working in tourism destinations perform roles set out for them so that ‘the essential character of space in tourism practice is its combination of the material and the metaphorical’ (Crouch, 2002: 208).
Much of this research in cultural and social geography has focused on the embodied and active practice of being a tourist – of ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ tourism (Crouch, 2002), in some cases completely excluding any conceptual notion of hosting (e.g. Crouch, Aronsson and Wahlstrom, 2001), where tourism’s providers and mediators are cast as peripheral, powerless and almost irrelevant in the face of the tourist’s ‘sense-making’ capabilities (ibid). Indeed, their only role may be to impede the active tourist in their sense-making by ‘deflecting or deadening interest’ (Crouch, 1999:4). What is interesting here is the extent to which the researcher is aligned with the tourist in a binary which opposes anything that might be defined as ‘not-tourist’:

Agencies that represent tourism and leisure can only provide structures into which our imaginative practice enters, and through which it explores its desires, and their promotional messages that inflect these messages may not be ours. (Crouch, 1999: 4, italics added)

However, despite their theoretical marginalisation of those who work in tourism, Crouch et al’s influential paper suggests, almost as an afterthought, that we can problematize tourism provision, that ‘interesting reflections on the ways in which the power of the tourism marketplace works are possible’ (Crouch et al, 2001: 266). Here they acknowledge that not all tourists are cast in the mould of the independent researcher, and that many seek to avoid risk and be assured of a safe and entertaining welcome, possibly at the cost of a certain degree of freedom. Some form of hosting is clearly in evidence in this conceptualisation of tourism provision.

In focusing attention on the way tourists bring their own understanding to the creation of ‘lay’ tourism knowledge, we are therefore surely missing an important opportunity to explore the political and cultural practices which shape the way tourism provision is negotiated?

…and one unintended consequence of bringing the performing tourist into focus is the neglect of the mobilities and networks of objects, information, communication and people that afford tourist performances, make tourist places and connect home and away (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010: 14)

This viewpoint has engendered a further body of geographical work which explores the practices of those who work in tourism destinations: for example, Cuthill (2007) on the creation of place through the performance of service cultures, in which employees embody a culturally meaningful product at the point of encounter with visitors in tourist places, and Scarles (2012) on the
empowering qualities of self-directed performance by locals at tourism destinations. But is it possible to discover how and by whom are these performances shaped?

In reconceptualising touristic space as interactive, and tourism as an individual subjective experience for both tourist and host, Wearing and Wearing (1996) argued that if the tourism experience is about the creation of meaning, then the process of creation occurs in the social value of new meanings during interaction between host and guest.

…members of the destination (or host community) become a valuable part in determining the ‘identity’ of the destination through exploring the value that they have for particular places, events and traditions, endemic to their lifestyle and environment. Their input into the social value of the space is invaluable for understanding and therefore for providing sustainable tourist experiences. (Wearing and Wearing, 1996: 241)

Writing at the same time, Crang (1997:146) identified a series of ‘complex cultural circuits’ in which tourism and hospitality employees participate to negotiate the nature of tourism. He suggested that these circuits involve relationships between many different groups of employees, including tourism producers of different kinds, ‘promotionalists’, commentators (including journalists and academics), public sector employees, particularly those involved in different forms of regulation, tourists, ‘knowledge producers’ and producers in other related industries. This list implies a complex series of relations at and between different scales which combine to shape the production of tourism, and the performance of the tourism encounter, and we will revisit Crang’s work in the next chapter, where the role of these different types of employees is considered in more depth.

The idea of multiple and negotiated ‘realities’ in cultural circuits was also developed in depth in the context of tourism marketing and brand development by Pritchard and Morgan (1998) in arguing that tourism is just one way that language, representation and meaning are intertwined in the construction of image and identity for both places and the people who live and work in them. Tourism, place and ‘the social’ are therefore inextricably linked elements through which tourism places are produced and consumed.

So we can return here to the question posed above: does this ‘cultural circuits’ viewpoint necessitate the abandonment of the idea of host, particularly in relation to tourism places? Although some would applaud such a move, there are others who argue that relationships between host and guest are a core element in ‘new’ approaches to tourism through an
exploration of the related themes of identity, culture and power which emerge from the above studies (Hannam, 2008; Smith and Zátori, 2016). In this, we can also see a parallel with the more recent approaches to hospitality, and in particular to the relational and multi-scaled definition of the host-guest relationship described by Lashley et al (2007). Germann Moltz and Gibson (2007) further extend thinking about hospitality as a metaphor in discourse about both tourism and migration in a globalised world of wider mobility, where rigid distinctions between host and guest are replaced by more fluid relationships that include or exclude according to differing ethical and political practices.

Such practices shape the proximities which determine the nature of tourism places: ‘places are about relationships, about the placing of peoples, materials, images, and the systems of difference that they perform’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 214). The nature of these practices was examined in depth by Bærenholdt et al (2004). In their important work Performing Tourist Places, a key source for this study, they develop the idea that tourism places are created through fluid relationships between human and non-human actors by highlighting the importance of the work which occurs in networks of actors to produce such places. These networks reflect the multiple dimensions of the way tourism places are produced and consumed:

- Material: the physical environment, its location, physical resources and weather
- Embodied: what actually goes on in it
- Social: the encounters (involving human and non-human actors) that take place
- Memory: how places are ‘performed in absence’
- Image: places as performed through destination marketing

These authors focus in particular on the concept of destination as the dominant place metaphor in tourism policy and practice. In suggesting that destination is just one way in which tourism places are performed, they argue that the domination by ‘destination’ of policy discourse and planning has come to exert a strong influence on landscapes of governance in tourism places, used ‘to model ideal local or regional networks’ (ibid: 13). However, they argue that ‘destination’ represents a static and place-bound concept in a fluid and dynamic world. This, they suggest, is also reflected in the way tourism networks have been conceptualised and studied:
…it is a paradox that tourism industries, business networks and policies with their fundamentally mobile character have been researched through the prism of territorial categories such as “destination” (ibid: 25).

They therefore argue that ‘destination’ is just one form of network, and that tourism places are produced “in complex relations, where the material production of place intersects with imaginative place production...organised through mobile and territorial networking practices” (ibid: 25). This reflects several ideas discussed earlier about fluidity and multiplicity in the ‘backstage’ of tourism, and they will reappear regularly during the course of this study.

Geographical conceptualisation of place in this way enables new perspectives on the concept of ‘host’ which are the focus of this study. These ideas are developed further in the following sections.

2.5 So who is the host?

The previous three sections draw together some differing perspectives on the tourism host, covering a range of contributing disciplines through a period of great change in academic thinking about the social and cultural nature of tourism and hospitality. The examples cited above, which represent a range of emerging research traditions in these subjects, assign different characteristics and meanings to the host. Despite the blurring of roles evident in the more recent approaches discussed above, it has been argued that the host-guest binary remains a somewhat problematic ‘unarticulated assumption’ in tourism research (Sherlock, 2001: 274) that sees tourism as ‘series of binaries: authentic versus artificial, traditional versus modern, cultural versus economic; in which destinations of tourism are depicted as suffering the impact of a vast and exterior industry’ (Crang, 2006: 55), and which lies at the heart of how both the tourism industry and those who research it think about tourism (Franklin and Crang, 2001; Franklin, 2004).

Picken (2006) identifies a ‘communitas’ between tourist and researcher (explicit in the work of Crouch, cited earlier), based on these binaries, which has shaped not only ‘inwardly gazing’ research, which looks at what tourism is, but is also a key determinant in emerging critical approaches, which have a more outward-looking focus on what tourism should be.

From the above review, it is clear that it is difficult to be precise about the role of host in today’s tourism. Academic perspectives range from dismissing it altogether, to assigning particular
characteristics depending on the philosophical position of the researcher. For some, it is the ‘destination’, particularly as a focus for planning and policy relating to tourism marketing. For some it is the ‘locals’ – those who work in, but do not necessarily live in tourism places (Manuel-Navarette and Redclift, 2011), or those who both live and work in a destination, but do not necessarily originate there (Canziani and Francioni, 2013). For others, it is the residents – those who live in the places that tourists visit, and are affected by, but not necessarily involved in it (Reisinger and Turner, 2011; Griffiths and Sharpely, 2012; Sharpley, 2013). Various attempts to model (e.g. Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004) and analyse (Besculides, Lee and McCormick, 2002; Anderek, Valentine, Knopf and Vogt, 2005) the perspective of residents in tourist destinations have highlighted positive and negative attitudes of residents in communities which host tourism. In a recent extension of this, Arsal, Woosnam, Baldwin and Blackman (2010) examine how residents in destinations can perform an active and direct hosting role in providing information about the destination through participation in online travel communities.

Other studies have noted the changes that take place in the role of host as tourism places develop, often relating to changes in the relationships between the various businesses which are found there. Mottiar and Tucker (2007), in a longitudinal study of a Turkish village, Göreme, describe the changing role of host from direct hosting of backpackers in private homes in the early stages of the village’s development as a tourism place, to the intervention of more complex groups of tourism providers as the destination develops. In following the development of this village over time, Mottiar and Tucker also note also the fluid and dynamic nature of these hosting relationships, and the relationships of power that develop through both collaboration and competition:

Multiple ownership in Göreme might thus be said to form webs of businesses, which are complex and strong while they last, but forever changing shape as links are broken and re-formed in different mutations. (ibid: 22)

However, we have also seen throughout the approaches discussed above that locating the host geographically in the places of tourism destinations can create conceptual and practical difficulties in understanding today’s tourism industry. Andrews (2000) asserts that ‘the main problem with the approach adopted in tourism studies has been to assume that the host is a local resident of the destination’ (ibid: 237). She argues that, particularly in mass tourism, the role of
host has been supplanted by the tour operator, who performs all the elements of the provision of hospitality in place of the local host. Dann (1996) also noted the degree of control held by tour operators through the language used to describe and sell holidays, shaping the way the tourist behaves, and what they expect to see and do. The tour operator is therefore not only the provider of all the material elements of hospitality, but also controls the socialisation process which determines what takes place on holiday. Both Dann and Andrews show how, in mass tourism, ‘welcoming’ is performed by the tour operator, initially by creating images of what the tourism experience will be like, and then, often using a resort rep as a key mediator, continuing the presentation of the images represented in the brochures by offering guidance, setting ‘house rules’, providing entertainment, in effect, creating a ‘family’ which assists in maintaining a productive relationship between the tourist and the tour operator parent company. In both these approaches, the provision of hospitality is aligned with control – the role of host being dominant over the role of guest in an unequal relationship of power.

This theme was also taken up by Cheong and Miller (2000) in exploring issues of power in tourism in a tripartite relationship of tourists, locals and brokers. This paper will be assessed in more depth in the next chapter, but it is worth mentioning here that in their discussion of the nature of power relations in tourism, they suggest that the power inherent in the networked relationships between the many different types of brokers who work with locals to perform the role of host results in control over both the behaviour of tourists and the way tourism is developed. Feng’s (2012) anthropological study of tour operators operating village tours in rural China develops this theme by casting the tour operator in the role of ‘host’ in the context of mass tourism, and highlighting the power relationships between tour operators and local administrators in producing tours which objectify both tourists and ‘the toured’.

The brokers identified by Cheong and Miller include not only travel industry practitioners, but also a range of other organisations, including government at different levels, and the relationship between policy and practice at all levels, from global to local, has become a major area for tourism study (Hall, 2008). As a result of this, and in particular as a consequence of the emergence of discourses of sustainable tourism and the empowerment of local communities (Scheyvens, 2002), we have seen the evolution of more participatory models of the host, broadly covered by the term ‘stakeholder theory’ (Freeman, 1984; Byrd, 2007; Honey, 2008), in contexts ranging from traditional and emerging European destinations (Bramwell, 2006; Bramwell and Meyer, 2007; Mottiar and Tucker, 2007), to newly developed coastal tourism communities in
Australia (Dredge, 2006) and to destinations in various less economically developed countries (e.g. Jamal and Stronza, 2009; Mowforth and Munt, 2009). These models are useful because they cast both destinations and tourism places as complex and hybrid phenomena, with an emphasis on the participation of a range of stakeholders in collaborative decisions about tourism, and introduce notions of networked relations between different actors, both within and beyond the destination (Park, Cai and Lehto, 2009).

But they have been criticised on both practical (Liepins, 2000a, b; Moscardo, 2011, Dredge, Hales and Jamal, 2013; Dredge, 2015) and political (Saarinen, 2006; Fletcher, 2009) grounds as over-simplifying the nature of host communities and the internal and external relations of stakeholder groups (Reed, 1997; Jamal and Stronza, 2009; Bott, Grabowski and Wearing, 2011), ultimately leading to an under-representation of the needs of local people in the face of wider national and international interests.

Despite these criticisms, the ‘collaborative communities’ approach to tourism planning has placed a greater degree of emphasis on what is and should be done in tourism places, looking not only at how tourism works, but also at some of the ways in which it does not work. It also brings into focus the roles of different groups of people inside, around and beyond a particular tourism place who have the power and the capacity to work together and with others in creating and managing tourism experiences. It is therefore important to think not only about who these people are, but also about their various roles in the tourism systems that contribute in such a major way to tourism flows of people (Picken, 2006). We can therefore return here to Sheller and Urry’s consideration of how the various elements of tourism networks are ‘contingently brought together to produce certain performances in certain places at certain times’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 214), and seek the host not in a specific place in an increasingly mobile world, but as a function, a relationship between actors which draws in not only customer and provider, but also all those brokers who mediate the practices of tourism provision. This is the central proposition of this thesis and will be developed in detail through the chapters which follow.

2.6 Conclusion: Performing the host

Very many different actors network: visiting tourists, but also the built environment, performance work and other constructive efforts made by hosts. (Bærenholdt, 2012: 112)
Hospitality in its traditional sense takes place at the local level, between host and guest, and is, in essence, a combination of activities designed to provide a welcome for strangers. But we have seen in the discussion above the breakdown of the traditional notion of hosting at the local level, diminished theoretically and empirically by the commercial relationships which have not only shaped concepts in the field of hospitality, but which also gave tourism sociologists such as MacCannell, and anthropologists such as Smith, a certain amount of difficulty. Yet we have also seen that the concept of ‘host’ and its role in providing welcome and care (Netto, 2009; Minca and Oakes, 2012) remains an important sensitising concept in tourism, influencing and shaping the way we think about the relationships of tourism in both academic research and in policy and practice, and evident in destination narratives from the national to the local level.

This chapter has explored the differing traditions of tourism research which have examined the role of host, and has identified some key literature which underpins the justification to seek a new way of looking at the concept. Beginning with pioneers of tourism study, including Dean MacCannell and Valene Smith, it has shown how the themes of identity and power are evident in MacCannell’s ‘backstage’ performers, or Smith’s marginalised ‘local’ individuals and groups who populate traditional accounts of the role of host. An exploration of recent work in the anthropology of tourism has further highlighted issues of identity, politics and power which operate within such networks. Both Salazar and Bruner, in their post-critical turn anthropological writings, characterise the role of host as a performance whose backstage features the actions and activities, sometimes hidden, of various groups of tourism brokers acting on a global stage.

We have also seen how ideas about hosting in tourism have emerged from developments in cultural geography. Building particularly on important ideas about performance and place, this key body of work has translated into tourism by highlighting the fluid and dynamic nature of tourism places, and the role of relationships of practice which draw in many actors, both human and non-human, in different ways across time and space in creating these places. The work of key authors such as Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen and Urry in developing the emerging mobilities paradigm have highlighted the value of this approach in understanding tourism as a fluid *ordering* of people and things.

In developing the argument for a re-conceptualisation, this chapter has explored different perspectives on the nature of host, and of ‘host community’ in particular, and has shown that
recent approaches in tourism to the study of globalisation and mobility have suggested new ways of conceptualising the host as a networked performance. So can we look at the ‘knowing and doing’ of hosting, at the practices which combine to perform the role of host, in terms of how such relationships are negotiated, formed and maintained in the spaces of tourism production? With the demise of the host-guest binary, tourism is increasingly seen as an experience mediated by both tourists and those who design, produce and provide tourism services, rather than as an encounter between tourist and ‘other’. It is therefore argued that the role of host can be released from the binary and more usefully conceptualised as a complex and fluid nexus of human and non-human actors whose relationships play a key role in shaping the nature of tourism. Chapter 3 asks who these actors are, and explores the different ways in which they mediate the production of tourism.

Chapter 3 MEDIATION BEYOND CULTURE: BROKERS AND THE ENACTMENT OF HOST IN TOURISM NETWORKS

Touristic culture is more than the physical travel, it is the preparation of people to see other places as objects of tourism, and the preparation of those people and places to be seen. (Franklin and Crang, 2001:10)

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored differing perspectives on the nature and role of host in tourism, and concluded by characterising the host as a multi-faceted performance through which tourism is enacted. This chapter considers different aspects of this role, and asks how the relationships which support these performances and enactments are established and maintained in tourism networks. In doing this, it explores ways in which we can open the ‘black box’ (Latour, 1987) of tourism provision and begin to understand the role of different types of brokers in mediating
this process. In considering the different mediation practices of brokers involved in hosting, it moves towards a justification for the use of ‘community’ as an empirical focus.

3.2 Introducing brokers

In characterizing Thomas Cook as tourism’s first broker, Franklin (2004) describes how Cook set in motion an ordering process which would lead to the continual invention and reinvention of people and places, and shaped what has come to be known as touristic culture. We have seen in Chapter 2 that this culture draws in not only tour operators such as Cook, and their clients, but also a range of other actors who, in their performance on tourism’s backstage, work together to fulfil the role of host. This chapter looks at how tourism brokers have been conceptualised in the literature, and discusses some key ideas about their relationships in tourism networks.

The role of brokers in tourism systems was first elaborated in the three-cornered ‘BLT’ (brokers-locals-tourists) tourism system model by Miller and Auyong (1991, 1998). The model (Figure 3.1) was proposed as a vehicle for understanding the structure of the different relationships involved in managing resources for tourism, with resources featuring as ‘settings’ and ‘environments’. Table 3.1 shows the various categories of broker identified by Miller and Auyong – broadly defined as ‘persons who in one way or another pay professional attention to tourism’ (1998:3). The model was proposed as a methodological framework for categorising participants in the tourism chain, with a view to describing the sociological structure of the destination, and charting its change over time (Miller and Auyong, 1998).
Figure 3.1 A model of tourism

(Source: Miller and Auyong, 1991: 77)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site (first-order)</td>
<td>Live and work in region</td>
<td>Hotel/restaurant workers, guides, vendors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-site (second order)</td>
<td>Work outside region but direct tourists, products and services to it</td>
<td>Travel agents/bookers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site (first-order)</td>
<td>Live and work in region</td>
<td>Visitor and tourist bureau employees, resource managers, local government planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-site (second order)</td>
<td>Work outside region but direct tourists, products and services to it</td>
<td>State or federal government resource managers and planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social movement</td>
<td>NGOs, environmental and special interest groups</td>
<td>Planning, development and management of tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brokers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic brokers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Examine tourism as scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel media brokers</td>
<td>Reporters and journalists</td>
<td>Inform the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting brokers</td>
<td>Analysts, marketers, travel writers and entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Consultants for private, public and social movement brokers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Types of brokers (after Miller and Auyong, 1998)
Despite its focus on structure, and its methodological emphasis on coding, categorising and measuring, rather than explaining, the model seeks to move away from the ‘host-guest thinking’ that has been seen to be problematic (Miller and Auyong, 1998:3), and has at its heart an emphasis on relationships between the different groups identified. The list of brokers in Table 3.1 shows some considerable overlaps with the participants in Crang’s ‘cultural circuits’ of negotiation (Crang, 1997:146) discussed in the previous chapter (Section 2.4). In contrast with Franklin’s characterisation of Thomas Cook, Miller and Auyong’s brokers are located at the tourist destination, ‘directly engaged in planning relations linking tourists and locals’, with a focus on protecting the interests of locals (Miller and Auyong, 1991:76). Further complexity is introduced by the concepts of ‘touristic/non-touristic publics’ – those who may be locals or brokers, and the ‘touristic citizenry’ – those (who may be locals or brokers) who have the vote in the destination area (Miller and Auyong, 1998). Thus, notions of politics and governance in tourism at a range of levels are also implicit in the model.

The BLT model is developed in a later paper with this additional dimension explicitly factored in, in the form of a Foucauldian analysis of power in tourism (Cheong and Miller, 2000), focusing on the extent to which power relationships shape the behaviour of tourists. This argument attempts to refute some earlier views (discussed in the previous chapter) of the all-powerful tourist and the downtrodden host (Wearing and Wearing, 2006), and characterises brokers as those who are empowered to negotiate and shape the way tourism is produced. Indeed, the definition of brokers is revised – now seen as ‘those who derive a living (receive monetary remuneration) for an involvement with tourism production’ (Cheong and Miller, 2000:379). Here, brokers are characterised as Foucauldian agents, active in the production of tourism, often working with locals to ‘compel the tourist to function in a certain way’ (ibid: 381), intervening and constraining the behaviour of tourists ‘for the sake of profit and public service’, and can therefore be aligned with definitions of the commercial host discussed in Chapter 2.

Cheong and Miller conceptualise the mediating role of brokers more widely, identifying several different ways in which they act as Foucauldian agents in controlling the behaviour of tourists. They act as collaborators (with locals and each other) in the production of tourism, buffers (between tourist and local) in mediating cultural difference and impacts, and experts, employing a range of strategies, including ‘education, instruction, persuasion, advice, interpretation, surveillance and coercion’ (ibid: 383). This role in controlling, or managing the performances of tourists is, as we have seen earlier, a familiar one in the literature, but what is less well developed in Cheong and
Miller’s argument, as elsewhere, is the way tourism production is shaped by relationships, including competitive ones, between brokers themselves.

Although they do not discuss or develop the concept, Cheong and Miller identify the ‘tourism network’ as the site of these broker relationships, and emphasise the importance of recognising the fluidity of such networks and the roles played by different categories of broker within them: ‘at any given time divergent brokers in different professions align themselves around an issue’ (ibid: 381), suggesting that, even if they act in a competitive way as tourism entrepreneurs, they can still engage in collaborative forms of mediation in certain situations if required. Developing the key theme of their argument, the operation of productive and disciplinary forms of power in tourism, they also recognise that within these networks, power is exercised through things - resources, such as money, ideas, ownership and knowledge, which act as mediators of the relationships between different brokers. Power is therefore a relational effect, translated between material and non-material actors, rather than a constituent of a pre-existing structure, something which is possessed and exercised by brokers in tourism networks. We return to these ideas in developing the conceptual framework for this study in Chapter 4.

In contrast, Jennings and Weiler’s (2006) work on brokers represents a different, more managerial tradition in tourism research, focusing on brokers in the context of analysing inputs into quality tourism experiences. Such inputs, they suggest, can have positive, negative or neutral effects on the tourism experience for the tourist. Their focus is on whether or not these inputs can be measured, and therefore managed, to improve the quality of experience for the tourist, and therefore sits nearer to the ‘business end’ of tourism research (Tribe, 1997, 2004, 2010; Hollinshead, Ateljevic and Ali, 2009). They define the broker role as ‘any active attempt by an individual to mediate the tourist experience of another individual’ (Jennings and Weiler, 2006: 58), using the terms broking and mediating interchangeably. Jennings and Weiler’s typology of broker/mediator is shown in Table 3.2. The division into formal and informal is based on the role played by each type of broker at different stages in the tourism experience – their ‘formal’ brokers relate to all of those covered by Cheong and Miller’s model – i.e. those who are remunerated for their role in tourism. However, they suggest that in many cases, broking is just one of several roles undertaken by these people, again highlighting the importance of understanding fluidity in broker networks, but also showing that tourism is an integral part of the everyday lives of brokers. Also noteworthy is their inclusion of ‘informal’ brokers – those who are not required to act as brokers as part of their job, but who do so nevertheless. Here they
include several groups who would be categorised as brokers by Cheong and Miller – waiters, ‘back of house’ accommodation staff, taxi drivers – as well as some – e.g. local residents – who would not, and many who could be characterised as performing the role of host, including some ‘informal’ mediators, who ‘share a tendency towards invisibility’ (Chambers 1997: 6) and whose mediation ‘largely goes unnoticed and unrewarded’ (Jennings and Weiler, 2006: 63).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of role</th>
<th>Planning and recollection (pre and post-visit)</th>
<th>En route (travel to and from site)</th>
<th>On-site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Travel agents, travel consultants. Government marketing bodies. Marketing of tourism operations via promotional materials and events</td>
<td>Tour guides</td>
<td>Concierges in accommodation sector. Staff and products in tourist information centres. Local government tourism staff and products. Tourism operations staff and products. Tour guides (local – paid and volunteer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Examples of mediators and brokers associated with the tourism experience (Source: Jennings and Weiler, 2006: 62)

Thus, while Cheong and Miller locate brokers in a conceptual ‘big picture’, which attempts an overview of the operation of power in tourism networks, the focus in Jennings and Weiler is on individual relationships which can be identified, measured and managed. Their brokers are all close to the tourism coalface – they do not include bodies such as national governments or their agencies, development organisations, or other NGOs, but do, unlike Cheong and Miller, include tourists themselves as significant mediators of their own experiences. It is also interesting that both models restrict their conception of brokers to those receiving remuneration for their role in tourism, thus excluding the many volunteers who often perform similar roles to those in paid employment (Jago and Deery, 2002; Smith and Holmes, 2009). It is also important to note that Jennings and Weiler recognise, but then explicitly exclude from their discussion, interaction between brokers which does not involve direct face-to-face interaction with tourists. The fact
that many of the brokers in their list (Table 3.2) are clearly involved in activities which do not bring them into direct contact with tourists suggests a gap in our understanding of relationships between ‘backstage’ actors in tourism networks.

Significantly, too, both papers make passing reference to the importance of brokers that are things. As we have already seen, Cheong and Miller recognise the importance of different resources as mediators of broker relationships, non-human actors such as ideas and discourse through which control is exerted, demonstrating productive and disciplinary power in tourism networks. Jennings and Weiler also identify ‘non-personal’ mediators, rather obscurely described as ‘signage, design, aesthetics, overall settingscapes, activityscapes, peoplescapes and experiencescapes’ (Jennings and Weiler, 2006:2). Whatever these might be (and it is not made clear), they are suggestive of an ordering process involving the interaction of human and non-human actors in the enactment of tourism.

We can therefore see here a development of the key themes discussed in Chapter 2 – MacCannell’s shadowy backstage host figures, and the ‘vast behind the scenes picture’ of power, politics and governance which creates different versions of the Maasai ‘host’ and their culture in Kenya, so vividly demonstrated by Bruner. From the discussion in this section, we can therefore begin to assemble the idea of the host as a networked assemblage of human and non-human brokers, engaged in mediating practices which operate not only in direct encounters with tourists, but also in backstage entanglements which stretch beyond the ‘local’ context of tourism places. The next two sections explore these mediation activities in more depth.

### 3.3 Mediation, identity and power in tourism hosting

Miller and Auyong (1998) argued that mediation, defined by Chambers (1997) as ‘the intervention of others who serve neither as hosts nor guests in any conventional model’ (ibid: 6) is a role formalised within tourism by brokers. However, their model stops short of exploring these processes of mediation, the nature of the intervention, and the relationships between and within the different groups of brokers they identify. In Chambers’ view mediation, be it in mass or ‘niche’ forms of tourism, is an attempt ‘to control the terms by which the tourism experience is defined’ (ibid: 7). This control can serve either to meet the needs of tourists or to mitigate their negative effects, and is implicitly suggestive of the presence of power relationships in the provision of tourism experiences.
Both Chambers and Jennings and Weiler see mediation in terms of culture – the ‘buffer’ role between tourist and host, transmitting distinctions, deciding what is and is not seen, and how these things are represented. This is the traditional view of mediation in tourism, deriving, as we have seen in the previous chapter, from anthropological studies where the focus is on the role of tourism personnel in providing a link between tourist and host cultures. Writing in Valene Smith’s original edition of *Hosts and Guests*, Nunez (1977) noted the role of ‘innovative individuals’ in host communities in providing such links, but he assessed their role in a largely negative light, seeing it as contributing to processes of acculturation, in which the host culture is damaged, through the mediation of these individuals, by the more powerful cultures of the visiting tourists. Indeed, Nunez noted that such people are often marginal to the community itself, and therefore lacking in respect for traditions and culture, motivated instead by profit and progress. There is a significant body of work in tourism which has built on this school of thought, and which has contributed to the longevity of the host-guest binary by focusing on the need for cultural mediation between the two.

It is possible to characterise these mediation activities as interventions in forms of tourism where tourists need someone on the ground to act as an interpreter and organiser – a physical go-between to negotiate their encounters with others (Cohen, 1985). The tradition of researching such directly-mediated encounters has tended to focus on the power of the tourism industry and its brokers, including ‘the writers of travel books and guides, travel agents, hotel owners and designers, photographers, tour operators, travel programmes on TV, tourism development officers, and so on’ (Urry, 1992: 173) to manage the behaviour of tourists through the shaping of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1992; Smith and Brent, 2001), and the control exerted by tourism’s image-makers over the development and marketing of tourism destinations (Dann, 1996; Morgan and Pritchard, 1998; Morgan *et al.*, 2004; Marzano, 2008).

The importance of interpretation as a form of mediation in tourism is also the subject of extensive work by Moscardo (e.g. 2008, 2012), who examines the way the tourist experience is shaped by stories about places which are developed by tourism marketers into destination brands and images (Moscardo, 2012). She argues that such stories engage the tourist in a shared experience, via a framework involving a network of tourism industry brokers which is shown in Figure 3.2. This model highlights the role of different brokers in the design and management of tourism experiences, and the importance of stories as mediators of that experience. But it does not consider how the use of such stories is negotiated between the different brokers implicit in
the diagram, and it also fails to represent important links between the design and delivery of messages and those who actually create them in the first place (represented here by my addition of dotted lines to the diagram). Moscardo’s model foregrounds the neglected area of things (in the form of images, stories, brands and other forms of representation) as brokers, but also emphasises ‘backstage’ issues such as how these things are managed, and the nature of decisions about the information to be conveyed, and how it should be conveyed.

Figure 3.2 Framework for considering the role of stories in tourism experiences (adapted from Moscardo, 2012: 51)

Despite a strong and now well-established theoretical background in tourism studies on the role of identity in tourist performance, there is, as we have seen, surprisingly little research on the role of identity in relationships between industry brokers. Crang (1997) asserts that tourism’s stages,
which he characterises as ‘performed definitions of work settings’ are contested, ‘a set of orienting presuppositions which initiate a process of setting and role definition which sits at the heart of the interactional process itself’. This process, he argues, is one of contestation and negotiation between different ‘factions’ within the tourism industry, each potentially possessing very different kinds of understandings about the settings and practices in which they are engaged (all quotes Crang, 1997: 146).

Ateljevic and Doorne (2004) also suggest that we can position those who work in the tourism industry – both in the private sector and in public sector policy-making bodies - as actors within complex cultural circuits, characterised as ‘dynamic and interconnected whole[s] where players and stakeholders may (re)align themselves with any other player or stakeholder as need, desire or opportunity allows’ (ibid: 299). They also characterise these brokers themselves as consumers, making choices and decisions about the way tourism is or should be practised based not just on economic and managerial factors, but also based on their own cultural background and identity. Although Ateljevic and Doorne do not define their use of the terms ‘player’ and ‘stakeholder’, the quote reflects the themes of ordering and mediation outlined above, set in the context of tourism industry brokers. We can also relate this to our discussion of Cheong and Miller’s (2000) ‘BLT’ model in Section 3.2 above, where we saw that brokers can become involved in practices which are both collaborative or competitive depending on the context in which they are operating.

As tourism itself has diversified and fragmented into an array of niche products and individual experiences (Novelli, 2005), and as the role of technology, and in particular the internet and social media have changed the way tourism is mediated (Scarles and Lester, 2013), the control of industry brokers has been shown to have been diminished by the convergent mediatisation of society in general, and of tourism in particular (Jenkins and Deuze, 2008; Couldry, 2012; Månsson, 2011). Media of all forms are now seen not only as ‘things’ performing a connecting role, reducing the importance of personal contact in communication within relationships in many different contexts, but also as powerful actors in shaping these relationships (O’Regan, 2013). In tourism, the use of internet-based direct sales, online travel communities, user-generated information and forums, file-sharing and social media have led to the deconstruction of traditional linear communication structures, changing backstage relationships in tourism distribution channels (Buhalis and Law, 2008) and facilitating the enrolment of the tourist as
both producer and consumer of tourism knowledge (Scarles and Lester, 2013). As noted earlier, there is a rapidly-expanding body of recent work which explores the role of tourists as broker/mediators of their own and others’ tourism experiences (e.g. Bodker and Browning, 2012; Morgan, Lugosi and Ritchie, 2012; Russo and Richards, 2016), diminishing the role of other types of brokers, and further challenging the conventional role of ‘host’ and the host-guest binary in producing tourism.

The paradigm shift outlined in the Introduction, in which tourism is seen as a form of social and cultural ordering, encapsulates these changes in the way tourism is mediated, and brings new ontological perspectives into play which underpin the thesis of this study. These are considered more thoroughly in later sections, but here we need to introduce the way mediation is considered in actor-network theory (ANT) as a practice through which actors ‘transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry’ (Latour, 2005: 39).

Mediators in ANT are contrasted with intermediaries, who are defined as people or things which transport meaning without effecting change. Many of those who are conventionally regarded as mediators may, in ANT, be characterised as intermediaries, who play a passive rather than active role. For example, tour guides, conventionally regarded as key mediators (Chambers, 1997; Cohen, 1985), can, arguably, be seen as intermediaries, often reciting messages which are decided upon elsewhere, and reflecting an officially determined ‘touristic image’, a particular political agenda, or in many cases a combination of the two (Eade, 2002; Dahles, 2002; Weiler and Ham, 2002).

Mediation in an ANT sense consists of the continual performances by people and things which enable particular orderings to be sustained, and is a key concept in understanding tourism as a form of social ordering. This study therefore characterises the host as an actor-network, and looks at how different actors involved in the creation, delivery and production of tourism act as mediators of these networks. It suggests that these actors include the various types of brokers, formal and informal, human and non-human, discussed above, and that these brokers are enmeshed in networks which also include the technologies, objects and artefacts that populate tourism, and the narratives and discourse of tourism practice. The processes of mediation within these networks which enable tourism to be successfully created and performed are the essence of the role of host.

Chapter 2 argued that the host can be regarded as a diversified entity, consisting of not only the local community, but also a related network of other brokers who act with and on behalf of the
local community to produce tourism services. We have also seen that brokers can perform a range of tourism roles, assuming wider roles within and beyond the local area in negotiating, producing and delivering tourism through networks of mediation. With the wider diversification, differentiation and mediatisation of tourism, encounters in destinations are superseded by experiences mediated by networks of brokers, and brokers in networks – not just the cultural mediation of the encounter, but the wider network of ‘backstage’ relationships entailed in the creation and production of these experiences. The next section explores these ‘communities’ of tourism hosting further, and seeks to identify empirical work which has shed light on different brokers and the practices of mediation within these networks.

3.4 Mediating roles and relationships in tourism ‘communities’

Two of the studies discussed in Chapter 2 have particular relevance in helping us to understand the practices of brokers as mediators of tourism networks by emphasising the fluid and dynamic nature of such networks over time. The first, by Mottiar and Tucker (2007) demonstrates empirically how, as a tourism place develops, the number of brokers multiplies and their role and relationships change. Their findings are echoed elsewhere in work which looks at mediation by different types of brokers: for example, Ryan, Mottiar and Quinn (2012) characterise local entrepreneurs as key ‘tourism influentials’, galvanising small business clusters to assemble networks for destination development, and Wiltshier (2007) describes the role of academic consultants as mentors in small groups of tourism business owners, providing support and sharing knowledge which enables clusters or networks to function more efficiently in destination marketing and production.

The second key paper, (Zorn and Farthing, 2007) showed how, over a period of thirty years, relationships involving local and non-local brokers contributed to the long-term success of tourism development, thus moving beyond a narrow and purely ‘local’ idea of networks. Other research which attempts to trace networks beyond the ‘local’ includes Pearce’s major research project for the New Zealand government (Pearce, 2007), which examines links between local inbound tour operators and outbound tour operators in Europe and Australia, but also highlights the role of other brokers (in this case the New Zealand government and its overseas offices) in establishing and maintaining these relationships. Jensen’s work in Norway (Jensen, 2002) and subsequently in Madagascar (Jensen, 2009, 2010) shows in detail how different brokers
(government, private-sector industry bodies, incoming tour operators, regional and local tour operators and local guides and local communities) work together in developing tourism, and focuses on the issues involved in maintaining these relationships. Governments themselves, through wider policies and the relative importance given to tourism, as well as specifically-targeted policies and practices can therefore encourage or discourage particular forms of tourism (Macleod, 2006; Lashley et al, 2007; German Molz and Gibson, 2007).

These examples suggest that once policy becomes important in tourism development, the number of networked brokers starts to increase exponentially. In a parallel with Jensen’s work, cited above, Wearing, Wearing and McDonald (2010) also examine relations between tour operators and local communities in an emerging tourism destination, and introduce complexity by including other categories of brokers involved in the development, including international mining companies, an Australian ecotourism NGO and the Papua New Guinea government. Their study takes a Foucauldian view of the ‘microphysics of power’ (ibid: 62) inherent in the negotiation of a sustainable tourism strategy for the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea (Wearing and MacDonald, 2002; Wearing, Grabowski, Chatterton and Ponting, 2009; Wearing et al, 2010; Bott et al, 2011). This work shows how an exploration of the power inherent in the relations between key groups of brokers enabled effective mediation of a solution which encompasses an understanding of the interests of both villagers and tour operators. This outcome is presented as a successful result of mediation based on an innovative approach to understanding the power relations involved. The role of government and NGO brokers as transforming mediators is also examined by van der Duim and Caalders (2008), who explore how governments, NGOs and private industry brokers work to effect the necessary global connections for community-based tourism ventures in Costa Rica to be marketed overseas. Their study highlights the difficulty of making and perpetuating those connections, and enables a focus on understanding why such relationships succeed or fail in developing effective tourism partnerships.

Many of these examples use the concept of ‘community’ as a starting point in considering networks. Most of the examples cited in the previous paragraph also use ANT thinking in discussing these communities. As we saw in Chapter 2, much has been written about ‘community’ in tourism, particularly in relation to the concept of ‘host community’ and the difficulty and issues surrounding the search for an operational definition. Beeton (2006) has used the concept in a wider sense, looking at the professional relationships which constitute
communities of interest or practice, a theme also adopted by Ren, Pritchard and Morgan (2010) in discussing research ‘communities’ in tourism, and by Tribe (2010) in his ANT-based consideration of communities or tribes of academic interest. Tribe and Liburd’s recent extension of this work (2016) further highlights the fluidity of the tourism knowledge space, the dynamism of the networks or communities that reside within it, and the role of non-human actors in mediating the membership and performance of these knowledge-based communities.

However, this interest in academic communities of interest and practice has not so far been translated in the wider tourism literature. The idea of communities of practice as a means of encouraging ‘learning by participating in shared activity’ (Fox, 2000: 853) has a long tradition in management literature in writing about organisational learning, and has been applied in a range of organisational contexts. A detailed analysis of this literature is beyond the scope of this study. In the tourism literature, the concept is mentioned in passing in discussing management approaches to tourism knowledge (Cooper, 2006; Shaw and Williams, 2009) but its value as a means of understanding the performance of tourism networks is only just emerging (e.g. Dredge, 2015).

Fox (2000) suggests that through ANT we can see communities of practice as groups of actors whose shared goals and practices become durable through processes of translation. This is developed in the context of rural studies by Liepins (2000a:28) who adopts an actor-network approach in defining ‘community’ as:

…a social space, and a term which continues to represent sets of practices, meanings and political possibilities…

Liepins’ work (2000a, b) identifies four themes which recognise the material and cultural dimensions of community (Liepins, 2000a: 28-29), ‘a social construct about human connection that involves cultural, material and social dimensions (ibid: 29). According to Liepins, understanding the concept of ‘community’ entails:

1) an engagement with the discursive ways in which meaning is constantly constituted and reworked

2) a recognition that community does not imply homogeneity – it entails diversity, difference and unequal power relations

3) an understanding that community involves practices in different times and locations
an acknowledgement of complexity, evident in layers of meaning and difference within communities

Many of the ideas in Liepins' work have been translated into ANT studies in tourism (developed further in the next chapter), although few have explicitly developed the concept of communities of practice. Building on these ideas, the adoption of an ANT approach therefore enables us to look at the idea of ‘host community’ in a way which draws in different groups of brokers, their practices, discourses and organisational and individual cultural meanings. The entity under focus in this study is a community of tourism brokers, characterised, as we saw earlier, as people, things and discourses operating within tourism to perform the role of host, and the ‘diversity of people’s positions, relations and performances [which are] visible in the variety of identities that are mobilised by people within any one community under consideration’ (ibid: 31). These ideas are expanded in Chapter 4 as the concept of broker-host networks is developed.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the concept of brokers in tourism, showing that it has been adopted in widely differing traditions of tourism research to explore the roles of different mediators involved in the production and delivery of tourism. Extending beyond the social and cultural mediation of tour guides in face-to-face encounters, it discusses literature which highlights the dynamism and fluidity of relationships in wider networks of brokers, both within the tourism industry and in the wider institutional context of tourism. It also shows how authors using the concept of broker have introduced, but not developed, the idea of non-human brokers acting as mediators in tourism networks, and argues that aligning with approaches which focus on the concept of ordering in relationships between human and non-human brokers operating within the ‘backstage’ areas of tourism provides a useful approach to explore the reconceptualization of host as discussed in Chapter 2.

It goes on to explore some key ideas relating to mediation in tourism, again showing how the number and type of mediators, including electronic media, have changed many of the relationships of tourism production, and suggests that actor-network theory can provide a useful platform for an investigation of how relationships between different human and non-human brokers can work (or fail to work) in performing the role of host in the production of tourism. It
develops this theme by revisiting concepts of ‘host community’ discussed in the last chapter, and argues that an actor-network approach to community, based on ‘communities of practice’ provides a suitable context for this study, incorporating ideas about identity and power as central to the discussion of how these communities work.

The literature on communities of practice suggests that with increasing complexity, so the relations between brokers on tourism’s backstage become ‘black boxes’, defined as closed entities within networks, entities which become too intricate to explain through empirical research (Latour, 1987). So are we confined to researching the local, to focus on the destination and its stakeholder networks and clusters? Or is it possible to adopt an approach which embraces complexity while maintaining a focus on how broker relationships are formed and maintained, to open tourism’s ‘black boxes’, to look inside and examine the relationships between the brokers who operate on this political and cultural backstage? By focusing on the concept of ‘host’, this study seeks an approach which conceptualises tourism as a hybrid activity, a fusion of the economic and the cultural, of production and consumption, and explores these ideas in relation to the ways those who work in the tourism industry engage in ‘worldmaking’ through their relationships and interactions. It therefore asks questions about the operation of broker networks in the ordering processes of tourism through an exploration of key themes which emerge from the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

The final literature review chapter looks in more detail at actor-network thinking, exploring the philosophical underpinnings and concepts which make it a suitable approach for this study, before drawing together the key themes from the previous two sections, and building them into a conceptual framework which acts as a foundation for the design of the project.
Chapter 4 PRODUCING THE BROKER-HOST NETWORK: THE EVOLUTION OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

This study proposes a reconceptualization of the host in tourism by looking at the relationships at work in networks of brokers in the production of tourism. Chapter 2 positioned this reconceptualization within the existing literature on the host-guest relationship in tourism, and concluded that the idea of host is more helpfully characterised not as a performance located in a specific place, in binary opposition to ‘guest’, but as a mediated process of enactment, performed in networked relationships between different actors operating within the complex cultural circuits of tourism. Chapter 3 examined ways in which these actors have been identified in the literature, and discussed different forms of mediation in tourism involving people and things which can be characterised as ‘brokers’. Forms of mediation range from social and cultural mediation in face-to-face encounters, to mediation within the wider communities of practice which characterise the ‘backstage’ areas of the tourism industry. It suggested that ideas about identity and power so prevalent in studies which focus on the tourist performance have been under-represented in these studies of ‘backstage’ broker relationships.

This chapter draws together the theoretical themes of this study and develops a conceptual framework which demonstrates the link between the research question and the empirical context of this study. In doing so, it considers ways in which an actor-network approach enables us to explore relationships between different types of tourism brokers - a theme which has more commonly been studied within the business-management tradition - using a socio-material focus. It begins by situating ANT within the existing canon of tourism research, discussing issues of ontology and epistemology to support its choice as an approach. It then discusses the conceptual basis of ANT thinking, and how it has been applied in tourism research to date. It ends by presenting a conceptual framework which demonstrates an understanding of the role of host based on key themes from the literature, a framework which then becomes performative as a mode of ordering for this study.
4.2 Philosophy of research: locating actor-network theory

…qualitative inquiry can generate theory out of research, should place emphasis on understanding the word from the perspective of its participants, and should view social life as being the result of interaction and interpretations (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004:4) Qualitative research is ‘as much a way of conceptualising and approaching social inquiry as it is a way of doing research’ (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004:5). This study examines the implications of reconceptualizing the host, one of tourism’s key sensitising concepts. It can therefore be positioned in line with the ‘rethinking project’ (Picken, 2006) in tourism research which has been characterised as the ‘critical turn’. This has come to reflect not just the re-emergence of critical theory per se, but also a wider focus on issues of ontology, epistemology and methodology in tourism research (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan, 2007; Tribe, 2009). At the heart of this movement is an emphasis on the processes of knowledge production, and what it means to know (Tribe, 2004; 2009). This section discusses the ‘hinterland’ (Law, 2004) of assumptions and choices about knowledge production (ontology and epistemology) which underpin the reconceptualization of host.

4.2.1 A relational ontology (ordering, materiality, multiplicity)

ANT is one of the few contemporary analytical frameworks that openly engages with ontology. (Farias, 2012: 128)

…from a relational approach, the ontological and the epistemological cannot be clearly separated… (Jóhannesson, Ren and van der Duim, 2015: 7)

Ontology is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality, exploring issues of ‘being, meaning and identity’ (Hollinshead, 2004a: 63) which underpin the way we think about the world. It is therefore fundamental to understanding the type of knowledge being produced in research, so the choices we make as researchers about how to approach a subject are dependent on the ontological standpoint we take (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In ANT ‘reality’ is seen as
relational, fluid and multiple, ‘a sense of the world as an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities’ (Law, 2004:7), comprised of enactments involving people, things and ideas which result in different orderings of society.

This study therefore aligns with research in tourism studies which is based on various ideas (an ontological ‘meta-theory’ (Pernecky, 2010)) originating in Heidegger’s philosophy of Dasein (Heidegger, 1996). This translates as ‘being-in-the world’, a standpoint which emphasises the practical and embodied nature of our involvement with the world, and the importance of meaning in understanding people’s actions and experiences (Obrador-Pons, 2003; Pernecky, 2010). Tourism is seen as ‘a fluid, constructed phenomenon that is accepted and shared (to various degrees) across different cultural terrains’ (Pernecky, 2010:8), that routinely makes worlds by constructing specific touristic meanings, but also de-makes and re-makes them (Crang, 2004; Hollinshead, 2004a, b), thereby operating as an ordering process through which places are performed and produced (Franklin, 2003; van der Duim, 2007a). Significantly, however, Franklin suggests that the predominantly humanist approach taken in cultural and critical approaches to tourism research is limited:

‘Because tourism cannot be a purely social activity in that all social phenomena act in complex ways with non-human objects...what we have here is a complex materially heterogeneous assemblage which is both coherent and at the same time emergent’ (Franklin, 2012: 46)

Characterising research based on ordering in this way takes it into the realm of ‘post human’ ontology (Büscher, Urry and Witchger, 2011; Franklin, 2012), adopting a view of ‘the social’ which recognises the interdependence of human and non-human actors, and which ‘engenders new kinds of researchable entities and a new or rediscovered realm of the empirical’ (Büscher and Urry, 2009: 99). In ANT, human and non-human actors are seen as existing in symmetry (Callon, 1986). Culture, identity, power and even tourism itself, are all effects which emerge from these orderings, and this approach therefore suggests we concentrate on ‘what people and things, people and things together, actually do’ (Franklin, 2012: 49, italics in original). In taking this view, we are moving away from a purely interpretivist approach (looking at what people think about things) to include a focus on practice (how things are actually done). Understanding these enactments and orderings therefore entails asking questions about how our ‘objects of study’ (broker-host networks), are ‘simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and
collective, like society’ (Latour 1993:6). These ideas are discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.1 below.

How the answers to these questions are interpreted and represented by the researcher is a further issue which links the ontological understandings of the researcher with her epistemological viewpoint (discussed in the next section). It has been argued that all research is interpretivist in nature, constructed by the researcher and interpreted according to the specific ‘rules’ embodied within different research paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This issue has particular resonance through the many different approaches which are broadly grouped under the heading of constructionism, where researchers act as ‘culturally situated story-tellers (Pernecky, 2010: 1), not only interpreting the constructions of other people, but also being aware of how their own view of the world shapes these interpretations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This approach has also necessitated a focus on the position of the researcher, and a clarification of her standpoint in framing research questions and approaches.

We therefore need to acknowledge that research itself is a form of ordering, that the research project is an actor-network, and that the starting point (or obligatory point of passage) for this is the researcher. In this study, I have re-conceptualised the host, so the study is based on my idea of what the host is, and how it is performed. The research question is the entry point, and I have enrolled people, things and ideas in a reflexive investigation of this concept to enable my aims and objectives to be met. The implications for this in designing the study are discussed in Chapter 6.

4.2.2 Epistemology: ‘knowing’ tourism

…we will need to think hard about our relations with whatever it is we know, and to ask how far the process of knowing it also brings it into being (Law, 2004:3)

Identifying an epistemological approach involves thinking about how a subject is ‘known’ (Tribe, 1997, 2004). This study contends that investigating the role of brokers in performing the role of host provides a productive way of adding to our understanding of a key concept within the field of studies about tourism. Chapter 2 looked at how the concept of host has been approached
through different disciplinary lenses in tourism research – sociology, anthropology and geography, each resulting in a binary vision (front/backstage; host/guest; producer/consumer) which has proved increasingly problematic as an explanation of how tourism works, culminating, in some versions of cultural geography, with the conceptual removal of the host altogether. Chapter 2 concluded by arguing for an approach which goes beyond these various disciplinary lenses, and Chapter 3 proposed an alternative view of the host which is based on an understanding of the practices involved in relationships between people and things who act as brokers in tourism. We saw here that tourism, in this study, is conceptualised as a hybrid ordering activity involving different brokers, a fusion of the economic and the cultural, of production and consumption, in which both tourists and those who work in the tourism industry engage in ‘worldmaking’ through their relationships and interactions.

Pernecky (2012) argues that each of the disciplinary perspectives outlined above represents a different construction of tourism, and he identifies ‘host’ as one of a number of key roles that has itself been constructed through these disciplines. The breakdown of traditional disciplinary approaches and the emergence of tourism as an interdisciplinary field (Tribe, 1997; Tribe and Liburd, 2016) provide an opportunity to re-evaluate these constructions and the concepts of tourism. Pernecky believes that constructionism has been widely misrepresented in tourism research, and attempts clarification of what it means to take a constructionist approach. He suggests that such approaches can be broadly categorised as those that look at the construction of tourism from the outside, by adopting new perspectives and paradigms (he cites ‘worldmaking’ and ‘ordering’ as two such paradigms) and those that look at constructions of tourism from the inside, framed within the conceptual boundaries of what we already know tourism to be. He provides a caveat, however, in noting that:

…the distinction between the knowledge OF tourism and the knowledge WITHIN the already established framings of tourism (such as existing and widely accepted concepts and definitions) is not definite as both are in a dialectical relationship…(Pernecky, 2012: 1129, original emphasis).

This study is therefore based on an epistemological understanding which mediates this relationship by looking at an existing construct through a new theoretical lens, re-conceptualising the idea of host by drawing on ideas from ANT, where ‘tourism is seen as multidimensional spatial practice, involving cultural, material and social elements’ (Jóhannesson, 2005: 147).
Tourism is therefore ‘known’ through an analysis of practices, the things that are done in tourism to perform the role of host, so that in studying it, we have to focus on *enactments* rather than *constructions* (Law, 2004; Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005).

Knowing tourism in this way produces a significant methodological challenge to the conventional constructivist stance. It is important to remember that tourism ‘is’ in a world that incorporates not only the individual lives and experiences of tourists and tourism workers alike, but also the institutional and organisational practices of tourism through which particular discourses about what tourism ‘is’ and ‘should be’ operate. Tribe (1997, 2004, 2010) has argued that these two dimensions have, in the past, been separated in tourism study, leading to two distinct ‘fields’ of tourism knowledge. More recently, the fluidity of these ‘fields’, and the scope for interdisciplinary studies which breach this binary, have been noted (Tribe and Liburd, 2016). This study therefore argues that it is possible to view these institutional and organisational practices as integral to the lived experience of both tourists and tourism workers alike through its focus on the networks of brokers through whom these practices are enacted (Chapter 3).

4.3 The question of networks

…tourist networks are highly ambivalent. They are attracted by places, but they may also quickly change their routes. (Bærenholdt *et al*, 2004: 46)

Approaches which emphasize the transactional, or networked nature of social phenomena, have featured in many different forms throughout the social sciences (Emirbayer, 1997). We have seen at various points in the literature discussed earlier that networks have been widely seen as a tool for studying the interconnectedness of tourism (Scott, Baggio and Cooper, 2008; Volgger and Pechlaner, 2015), developed theoretically through two broad themes: *business theory* on the networking in and between organisations (e.g. Tinsley and Lynch, 2001; Buhalis and Laws, 2001; Sorensen, 2007) and *political networks* with a focus on tourism policy, planning and governance (e.g. Hall, 2008; Bramwell and Lane, 2000; Dredge, 2006). However, despite their prevalence, and their value in recognizing the importance of multiple stakeholders in tourism, and the connections between them, we have also seen in that such models have sometimes been found lacking in tourism research. Even at the local level, it is suggested that they have a tendency to
oversimplify what are inherently complex relationships (Volgger and Pechlaner, 2015). In their focus on structure, and their emphasis on the nature of different forms of linkage within these structures, they tend to represent static ‘snapshots’ of how relationships between different actors operate, rather than asking how such relationships are forged, and are then maintained or break down (Dredge, 2006; Dredge et al, 2013).

Dredge (2006) argues that in order to fully understand the operation of tourism networks it is important to acknowledge the essentially hybrid nature of such relationships, and the equally hybrid and somewhat ‘messy’ contexts in which they occur. More recently, Dredge et al (2013) have acknowledged the necessarily complex and time-consuming nature of research on networks, particularly in cases which focus on policy-making, and the difficulty of finding an approach which is effective in underpinning the collection and interpretation of data in these contexts. They suggest that more dynamic approaches, which look at the interplay between micro and macro influences across time and space, associated with actor strategies, rules of conduct, and power relations, can be a more effective way of approaching the study of such relationships. In a development of these earlier ideas, Dredge has recently suggested ways in which ANT can contribute to our understanding of the fluidity of tourism networks (Dredge, 2015), and of the role of actors in formal policy networks, particularly in relation to the production and management of knowledge.

…policy actors…have the capacity to construct a world, create a truth, and in doing so shape a history of the issue and its impact… (ibid:10)

In a recent review of research on networks in tourism, Volgger and Pechlaner (2015) assess the body of research in tourism networks, with a particular focus, as with Dredge and her associates, on networks of tourism governance, and suggest, among a series of recommendations, that we ‘consider innovation dynamics and relational dynamisms in networks as well as their governance’ (ibid: 306).

In focusing on a concept (the host) instead of a structure (the network) this study therefore chooses to explore relationships between brokers from the ontological standpoint of ordering, drawing on ideas developed in actor-network theory. The methodological implications of adopting these ideas will be further developed in Chapter 6, but they are discussed here as they are used to draw together the key themes derived from the literature, and lie at the heart of the conceptual understanding which underpins this project.
4.3.1 Interpreting tourism through ANT

Social ordering, ‘a mix of relational materialism and Foucault’s concept of governance’ (Franklin, 2004: 285), is seen ontologically by theorists such as Latour (1986, 1993, 2005) and Law (1992, 2004) as ‘an impossibility, a never-to-be-attained state … ordering attempts, are [nevertheless] the very stuff of the world, the way the world operates as a process of becoming’ (Franklin, 2004: 285). In other words, it is the processes at work within tourism which determine how it works, not what it is, but how it is held together. Seen in this way, tourism is ‘a fundamentally connected rhizomic entity, even if it is extremely large, and it is an organized entity even if it is comprised of many organizations’ (ibid: 285, original emphasis). The concept of a rhizomic entity derives from the poststructuralist philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a concept interpreted by Hetherington thus: ‘if there is a whole….we can never see it except through a myriad of many distinct, if connected facets that refract and resettle a total perspective’.

(Hetherington, 1998: 12)

This approach enables a shift away from the challenging task of defining and describing ‘whole’ networks towards attempts to understand facets of the processes of organization at work within dynamic interacting entities – an epistemological focus, in the words of sociologist John Law, on ‘verbs rather than nouns’ (Law, 1992). As we have seen, this study, recasts ‘hosting’ as people, things and discourses operating within tourism to perform the role of host, requiring us to adopt an approach which explores how tourism is assembled, enacted and ordered.

Adopting this approach also requires that we examine the concept of network as used in ANT. Several writers, notably Latour (1999) and Ingold (2010) have noted that the use of ‘network’ in this context is misleading – in French (reseau) it means both a network and a web or mesh. The ‘lines’ which the network is comprised of are what Ingold terms ‘lines of becoming’, or ‘conditions of possibility’ (Ingold, 2010:12) rather than lines of connection. In such networks, or webs, orderings therefore become active through performance – in other words, they are not pre-existing structures, but are in a constant process of evolving and becoming through the actions of their constituent parts (Law, 1992; Latour, 2005). These orderings draw in a heterogeneous range.
of human and non-human things and practices to create actor-networks, which exist through a series of relationships between actors.

The networks thus formed are in a process of continuous change through a series of translations, defined as ‘the processes of negotiation, mobilization, representation, and displacement among actors, entities and places’ (van der Duim, 2007: 966). Rather than seeing actors as intermediaries, defined as that which ‘transports meaning or force without translation’ (Latour, 2005: 38), meaning in ANT is ‘transformed, translated, distorted and modified’ by mediators, whose contribution is dynamic and unpredictable. As we have seen (Section 3.3), these mediators can be human or non-human: ‘humans often stand powerless confronted with strong actor-networks made up of technologies, documents, habits, discourse and schemes’ (van der Duim, Ren and Jóhannesson, 2012: 16). This, Law (2004) argues, although ‘messy’, is nonetheless a more accurate reflection of the workings of ‘the social’ than more structural accounts in which intermediaries perform specific roles in pre-existing structures.

It has been suggested that the process of translation can itself be resolved into four ‘moments’ (Callon, 1986) which define ‘the process and methods by which actors try to convert ordering into order; the processes in which durability is strived for’ (van der Duim and Caalders, 2008: 113: emphasis added). These moments create a shared space in which projects can be negotiated.

- **Problematisation**: agreement on the nature of a project and how it can be solved
- **Interessement**: identification of the actors involved
- **Enrollment**: negotiation of the terms on which all actors will be involved
- **Mobilisation**: the methods used to enable the translation to take place.

Breaking the process down in this way encourages an understanding not only of how things happen, but also of the things that can go wrong to make them fail. The structures, networks and organisations which emerge from these processes are therefore effects of ordering, rather than pre-existing phenomena (Porsander, 2005). The processes and performances through which these effects come into being are the focus of ANT-based study: ‘people engage in organizational routines based on their understandings and interests, and they privilege some performances over others as “the way things are done around here”’ (Feldman and Pentland, 2005: 97).
The ordering metaphor also challenges the way we view *scale*, and particularly commonly-used concepts such as ‘global’ and ‘local’. These are often used to suggest a binary division between ‘large’ and ‘small’, thereby also implying degrees of ‘importance’ or power attached to each. However, Watson (2010: 9) discussing Castree (2002) argues that ‘…it is not the *distance* that is important but rather the *connectivity* between objects in a network…when investigating networks of relations, network durability and length needs to be examined from the inside—not explained by external causes that are natural or social, global or local’ (*original emphasis*). This has further implications for the use of method, and these are discussed in Chapter 6. It is also suggested that modes of ordering can be defined and researched at three different levels: the *strategic* (how tourism should be performed, and the networks within which these ideas circulate); the *internal relationships* of the practice, and the *external relationships* which enable these practices to be realised (van der Ploeg, 2003; van der Duim, 2007b). Such relationships are non-territorial – they cut across notions of scale, such as national, regional and local: ‘actor-network theorists refrain from any shift in scale…rather we should simply follow the networks wherever they may lead’ (van der Duim, 2007b: 37). How this differs from a ‘nested scales’ view of places and networks is shown conceptually in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. The ‘nested scales’ approach is shown on the left (Figure 4.1) and the ‘ordering’ approach is shown on the right (Figure 4.2).
Figure 4.1 Nested scales (Source: Author)

Figure 4.2 Modes of ordering (Source: Author after van der Ploeg, 2003; van der Duim, 2007b)
The way these ‘levels’ of ordering produce ‘tourism’ as an effect is explored throughout this study, and the implications of this are discussed further in Section 6.5.

4.3.2 The role of things: the material dimension of tourism networks

We have seen that tourism can be characterised as operating through cultural circuits in which ‘the everyday world is increasingly indistinguishable from the touristic world’ (Franklin, 2003: 5, original emphasis). Franklin (2004) characterises tourism as ‘a way of making the world different, a way of ordering the objects of the world in a new way’ (Franklin, 2004: 279) and, he adds, ‘not just human objects’. In Chapter 2 we explored the materiality of place which is central to post-structuralist accounts of tourism (Hetherington, 1997; Sheller and Urry, 2006). We also discussed the materiality of tourism in Chapter 3, where tourism ‘things’ – signs, communications media and technologies, as well as ideas, discourse and knowledge – are seen to act as mediators in tourism networks. Haldrup and Larsen (2006) contend that the role of things has been consigned by much postmodern social theory to their symbolic value, rather than acknowledging the ‘use-value’ of a wide range of objects, machines and technologies which enable and therefore have the potential to empower, human actors: ‘Discourses, sensuous bodies, machines, objects, animals and places are choreographed together and build heterogeneous cultural orders that have the capacity to act, to have effects and affects’ (ibid, 2006: 278).

Ingold (2010) extends this by exploring the difference between ‘things’ and ‘objects’, and suggesting that ‘things’ include not only the material object, but also the gatherings of ideas, practices and meanings that accompany them. Interestingly, this idea is also developed by Law and Singleton (2005) in their seminal ‘post ANT’ discussion of multiplicity, showing how objects can become ‘messy’ as they are translated through different gatherings of ideas into ‘states’ which they characterise as ‘region’, ‘network’, fluid’ and ‘fire’. Although these are all used in relation to the ‘object’, they also align with Ingold’s notion of ‘things’ as multiple and complex.

As we saw in Chapter 2, admitting non-human actors also raises questions about how we understand tourism places: Destinations are … often less coherent and more contingent and decentralised than the images and brands made by ‘destination actors’. The networks and flows involved in attracting, mobilising, servicing, accommodating and entertaining tourists are much more complex and multi-layered than envisioned by the idea of some kind of fit between a
geographical area, specific actors and a marketing ‘destination organisation’ (typically a
tourist office). (Bærenholdt, 2012:111)

Tourism places can therefore be seen as outcomes, or effects, rather than geographical entities
(Jóhannesson and Bærenholdt, 2008). They exist not just at a specific location, but in the
networks of actors involved in their production. As we have seen in earlier sections, this study
characterises the host itself as one such network, and seeks to identify communities of practice
involved in enacting this role. In doing this, it focuses on the people and things involved in the
networks of hosting in an established tourism destination.

4.3.3 ANT in tourism

ANT thinking has recently been applied in a number of studies in tourism, focusing on the
contribution it can make to an understanding of the complexities of tourism networks
this it has been used to explore relational concepts, such as destination (Bærenholdt, 2012; Farias,
2012) and destination branding (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011), entrepreneurship and innovation
(Arnaboldi and Spiller, 2010; Jóhannesson, 2007, 2012; Jóhannesson and Bærenholdt, 2008;
Paget, Dimanche and Mounet, 2010) and academic research (Ren et al, 2010; Tribe, 2010), and
the role of non-human actors in tourist practices, such as photography (Larsen, 2005, 2006), weather
(Rantala, Valtonen and Markuksela, 2011) and backpacking (Walsh and Tucker, 2009), and in
tourism practices and the making of destination images (Povilanskas and Armaitiene, 2011; Ren,
2011; Rodger, Moore and Newsome, 2009; Franklin, 2014). It has also been used in various
studies which reassess the relationship between tourism and development, particularly using the
notion of ‘tourismscapes’ - the ‘complex relationships across space and through time between
networked people and things’ (van der Duim et al, 2005: 293), which cast the ‘host’ as a complex
and fluid entity, including government, development organisations, local communities and
tourists themselves (van der Duim, 2007b; van der Duim and Caalders, 2008; Hummel and van
der Duim, 2012; Wearing and McDonald, 2002; Wearing et al, 2009; 2010).

Existing research in tourism also demonstrates the value of ANT as an approach in exploring the
main theoretical themes of this study. Ren shows how ANT-based approaches can shed new
light on our understandings of identity, by examining the ‘doings and workings of the destination

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network and its actors’ (Ren, 2010b: 1) through which cultural understandings and misunderstandings emerge. Rather than emphasizing a host-guest binary, Ren’s study shows how, over time, residents in a small Polish ski resort align themselves with tourists against ‘outsider’ perceptions of what the town is and should be, and that the ‘other’ is the combined effects, over time, of those from outside who have come into the town to develop businesses in an expanding tourism economy. Ren highlights the processes of translation which have brought this state into being, and led to the destination being ‘imagined, planned and built’ in a particular way. In exploring these processes, Ren highlights the importance of power in understanding processes of translation, and suggests, following Hollinshead (1999: 8), that ‘tourism (often unsuspectingly) matters in the making dominant of some…narratives…and, on another level, how individual managers, developers, researchers in tourism and travel quickly engage in small and large games of cultural, social, environmental and historical cleansing, as they promote and project some socio-political universes and chastise or omit other possible contending worldviews’ [italics in original].

4.4 The host in tourism: towards a new conceptual understanding

…very many different actors network: visiting tourists, but also the built environment, performative work and other constructive efforts made by hosts… (Bærenholdt, 2012: 112)

As shown in Chapter 2, the concept of host has recently been contested in academic studies of tourism. This review has examined the literature relating to traditional views of the relationship between host and guest, and has argued that approaches which focus on a binary relationship, and in particular the view taken by traditional approaches in sociology and anthropology, can be superseded by a more fluid conceptualisation of host which emphasises networks of performance and the practices of different groups of brokers in tourism. It has reviewed the literature on brokers (Chapter 3), looking beyond the conventional view of cultural brokers in face-to-face mediation of tourism experience, and argued that a wider focus on the mediating roles of human and non-human brokers in tourism networks provides a productive way of looking at these practices. It suggests that these mediating roles operate at and between different scales, in fluid networks which can be usefully conceptualised using an actor-network perspective as ‘communities’ of tourism producers.
Released from its binary relationship with the ‘the guest’, hosting is therefore seen here as a web of associations (the ‘performative work and constructive efforts’ noted in the quote from Bærenholdt above) through which tourism is produced, negotiated through networks of policy and practice mediated by human and non-human brokers, which are more or less durable depending on the number of associations they maintain. These associations are shown below diagrammatically as a conceptual framework for this study (Figure 4.3), a framework which itself becomes a ‘strategic’ mode of ordering (Law, 2004; van der Duim, 2007b) through which this study is produced (the implications of which are discussed further in Chapter 6).

**Figure 4.3**  Broker-host networks (Source: Author)
As Figure 4.3 shows, the leading actor in this network is the broker-host, seen through the lens of actor-network theory as a nexus of human and non-human actors within the tourismscapes, continuously working to enact and maintain the production of tourism. It is the work of these active mediators, the focus on networking rather than networks, on fluidity and change rather than static ‘snapshots’ of structures which provides a way of making things visible which may otherwise be black-boxed in the conventional policy landscape.

This also enables a focus on ‘controversies’ (Jóhannesson et al, 2015), on the contested spaces and identities of tourism, and on power as a network effect: ‘The amount of power exercised varies not according to the power that someone has, but to the number of people who are brought into the composition’ (Latour, 1986: 265). ANT conceptualizes power as ‘a shared capacity, involving myriad natural actants as much as social ones, which is thoroughly decentred in different networks.’ (Castree, 2002: 121). The processes of translation outlined above are the key to understanding this: ‘Power, like society, is the final result of a process, and not a reservoir, a stock, or a capital that will automatically provide an explanation’ (Latour, 2005: 64). Power is therefore derived from ‘being able to enrol, enlist and convince other actors to allow the initial actor to represent them’ (Murdoch, 1994: 15). In its focus on the productive aspects of power discussed earlier (Chapter 3), it emphasizes relationships rather than structures. In this, it develops the understanding that being more, or less, connected is the means of participation in governance at whatever level: ‘the small is being unconnected, the big one is to be attached’ (Latour, 2005: 180).

Broker-host networks are therefore seen as actor-networks comprised of people, things and discourses operating within tourism to perform the role of host. Researching and describing these networks is approached using the three key actor-network concepts of ordering, materiality and multiplicity discussed in this final review chapter, and explored with reference to a series of network effects which include identity, power and governance and the way these work in different forms of tourism production. These networks therefore form the ‘context’ of this study, providing a set of ideas through which the narrative storylines provided in Chapters 7-10 are constructed. These narratives are generated in relation to a specific tourism place, which forms the starting point for this study, and this is described and discussed further in Chapter 5 which follows.
4.5 Conclusion

ANT has remarkably shifted the attention of research from ‘the tourist’ to people, animals, objects, machines and events which through their multiple relations shape the ‘place’ in which tourists intervene. (Russo and Richards, 2016: 4)

The host is an important sensitising concept in tourism, and the literature on this, reviewed in Chapter 2, shows multiple and evolving uses of the term. Sociocultural interpretations depict ‘the host’ as powerful but ill-defined locals, or disempowered local communities whose culture is threatened by tourism. Although it has been argued that the concept is no longer valid in a globalised and increasingly mediatised world, it has more recently been encapsulated in post-modern thinking as a multi-faceted role performed on tourism’s ‘backstage’. Tourism places are therefore not only created through the performances of tourists, but also through the performance of tourism producers/providers in this backstage space. The concept is thus aligned with the idea of ‘host community’ - tourism places and the people who live in them - a powerful narrative in tourism, and a perspective which often highlights political and power issues through questions about how ‘host culture’ is valued through tourism.

The literature also suggests that identity is a significant dimension of hosting, through notions of staged authenticity and acculturation. Identity also appears as a key theme in the literature relating to the host as place, particularly through issues of place branding and destination marketing. Ideas about power are also present, either explicitly or implicitly, in many of these perspectives. We see the host as a somewhat shadowy backstage performer exerting power over the tourists by denying them access to their ‘authentic’ lives (McCannell), as marginalised locals disempowered through tourism (Smith), and as hidden but powerful networks of production involving the Maasai and other brokers described by Bruner. We also see how identity and place are brought together through hosting, and how power is an effect of the networks through which this takes place.

Questions of power in the relationships of hosting lead us to a second major theme in the literature, through the key paper by Cheong and Miller (2000) relating the operation of power to the performance of and associations between, different groups of brokers (Chapter 3). In their model, broker roles are active and fluid, changing to suit a particular issue or need. They also suggest that individual actors can switch between different roles depending on circumstance.
Adopting ideas from Foucault, Cheong and Miller argued that power can be either productive or repressive/disciplinary, and that both these forms are exercised in tourism through brokers in ‘networks of relations’ which manage or control the nature of tourism and the tourist experience.

The wider literature on brokers discussed in Chapter 3 identifies those in both the public and private sector who receive remuneration for the work in tourism, but the discussion centres largely on what we might call ‘frontstage’ brokers, those whose role involves direct contact with tourists. In taking the discussion ‘backstage’, this study asks questions about how human and non-human brokers also form relationships which can be characterised as hosting. Brokers are therefore seen as mediators in tourism networks, performing a role that ‘works’ between locals and tourists to control or manage the tourism experience. The concept of mediation used in this way involves the continuous performances by people and things which enable particular orderings to be sustained.

The discussion on brokers also takes us into the realm of tourism governance. It shows that once we start to consider the wider networks of government and policy-making brokers, two further factors come into play: the number of brokers increases dramatically, and the work of networks starts to float free of place. This is also highlighted pragmatically in acknowledging the difficulty of finding an effective way of approaching the study of relationships in tourism planning, suggesting that more dynamic approaches, which look at the interplay between micro and macro influences across time and space, associated with actor strategies, rules of conduct, and power relations, can be a more useful way of understanding the workings of broker networks. More recently there have been calls in the policy and practice literature for an emphasis on the networked relationships of tourism to focus on dynamism, and the role of ‘moderating actors’ in in the networks of tourism.

This final literature review chapter discusses the ontological and epistemological understandings which underpin ANT, and shows how these form the basis of the reconceptualization of host as multiple, heterogeneous and fluid. The adoption of actor-network thinking enables us to see webs of hosting involving human and non-human actors which are attracted to places, but are fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed in particular tourism ‘places’. This enables us to bring together the concepts explored in Chapters 2 and 3 through the concept of broker-host networks, drawing together the networks in which the practices of hosting are present in the ordering of tourism into a conceptual framework which forms the basis for research design and analysis for this study.
SECTION B: CONTEXT AND METHODS
Chapter 5  POSITIONING PLACE - LOCATING CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

There is no such thing as ‘context’. The conditional elements of the situation need to be specified in the analysis of the situation itself as *they are constitutive of it*, not merely surrounding it or framing it or contributing to it. (Clarke, 2005: 71, *original italics*)

This study adopts an ontological position (see Section 4.2) which sees realities as constructed through practices made possible by actor-networks ‘more-or-less precariously’ held together through the mediating role of human and non-human actors (Law, 2004:21). In ANT the idea of context is regarded as fluid, seen to emerge from an understanding of relationships rather than identified as an *a priori* exercise (Latour, 1986). In line with the conceptual framework presented in the previous chapter, we can therefore define the context for this study as the actor-networks of tourism brokers within which the role of host is performed.

The choice of a location is therefore necessarily seen as a point of departure from which the actor-networks of tourism hosting may be traced, rather than a bounded space confining the study. As a tourism place, Llangollen, in the county of Denbighshire, North Wales, UK (Figure 5.1) is performed both through the everyday lives of those who live in and visit it, and through layers of tourism governance, policy and strategy, all of which are themselves enfolded into networks which extend the context far beyond the immediate geographical area of the town. This chapter provides an overview of the town, its tourism offer, and its landscape of tourism governance, and explains the reasons for its selection as the location for this study. The context itself will be seen to evolve through the analysis and discussion which follow in later chapters.
With a population of 4079 (Denbighshire County Council, 2014a), Llangollen and its immediate surrounding area constitute an established tourism ‘honeypot’ in the Dee Valley in North East Wales. In summer, the town is busy, lively and colourful, with banners and international flags very much in evidence, particularly during the first week of July when the annual cultural festival known as the International Eisteddfod brings large numbers of visitors to the area. Its river location attracts both anglers and white-water sport enthusiasts, and its surrounding hills have long had a reputation for various outdoor and more recently adventure sports. It also boasts a number of heritage and cultural attractions whose significance and role will be explored further in the course of this study. More recently a number of different festivals have been established in the town, including a Walking Festival (in its 4th year), Llangollen Fringe (20 years), and the annual Hamper Llangollen Food Festival, which have been successful in expanding the tourism offer.
5.2 What sort of place?

The key actors in Llangollen’s tourism are illustrated in Figure 5.2, which also highlights a number of different brands and identities attached to its tourism offer. In the words of two of its tourism providers:

Llangollen as a little striving tourist town has got a lot for everybody. It’s got some really old industry, tourist attractions which work uniquely in themselves by themselves, for themselves – the Llangollen Wharf, the canal itself, the railway and the shops in town…um…they’re unique and attract in a whole
wide range of people, which is a really broad spectrum of people, from the families and the really young, to the school groups coming to see the AONB and the World Heritage Site, and the history and the archaeology of Valle Crucis and Dinas Bran, and to elderly people, there’s a lot of coach tours coming through the town as well, so with my industry [activity tourism] and the outdoor coming into that there’s a bit for everyone, and actually, coming in from outdoor provision, there’s not a great deal of people based here...it’s certainly not to capacity yet in the amount of outdoor providers based here in this area. [Informant 5: local resident and tourism provider]

...we find that a lot of people come into Llangollen because there’s so much more to do here...you’re not just specifically coming for outdoor activities necessarily...you can see that when you’ve got 150 people stood on the bridge on a summer’s day...you know, it could be mum, dad, grandma, kids... [Informant 29: activity tourism provider]

A key attraction for the large numbers of day visitors is the town of Llangollen itself, and particularly its vibrant main street, with an array of independent shops selling local food and crafts as well as more conventional tourism items, and food outlets of various sorts. There is a noticeable absence of national chains and familiar names in this offering, which also includes several hotels, numerous pubs, a hostel, and a busy Tourist Information Centre.

Figure 5.3  Castle Street, Llangollen (Source: Cittaslow Llangollen)

With the threatened (at the time of writing) closure of a local print works, the last major employer in the town, tourism is now the main economic activity. An extensive report was carried out in 2011 by Locum Consulting on behalf of the local authority, Denbighshire County Council, to review tourism development opportunities in Llangollen (Locum Consulting, 2011). Along with the Llangollen Town Plan (2013/4), this supplies basic demographic statistics which are discussed below as background in this study.
The population of Llangollen consists of a predominantly white British demographic. 50 per cent of the population is classed as ‘retired’, and about 50% of residents are placed in socioeconomic group ABC1. Unemployment is well below the national average (Locum Consulting, 2011; Denbighshire County Council, 2014a). All indicators place Llangollen in an older, but more prosperous, demographic than the surrounding areas, which are predominantly rural and agricultural. Some neighbouring villages are in declining industrial communities, and are categorised as ‘high’ in terms of unemployment and social deprivation, although Welsh Government figures comparing 2005-2011 show a reduction in deprivation ranking for the Llangollen area compared with Wales as a whole (Denbighshire County Council, 2014a).

Llangollen’s Town Plan shows that more residents in Llangollen have been born in Wales than in the county of Denbighshire as a whole, but that a smaller proportion (20.1% in Llangollen compared with 24.6% for the county as a whole in 2011) speaks Welsh (Office of National Statistics Wales, 2014). This low incidence of native Welsh speakers can be attributed to its historic position in the Welsh borderlands, and the large numbers of residents born outside the area (often retirees from Merseyside and other parts of North West England). More recently, however, the popularity of Welsh-medium primary schools, particularly among higher socio-economic groups in the area, and the input of policy and resources to encourage the teaching of Welsh in schools at a national and local authority level have increased the level of Welsh understanding in the area (Denbighshire County Council, 2014b).

For a town of its size, Llangollen is an unusually dynamic community. Although the percentage of its residents in younger age groups is significantly below the regional average, the Town Plan (Denbighshire County Council, 2014a) notes ‘There is a lot of community activity for young people, including a youth club, young farmers, youth football club, youth cricket team, scouts and beavers, silver youth band, operatic youth group, boys brigade’. But more notable still is the fact that a recent project (Collinge and Gale, 2013) to create a photographic record of the Llangollen community identified over a hundred organisations and community groups active within the town, demonstrating a strong and active emphasis on community life. A number of these groups have been in existence for more than 100 years (the oldest is over 150 years old), but several have been formed more recently which indicate a growing concern with the town’s future (discussed further in Chapter 9). Among these groups are the Civic Society, which exists.
to ‘encourage community action, excellent design, sustainable development and respect for the built environment’ (ibid, 2013: 30), and a recently-formed local pressure group, Keep Llangollen Special, which aims ‘to support the residents and independent businesses of Llangollen, bringing us together to improve the town’s prosperity and well-being for everyone’ (ibid, 2013: 71).

In 2012, the Town Council succeeded in bringing together different interests in the town to submit a successful application to become a Cittaslow town, thereby making a strong and coherent community statement about how they would like the town to develop in the future. Cittaslow is a popular movement which started in Italy in 1999, with the aim of improving the quality of life in towns by encouraging ‘slow’ practices in food production and consumption, green energy and transport, and community living. It is now an international movement, with members in 28 countries (Cittaslow International, nd). Each member country can award Cittaslow accreditation to towns of below 50,000 people. Cittaslow accreditation now has a status which enables such towns to attract funding, particularly in Europe, to support their activities, which includes as part of its manifesto, a commitment to welcome and develop tourism in Cittaslow towns.

5.3 Tourism and the policy landscape

Llangollen’s role as a significant regional tourism hub is readily apparent. The town now (2016) hosts the only full-service Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in Denbighshire, a busy office located in a former chapel in the town centre. All the TICs in North Wales are partly funded by local authorities, but run by North Wales Tourism, a private-sector regional tourism association working with members of the tourist trade throughout North Wales.

As a tourism place, Llangollen is performed in many ways, and is itself performed upon by policy-makers and consultants whose role is to craft the tourism offer through differing layers of public policy and public-private partnerships. What is of particular interest in this study is the fact that within the various networks of policy and practice in which the town is enrolled, although it is produced and consumed as a destination, hosting large numbers of tourists each year, it is not officially managed and marketed as one. This explains the absence of at least one basic set of statistics – how many people visit the town each year, who they are, what they do,
and how these numbers are spread across the year, key data which do not exist and have never been collected.

Locum’s research into tourism in Llangollen showed that:

- Most visitors tend to originate from the North West of England or the West Midlands.
- 72% of visitors are day visitors and 28% are staying visitors.
- Visitors are primarily married couples aged 55 or older with the majority from socioeconomic groups ABC1.
- 62% are repeat visitors and many are regular visitors to the area.
- Day visitors tend to spend less than staying visitors per person per day although both types of visitor like to do similar activities during their trip including eating and drinking, shopping and having a general day out. (Locum Consulting, 2011: 20)

Locum also noted the following issues:

…some of Llangollen’s current markets have been declining for several years as people’s preferences and expectations change. The town needs a plan to replace them with new audiences and in order to do so will clearly need to provide the type of offer that they seek out and expect. … It is important for those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination to be aware of the limitations and to be mindful of the type of products that would widen the appeal so that when suitable opportunities present themselves, they can be encouraged. (Locum Consulting, 2011: 23, emphasis added)

The table below (Table 5.1), which shows visitor numbers for Llangollen’s key attractions (bottom five) to be relatively stable in comparison with other leading attractions in the area, does not bear out these concerns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loggerheads Country Park (free)</td>
<td>226,752</td>
<td>234,007</td>
<td>164,536</td>
<td>165,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moel Famau Country Park (including Coed Moel Famau) (free)*</td>
<td>179,236</td>
<td>151,000*</td>
<td>140,000*</td>
<td>140,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirk Castle (paid)</td>
<td>125,865</td>
<td>129,862</td>
<td>133,268</td>
<td>129,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erddig (paid)</td>
<td>129,733</td>
<td>147,291</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llangollen Wharf (paid)</td>
<td>103,000*</td>
<td>109,323</td>
<td>128,791</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llangollen Railway (paid)</td>
<td>166,550</td>
<td>166,638</td>
<td>150,957</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valle Crucis Abbey (paid)</td>
<td>8117</td>
<td>8,438</td>
<td>8,632</td>
<td>9,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plas Newydd (paid)</td>
<td>6322</td>
<td>6196</td>
<td>5855</td>
<td>9340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llangollen Motor Museum (paid)</td>
<td>4493</td>
<td>3,967</td>
<td>4,448</td>
<td>5,365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Estimated figures

**Table 5.1 North East Wales attractions visitor numbers (Sources: Welsh Assembly Government (2015); Denbighshire County Council (2014a); Llangollen Railway)**

As well as issues created by changing market conditions and demographics, Locum also noted problems of parking and congestion in the town, and the fact that business fragility and lack of investment in recent years has left some issues relating to the quality of the public realm, including empty shops, unattractive shop fronts, narrow pavements, absence of traffic-free areas and poor signage (Locum Consulting, 2011). There is pressure too on some of the resources used for activity sports in the surrounding hills, particularly in an area known as the Panorama, which is very popular with walkers. In addition, there is a long-running series of controversies relating to competing uses of the river, between anglers and landowners on the one hand and water sports providers and enthusiasts on the other, which is currently working against the development of water-based activity and adventure sports in the town. Responses to these issues are explored in detail in discussion of the outcomes of this study.

As with all local authorities in the UK, tourism in Welsh local authorities is a discretionary area for policy and investment, and tourism has often, to its detriment, been a victim of local government re-organisation, particularly during times of recession and local authority spending
cuts (Morgan, Hastings and Pritchard, 2012). This has meant that tourism provision is either split between a number of different departments, or moved from one department to another in recent years. Stevenson, Airey and Miller (2008) investigated the potential effect of successive phases of local government reorganisation on tourism provision in Leeds, UK, and found that the stable relationships necessary to effective policy-making are often disrupted by reorganisation and the associated insecurities among different groups of policy-making brokers that it engenders.

In comparison with the UK as a whole, however, the local government landscape in North East Wales has been relatively stable in recent years. There have been no boundary changes in the area since 1996, when the current county boundaries were agreed. At that time, however, there was considerable controversy about the location of Llangollen and its surrounding area, and a local referendum saw three villages in the neighbouring ward known as ‘Llangollen Rural’ vote to be part of the neighbouring county borough of Wrexham, rather than Denbighshire. The town itself voted by only nine votes to remain in Denbighshire, and debate over the position of Llangollen on the local authority map has been close to the surface ever since. In 2014 the Williams Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery (Welsh Assembly Government, 2014) recommended a reduction in number of local authorities in Wales from 22 to 12, with the proposed merger of Denbighshire and Conwy, its neighbour to the west, and this is still under discussion at the time of writing.

Llangollen itself can therefore be seen as a contested site in terms of governance and funding, and as a result a contested space in terms of associated policy and practice. In terms of tourism, we can identify a landscape of governance, illustrated in Figure 5.4 below, which underpins the practices of tourism which are at the heart of this study. Llangollen is unique in the area as the only settlement which falls under the governance of all four of the tourism bodies shown on the map. Their roles are discussed in more depth in the narrative storylines for this study.

- North East Wales: destination marketing
- Denbighshire: destination management
- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): sustainable tourism
- Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS)
From a structural viewpoint, further layers of governance exist at the level of North Wales (Tourism Partnership North Wales, disbanded in September 2014 and replaced by a new structure, the North Wales Tourism Forum), and at a national level of Wales itself (the national DMO, Visit Wales), and the European Community, while at the local level, Llangollen has its own Town Council, which has relationships with other town and community councils in the area. Each of these brings its own policies and narratives to the practice of tourism governance in Llangollen, and this is explored further in subsequent chapters.

The policy landscape of tourism in Wales is currently dominated by a narrative of partnership working, and the landscape shown on the map is shadowed by further groupings of trade and industry brokers who are largely organised along the same lines as the public-sector bodies shown here. The relationships between these public and private sector networks, their links, or lack of links, with tourism brokers in the town itself, and their role in the performance of host, will be explored through analysis in later chapters.
Figure 5.4 Llangollen tourism policy (Source: Author)
5.4 Generating context

The chosen starting point for this study is the initiation in August 2013 of Cittaslow Llangollen. As noted above, this was a grassroots movement introduced through the local community as a way of shaping the governance and management of the town.

Cittaslow is not explicitly about tourism. Its focus is the development of communities of interest, known as *convivia*, which spread the ideas of the movement through individual membership of local groups, and the development of *praesidia*, local networks of food producers, usually based on a single product, which focus on developing production and marketing. Praesidia also have cultural objectives which include the strengthening of local identity through the preservation of historic buildings and the creation of tourist routes (Buiatti, 2011). The Cittaslow Manifesto (Cittaslow, nd) cites seven categories of ‘requirements for excellence’: energy and environmental policy; infrastructure policies; quality of urban life policies; agricultural, turistic [sic] and artisan policies; policies for hospitality, awareness and training; social cohesion; and partnerships (see Appendix 2). These include several specific requirements relating to local tourism provision (see Table 9.1). Although there are suggestions that Cittaslow does not always represent a suitable approach to tourism development (e.g. Semmens and Freeman, 2012), there is a growing body of literature linking Cittaslow to sustainable development of tourism destinations (Lowry and Lee, 2011; Presenza, Abbate and Micera, 2015).

Cittaslow Llangollen is therefore a community-initiated project which aims to draw in a range of different brokers - tourism professionals and other local people not involved in tourism. Its introduction highlights how the production of tourism is intricately tied up with the everyday lives of people in tourism destinations, and the links and relationships they make within the destination to achieve their objectives. It also draws brokers beyond the destination into relationships with local brokers – through policy initiatives generated regionally and nationally, and internationally through the global manifesto of Cittaslow, and the creation of opportunities for European funding.

As an innovation, it therefore provides an opportunity to access the practices of tourism provision, and the networks through which these practices take place. More particularly, the Manifesto makes particular statements about the nature of the welcome provided by the community to tourists, thus providing a specific focus on the nature of the tourist host. It was
therefore chosen as an appropriate, timely and practical starting point from which the networks of tourism hosting can be traced. In the chapters which follow, the methodological and analytical implications of this choice will be discussed, and its role in shaping the outcomes of this study will be examined.

5.5 Conclusion

The graphic in Figure 5.2 was constructed by the author to ‘represent’ the main features of tourism in Llangollen. It shows that Llangollen exhibits multiple relationships with tourism ‘things’ – in this case things which are broadly categorised as culturally significant buildings and artefacts, environmental assets such as mountains and rivers, which define and shape the on-going performance of Llangollen as a tourism place. It also highlights some issues around its identity as a tourism place, showing a multiplicity of brands representing different aspects of this identity. As such, it highlights the key ANT themes of complexity, multiplicity and fluidity which surround the idea of ‘context’ for this study. The map in Figure 5.4 shows a complex and fluid array of networks of human brokers involved in ‘layers’ of tourism policy and practice within and beyond the town who are associated with tourism in Llangollen. These two figures represent the context for this study, which is developed through methodological discussion (Chapter 6), and through four chapters of narrative (Chapters 7-10) which follow.
Chapter 6    RESEARCH DESIGN, METHOD AND ANALYSIS: WORKING WITH ANT IN PRACTICE

6.1  Introduction

The preceding sections developed a conceptual framework from the literature which assumes the existence of an entity in tourism which acts as ‘host’. This study is based on the proposition outlined and discussed in the previous chapters, that this entity is comprised of relationships between brokers – the human and non-human actors whose networked relationships perform the role of host. The aim of the study is therefore to investigate these relationships using actor-network thinking to explore the processes and practices at work within these networks.

The choice of ANT as the basis of this study has several important implications for decisions about research design, method, and analysis, and these are the focus of this chapter, which has four main sections. Section 6.2 explores methodological issues underpinning the study, looking at the implications of the choice of ANT in terms of values, ethics and research quality. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 discusses key issues in research design and use of method in the context of an ANT study, and presents an original contribution to ANT methodology which emerged as a result of this study. Section 6.5 discusses issues relating to analysis of the materials generated during fieldwork.

6.2  Hinterlands and values: adopting a methodology

…selecting a method [is] not a question of choosing the right tool to best depict ‘reality’. Rather, the questions could perhaps be: What kind of reality ought I to be storying or co-creating? What collection of methods allows for the creation or maintenance of the best, or most responsible, or x (insert your own adjective here) social reality? (Watson, 2010: 30)

…the texts of actor network theory are hybrid, partially derived from the actors under study, and partly through the practices of the researcher… (Davies, 2000: 542).
We can draw together the philosophical themes of ontology and epistemology discussed in Section 4.2 into a statement about methodology, defined as the *procedures* of qualitative research (Cresswell, 2013) which shape decisions we make not only about which methods to use, but also, crucially, about how we use them, how we analyse and report the outcome, and how we assess the quality of this outcome.

Rather than providing a theory or methodology in itself, ANT provides a methodological toolbox within an ordering framework, but rather than specifying what methods to use, it shows *how* those methods can be used, and how the materials thus generated will be interpreted: ‘ANT is not a theory about what the social is made of but is rather a method that enables one to give actors voice and to learn from them without pre-judging their activities’ (Gad and Jensen, 2010: 62). This study seeks to describe the connections and relationships which constitute the role of host. Multiple types of materials are required to ‘know’ the subject, generated by methods which elicit understandings not just of people’s interpretations of the world, but also practices which involve things and ideas. So the researcher’s choice about who and what is ‘heard’ and not ‘heard’ is guided by the way different human and non-human actors are linked to each other through practice.

Research design is, therefore, itself an actor-network in which a method assemblage is enrolled to fulfil the requirements of the researcher (Law, 2004). Within this assemblage, method choice is itself a subjective and inherently political act (Mol, 1999; Law and Urry, 2004; Gad and Jensen, 2010; Jóhannesson *et al*., 2015). ‘The researcher’s task is to unravel the ordering practices under study, focusing on the linkages with material resources and less visible actors’ (van der Duim, 2007b: 35). However, as the quotes at the beginning of this section suggest, the way the researcher approaches this task is primarily shaped by her own knowledge and values which constitute the hinterland (Law, 2004) of her choices about who and what to study, and how the results will be reported. This raises a number of important issues which need to be acknowledged in research design, and these are discussed below.

### 6.2.1 Values, ethics and choices in designing research

Axiology is the branch of philosophy that considers the role of values in social enquiry. Values relate to what we think is important (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011), and need to be
acknowledged as the basis for how we approach and report research. These authors draw a distinction between research paradigms which assume that research is ‘value-free’ (and thus base their judgements about what is ‘good research’ on the absence of influence based on values), and those that acknowledge that research is ‘value-laden’, where judgements about quality are based on how we acknowledge the role of values in our study.

In qualitative social research, it is now axiomatic that we recognise the values underpinning our approach to enquiry (Tribe, 2009; Lincoln et al, 2011), and in tourism research a consensus has emerged that reflexivity is fundamental to new and ‘emancipatory’ approaches which provide greater freedom for the researcher in choosing how particular methods will be used, while at the same time raising personal and political issues which situate the researcher (Ateljevic et al, 2007). Acknowledging this, it is suggested, requires the researcher to be ‘doubly reflexive’ – looking inwards to herself and outwards to the research relationships she is creating, and acknowledging the entanglements which shape her approach to research (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson and Collins, 2005; Feighery, 2006; Westwood, Morgan and Pritchard, 2006). These entanglements constitute the ‘hinterland’ of the researcher’s methodological choices and decisions, and the implications of this for research design in this study, and for the resultant quality of the research output, are discussed in more detail in 6.2.2 below.

Hardy, Phillips and Clegg (2001) contend that researcher reflexivity goes beyond recognising the positionality of the individual researcher, but also involves acknowledging the role of the academic community of which the researcher is a part: ‘The researcher is subjected to and resistant to the controls embedded in the research process, and neither the research subject nor the researcher can escape them’ (Hardy et al, 2001: 536). These controls are reflected in the requirement to demonstrate accepted standards of research quality and conformation to codes of practice within the research community. Decisions made about what to research and how to approach the subject therefore not only require an acknowledgement of, and reflexivity about, the role of personal values in the choices made by the researcher, but also have to take into account ethical issues, which can arise at every stage of the project, from initial design through to analysis and representation of findings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). This study was therefore designed in accordance with the guidelines of the researcher’s funding body, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and evaluated and assessed as ‘low risk’ by the University of Surrey Ethics Committee (Appendix 1).
Despite this adherence to formal rules and guidelines, however, there are ethical issues for the researcher in the conduct of any research project, and these can arise throughout the research process. Christians suggests that ‘[t]he general exhortations of codes are considered far removed from the interactional complexities of the field (Christians, 2011: 66). Ryan (2005) explores these complexities by describing ethical behaviour in terms of the responsibilities of the social researcher – to participants, to readers, and to ‘the “truths” of the research circumstance’ (ibid: 9). He discusses the issues which arise in relation to each of these responsibilities, and suggests that the rules and guidelines of the academic community may sometimes work against discharging these responsibilities, particularly in aspects of qualitative social research.

These issues come to the fore in this study not because of any potential damage to informants from the way their words are interpreted through analysis, but because of the difficulty in explaining the complex theoretical background and purpose of the study (Appendix 5). Ryan suggests that ‘the researcher possesses power only insofar as the respondent permits’ (ibid: 10), in that the respondent will only reveal what they consider to be an appropriate response in relation to their understanding of the purpose of the study, and their perception of the researcher and her aims and objectives. However, it is suggested here that this is balanced by the amount the researcher is able to convey about the real ‘meaning’ of the questions asked, and begs the question about how far an explanation of the theory behind the research question is relevant in the interview itself.

The way the narratives are constructed here represents my ‘truth’, a truth, as noted above, which is a hybrid of empirical work and researcher practice, based on the chosen conceptual framework. As such, it probably bears little resemblance to the narrative the participants thought they were constructing in agreeing to be interviewed. Participant interviews generated materials through which different viewpoints are elicited, but the focus on work and relationships in networks requires an analysis which looks beneath these meanings to the multiple and fluid relationships through which these participant viewpoints are constructed by the interviewees. Responsibility to participants in this study has therefore perhaps become secondary to the responsibility to the reader in producing a trustworthy account, with a major focus on the need for transparency of method and narrative construction. Although formal member checking was not employed in this study, several participants asked to see copies of the final output, and this is
seen as an important part of the ongoing nature of a project such as this, with discussion and feedback possibly contributing to future policy development.

This shows how ethical issues underpin all stages of the research process, and may produce conflicts of interest which impinge on academic requirements in terms of determining research quality. These are explored in the next section.

6.2.2 Questions of quality

We saw in the section on values above that our view of what constitutes ‘good’ research is based on criteria which reside in the choices we make about how to approach research at the outset. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) trace the evolution of interpretive approaches to social research through a series of paradigmatic controversies, and argue that criteria applied to more positivist approaches to research are less appropriate in evaluating constructionist research with a strong element of researcher reflexivity. Despite this, we still find positivist ‘scientific’ criteria applied in critiques of such research. For example, Yin (2013), in his 5th edition of Case Study Design, asserts that case study design needs to maximise four conditions relating to design quality: construct validity (objectivity), internal validity, external validity and reliability, and Xiao and Smith (2006) refer to the ‘weaknesses’ of case study design and method in relation to these criteria.

However, as suggested above, others have suggested that different criteria are more appropriate for research where analysis involves significant interpretation and an overt emphasis on the situated researcher. Goodson and Phillimore (2004: 38) in discussing the value of interpretive approaches to tourism research assert that they key to ensuring validity in qualitative research is transparency – being clear about the researcher’s role in the construction of knowledge and the choices they have made in doing this, in order to enable the reader to judge the quality of the research: ‘It is essential that those tourism researchers engaging with interpretive paradigms and qualitative methods and methodologies clearly justify their choice of approach and make visible their data collection and analysis procedures’ (ibid, 2004: 38).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that, in contrast with more positivist research approaches, the main criteria for success in interpretive research are the extent to which it can be regarded as trustworthy, (the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and neutrality replacing the
positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity) and authentic,
demonstrating ‘reflexive awareness of oneself as the researcher, and appreciation and
understanding of the position and perspective of others – the researched, the participants and
the reader’ (Westwood et al, 2006: 38). According to Lincoln and Guba, credibility here refers to
the plausibility of findings to those who have participated in the study – whether it accurately
reflects the meaning behind what they have told us. Transferability can be aligned with external
validity, and represents the extent to which the findings can be generalised to theory. Dependability
can be aligned with reliability, and is demonstrated through reflexivity about research design and
analysis, which encourages transparency, and confirmability represents the extent to which
conclusions are grounded in empirical work, and to which the process of analysis and the
assumptions made are clear.

The position and role of the researcher, the nature of interpretive analysis, and the choices made
about how the story is to be told are therefore important considerations in determining the
quality of interpretive research: ‘interpretation is not simply an individual cognitive act, but a
social and political practice’ (Schwandt, 2007: 12). In tourism research, Phillimore and Goodson
(2004), suggest that these issues are characteristic of ‘fourth (crisis of representation) and fifth
moment’ approaches to research, in which the researcher acknowledges the existence of multiple
interpretations and the centrality of her own position in interpreting the materials and presenting
an account. Trustworthiness therefore relies on the clarity and openness with which the
processes of enquiry and interpretation are presented (Westwood et al, 2006).

As noted in the introduction to this section, the choices made by the researcher about how to
engage with her study are seen as a political act which shapes the resultant account of ‘the social’.
‘The researcher… is not just observing, s/he is actively constructing what it is being studied’
(Alcadipani and Hassard, 2010: 10). This challenges the researcher’s choice about who is ‘heard’
and who is not ‘heard’, requiring a different relationship between researcher and participant. The
significance of this is further elaborated in the wider context of social research by Whatmore
(2003) when she speaks of the researcher’s role in the field as generating materials, rather than
collecting data. ‘Data emerge … not as nuggets of the “real world”, or as so many “discursive
constructs”, but rather as intermediaries or “third parties” between researcher and researched’
(96). Relinquishing control to ‘the data’ in this way is difficult for the researcher to achieve in
practice, given the centrality of her own decisions in choosing how the resulting materials are to
be interpreted and used. Routledge (2008) argues that ANT research takes us beyond reflexivity to a place where, as researchers, we need to acknowledge that we are active ‘in’ the networks we are researching, continually engaged in a series of small decisions and choices which build and shape materials generation and narrative output as we go. Examples of ‘acting in the network’, and the tensions inherent in the researcher role as participant in her own study (Ryan, 2005) are provided in Sections 6.3 and 6.4 below.

This study therefore aims to demonstrate clarity of values through an open engagement with the politics of method, by exploring some key issues relating to how we as researchers ‘speak for’ participants, both human and non-human. These issues are also evident in the choices made about how to present the research, and the rhetorical devices used to report its outcomes. This study aligns with many of the articles and chapters using ANT in tourism cited earlier, which adopt a narrative approach, telling ‘in-depth stories which show how [human] actors and non-human entities connect, and which explain the recursive processes’ (Paget et al., 2010: 837). ‘We let them [the actors] show us where to look, what material they use in the course of network construction and how they come to be related to others’ (Murdoch, 1994: 23). As we will see, this can present challenges to the researcher’s ethical stance in adhering to ‘the “truths” of the research circumstance’ (Ryan, 2005) when decisions have to be made about which actors to ‘follow’ as multiple ‘realities’ unfold.

Reports of ANT research are often lucid, highly readable and detailed accounts, in the form of stories with single or multiple threads which draw together the different themes of their study, presented as a narrative on how the ideas of ANT are translated through the chosen research topic (e.g. Ren, 2011). In these accounts, the voice of the researcher is ‘speaking for’ the non-human entities studied. Materials generated are identifiable through direct quotes from relevant literature or as extracts from interview transcripts. As a result, the overall research design, the nature of the materials, and the analytical approach adopted often appear to be secondary to the narrative report.

This tendency had led to criticism of such research as overly subjective and descriptive, lacking in analytical strength as a result (Cohen and Cohen, 2012), and ANT has been criticised from several points of view. In particular, its emphasis on what is included in networks has been challenged, particularly by feminist and other critical theorists, on the grounds that it does not
provide a way of studying what is excluded (Fine, 2005; Rudy, 2005; Gad and Jensen, 2010). This critique, and its implications for the generation of the materials to be studies, is discussed further in Section 6.3.4 below. Within tourism, it has been suggested that ANT is an as-yet unproven approach with serious limitations and ambiguities for empirical research, largely because, in failing to offer a set of basic (predictive) propositions which could be evaluated in empirical research, it is not a paradigm (Cohen and Cohen, 2012). However, its adherents in tourism research (van der Duim et al, 2013; Jóhannesson et al, 2015) rebut these criticisms, arguing that its non-paradigmatic nature can be seen as a methodological strength rather than weakness.

Instead of providing full-fledged and coherent representations, ANT offers examples, cases and stories through ethnographically rich descriptions of mundane and situated practices of how things work and of how relations and practices are ordered. (van der Duim et al, 2013: 6)

The perceived quality of ANT research output therefore appears to reside in the transparency of the accounts of materials generation, analysis and interpretation, and the full acknowledgement of the active role of the researcher as co-creator throughout the process, and of the centrality of the researcher’s ‘hinterland’ of knowledge and experience that she brings to the project. The trustworthiness and authenticity of the account rely on the clarity and openness with which the processes of enquiry and interpretation are presented (Goodson and Phillimore, 2004; Westwood et al, 2006). However, Law suggests that ‘reflexivity’ itself can itself be seen as ‘a form of mythology’ (Law, 2000:4), and argues instead that ‘we acknowledge and come to terms, somehow or other, with the specificity of our own knowledges, our situations’ (Law, 2000:5). This approach is evident in many ANT-based accounts (e.g. Law, 2000; Law and Singleton, 2005; 2013) which highlight ways in which the researcher mediates the translations which produce the research project as an effect or outcome. We return to this point again in Section 6.4.4 in the context of this study.

This study therefore requires an assemblage of methods through which the researcher, by ‘acting in the network’, collects detailed material about the connections and relations between people and things. The following sections provide an overview of how these requirements are reflected in the research design for this study.
6.3 Research design

Critical, reflexive case studies are…useful in questioning hidden assumptions and identifying silent voices, and they cause people and institutions to think and be reflexive. (Dredge, Jenkins and Whitford, 2011: 48)

6.3.1 Choosing a research strategy

Research design is ‘the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of study’ (Yin, 2013: 26). Much of the current research in tourism involving ANT uses ethnographic research methods, with a focus on close and detailed empirical examination through which ‘actors and their relations, strength, importance and ability to speak, act and represent is established’ (Ren, Jóhannesson and van der Duim, 2012: 20). Detailed description, it is argued ‘deconstructs taken-for granted categories of analysis…and demonstrates the complexity and entanglement of places, events, phenomena, actors and objects’ (ibid, 2012: 20). In its focus on detailed observation and description, ethnography clearly employs methods which are appropriate in ANT research. However, many ANT studies adopt a case-study design (e.g. Verschoor, 1997; Haug, 2012; Peters, 2012; Jóhannesson et al, 2015), which is more suited to an approach which makes no assumptions about the ‘group’ to be studied, and about where it begins and ends. Case study design is therefore chosen as the most appropriate approach for this study, which requires the tracing of heterogeneous flows of tourism in actor-networks which may extend conceptually and geographically beyond the ‘local’ community chosen as the starting point for the generation of materials.

Yin (2013: 2) defines a case study as a research strategy which ‘investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. Saunders et al (2012: 666) add ‘using multiple sources of evidence’ to this definition. Cresswell suggests some similarities between ethnographic and case study research design, in that the social ‘group’ which is the focus of ethnography can be seen as an example of a single case. However, he suggests that the case study has the ‘additional power to explore an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration’ (Cresswell, 2013: 97), and this (despite some reservations noted below) make it a suitable choice for this study. Yin (2013) suggests that another distinction between case study and ethnography is that a case study starts with theory development and proceeds to research design from there. As an investigation
designed to re-conceptualise a subject in light of new ways of thinking about tourism, this study begins by developing an idea, presented as a conceptual framework (Figure 4.3), about the host as constituted through broker relationships in tourism: ‘a [hypothetical] story about why [and how] acts, events, structure and thoughts occur’ (Sutton and Staw, 1995: 378, quoted in Yin, 2013: 38). Law (2004) suggests that such stories, which reflect the position the researcher takes in relation to the subject of study based on her understanding about the subject drawn both from her own experience and from the literature, constitute the ‘hinterland’ of the researcher’s methodological choices, providing guidance on where to look for relevant materials.

Although case study strategies have been criticised (largely from a positivist perspective) as methodologically ‘weak’, on the grounds that they are merely descriptive, lack analytical rigour, and provide little basis for generalisation to other contexts, analysis of the materials generated from a case study can be used to build new theory (commonly using an inductive approach to analysis: see Section 6.5 below) or to focus on theoretical questions which can then be generalised through theory to other relevant cases (Yin, 2013). Xiao and Smith (2006) argue that their strength lies in the ability to focus multiple methods on a central question to build explanation in relation to clearly defined research questions.

From the literature, we can therefore identify the following defining features of a case study (Stake, 2006; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Cresswell, 2013; Yin, 2013):

1) Identification of the case: this can be a concrete entity – a person, group or place, but it can also be defined at a less concrete level – a relationship, a decision process or a specific project. The key is that it has to be **bounded by specific parameters**;

2) The intent of the study: can be *intrinsic* (a unique case of interest in itself) or an *instrumental* case which can help to understand a wider issue or question;

3) It demonstrates **in-depth** understanding derived from different types of materials (one source is usually insufficient);

4) In a single case study, findings involve a description of the case and the themes or issues that the researcher has uncovered during analysis;

5) These themes or issues can be presented as a **theoretical model**;

6) **Conclusions** are seen as ‘general lessons learned from studying the case’ (Cresswell, 2013).
As the list above shows, case study design is well suited to studies in which analytic generalisation (generalisation to theoretical propositions) is required, and in which contextual conditions are highly pertinent to the analysis (Woodside, 2010; Yin, 2013). An instrumental (Cresswell, 2013) or paradigmatic (Flyvbjerg, 2011) case study is therefore suitable for a project such as this, which focuses on a theoretical concept (the host), and uses materials generated through fieldwork to apply the conceptual framework created for the study to the research question.

Although, as noted above, the use of case study is common in studies based on ANT thinking, it requires the researcher to adopt particular sensibilities relating to the nature of the ‘case’ to be studied:

The ‘case’ should not be taken here as a small and bounded example of a larger whole but rather understood in its own right, as a sensitising device that may invoke questions about differences and similarities between sites and circumstances under study.

(Jóhannesson et al, 2015: 9)

As shown in Chapter 5, this study is therefore located in, but not bounded by, a specific place, and the point of departure, the successful Cittaslow Llangollen application, was chosen because of the links between Cittaslow and ‘strategic notions about how tourism should be performed’, which are one of the forms of ordering included in the conceptual framework (Figure 4.3). From the point of entry at the inauguration of Cittaslow Llangollen in October 2013, I began by establishing the Chair of the local Cittaslow committee as a key informant, and identifying through him the different brokers involved over the previous year in the application for Cittaslow status. This was followed by an initial phase of interrogating the literature relating to Cittaslow and its relationship with tourism, and with the current policy and practice landscape of tourism in Llangollen and in Wales as a whole. As a result of this, the decision was made to ‘follow’ the Slow Food Llangollen group which was established in the town as part of the application process, with the aim of tracing the relationships between the new group and the key tourism actors in the town. The success of this original decision and its role in ordering the case is traced through the rest of this section.
6.3.2 Rethinking ‘the field’

Three issues arise from Yin’s (2013) definition above concerning the choice of case study as an appropriate research design. The first question is how we define ‘real life’ as a context for study. We saw earlier (Section 4.2) that this study adopts an ontological position which sees realities as constructed in practices made possible by actor-networks comprising human and non-human elements which are ‘more-or-less precariously’ held together (Law, 2004:21). For this study, we can therefore define the ‘real world context’ as the actor-networks of tourism brokers within which the role of host is performed. Arising from this, the second issue relates to the way ANT sees tourism as entangled in other forms of ordering, entanglements which produce ‘controversies’ between the multiple realities enacted in these different orderings (Ren, van der Duim and Jóhannesson, 2015). This too has implications for our definition of ‘the field’, as these authors advocate expanding the field of tourism studies to encapsulate these other forms of ordering as well. The third issue is the requirement that a case study be bounded by specific parameters. Cresswell (2013) suggests that bounding criteria might include time and space, but for an ANT study, which is ontologically fluid and open-ended, and in which ‘time’ and ‘place’ cannot be assumed as fixed: ‘a non-territorial approach to fieldwork must be applied, in which the shape, importance and workings of the network are not known or taken for granted prior to its investigation’ (Ren et al, 2012: 21).

Haldrup and Larsen (2010: 40) note that one of the challenges facing the ANT researcher is the danger of ‘erecting walls and neglecting connections and movement in and out of the site’, and the need to move beyond a bounded ethnographic field, to go where the action is, offering the researcher unanticipated opportunities to collect material which aligns with her own research questions and objectives, or to suggest alternative directions which might shed light on the same questions. This demonstrates the geographical mobility of ‘the field’, (Massey, 2003) but also shows how we construct ‘the field’ conceptually as researchers through the choices we make about who and what to engage with (Riles, 2000).

Ren (2010a) suggests that this approach has much in common with multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995; Falzon, 2009). However, Massey (2003) argues that in ANT, the field exists in spaces other than the geographical:
‘The field’, then, begins to seem less like a space which one goes to and subsequently leaves. Rather, it is a much more complex structure which one transforms; it is still present, in transformed form, in your written report, and the processes of transforming it are present, too, in every operation ‘within’ the field. (Latour, 1999, paraphrased by Massey, 2003: 83)

Krauss (2009) develops this theme by discussing how ANT fieldwork can take place in a plurality of settings other than geographical space, including the spaces of policy-making and political decision-making as well as the virtual spaces of online communities. This has implications for the way conventional ethnographic methods are used, and is explored further in Section 6.4.

We can see from this that ANT therefore requires a conceptualisation of the field which is open not only to multiple geographical localities which are independent of scale, but also to the fluid nature of the creation, maintenance and breaking down of relationships between the actors in these localities and beyond. It also focuses attention on the ‘temporalities…of networking practices’ (Bærenholdt and Haldrup, 2006: 212), with the possibility that ‘the field’ lies in the past as well as the present (see 6.3.4 below). It therefore requires of the researcher a flexibility of approach which can accommodate and respond to new directions which open up, rather than excluding or disregarding them. The researcher is called upon to decide not only on whether, but also on how to follow her chosen actors, decisions which ultimately shape the nature of the field and the outcome of the study.

The account provided in Appendix 3 shows how this played out in the early stages of this project in relation to the original plan to follow ‘Slow Food’ as an actor, and describes how the choices I made at the outset seemed to be taking me away from my focus on the tourism host, suggesting that the relationship between tourism and Slow Food as a mediator of tourism networks was less straightforward than I had originally anticipated. I therefore decided not continue with the Slow Food focus, but to stay within ‘the field’ of Llangollen’s tourism by ‘following’ other aspects and ideas of the Cittaslow application, taking me into tourism’s entanglements with other forms of ordering, in this case the policies and practice of local governance. ‘Following’ Slow Food in this example would have required a revision of the research question, aims and objectives of the study, and a possible journey move away from the intended reconceptualization of ‘host’.
6.3.3 Planning, design and performance: ‘acting in the network’

Massey’s quote above also highlights the active role the researcher plays in transforming ‘the field’ through the processes of generating and analysing materials, and acknowledging this makes an important contribution to fulfilling the quality issues of clarity and transparency discussed in detail in Section 6.2 above. The academic process requires that effective project planning and design is demonstrated by drawing up a list of potential informants. For this study, a plan was therefore drawn up at an early stage which suggested key brokers (people and organisations) and their connections in the actor-network of tourism hosting, largely based on my current knowledge and understanding as I approached the project. However, as the ‘Slow Food’ account (Appendix 3) shows, some of the assumptions made at the outset about what these participants and their relationships might look like broke down as the actor-networks were traced, and other associations emerged.

The question of bounding parameters also raises issues about the starting and finishing of the case study, and these are discussed under Sampling below (Section 6.3.4). In the original plan for it was intended that the broker-host networks would be investigated over a period of nine months, ending in October 2014, covering one summer tourism season, and some key events in the annual tourism calendar. However, an unanticipated interruption to the third year of my three-year PhD programme enabled me to extend the period of fieldwork to a second summer season in 2015. This was advantageous in two ways: it enabled me to revisit some of my participants and to re-check and reconsider some of the ideas that had emerged from my first set of interviews, and it also provided a more longitudinal perspective which enabled me to ask new questions about some unfolding events and circumstances.

A further question which arose at this stage was the extent to which those brokers who were expected to be participants at the outset of the project, but were not traced through the sampling process (see below) should be included anyway, to explore the reasons for their absence. As noted earlier, one of the criticisms of ‘early’ ANT was that the need to ‘follow the actors’ resulted in the exclusion of those actors who were not ‘connected’ to the network. As the account of the outcomes shows, the questioning of ‘absence’ proved to be a useful dimension of materials generation in this project, and this appears as a narrative theme throughout.
This section highlights how ‘mess’ is an integral feature of an ANT study, and that despite the requirements of academic programmes to show evidence of project planning, things do not always turn out as planned.

6.3.4 Gathering informants: when is enough ‘enough?’

Interpretation must hold objects of reflection stable long enough to be of use. (Strathern, 1996: 522)

ANT acts as a spotlight to illuminate smaller parts of larger networks. In order to be useful, investigators need to arbitrarily decide what is a part of and apart from the network. (Watson, 2010: 21)

Yin (2013) advises that in a case study, relevant field contacts must be selected in relation to theory. We saw earlier that the starting point for this project is the situated researcher [me], the questions I asked about how the role of host is performed, and the place I chose to start asking these questions. Initial participants are therefore the ideas and narratives of an innovation, Cittaslow Llangollen, particularly as they relate to tourism, and the people of Llangollen who were enrolled as actors into this new development.

From this point, the study adopts the ANT approach known as ‘following the actors’ (Latour, 2005), a form of snowball sampling in which actor-networks are identified and traced through the actions of human and non-human participants, and ‘that which makes them act’ (Latour, 2005: 237). Identification of participants therefore becomes a key part of the process of generating materials, and is intimately linked with analysis from the outset, as the significance of particular actors becomes clear as the networks emerge (Jóhannesson, 2005). ‘Informants’ can include documents, policies, narratives and things, as well as people (Ren (2010a; Ren et al, 2012). As we have seen above, it is not always possible to identify where all these actors will be found: ‘Instead of demarcating the field prior to its description, feedback from the field must guide and point on to the following places, objects, practices or discourses suited for further description’ (Ren, 2010a: 206). This creates significant challenges relating to how as researchers we ‘allow’ or enable our participants to show us where to go next, and how far we can stray from our original
research objectives, possibly into new and more interesting questions, but equally possibly into a blind alley (as suggested in the quote from Watson, 2010, above, and demonstrated by the fate of Slow Food as an actor in this study).

It also became clear at an early stage that it was necessary to ‘follow’ some informants into the past in order to trace the evolution of broker-host networks through time. Many of these informants were tourism ‘things’ which had gathered different people, ideas, and other non-human actors as tourism developed in the town over the years. This necessitated changes to the planned process and methods (discussed further in Section 6.4).

An equally challenging issue in this type of research is the question of where the study ‘ends’? When have we generated ‘enough’ material for a complete study? Saunders et al (2012) suggest that ‘data saturation’ is reached when further collection yields little or no new information or themes. Yin (2013) agrees, but notes that there is seldom a clear cut-off point. There is, however, some debate about where an ANT case study ‘ends’ because of the fluidity and multiplicity which characterise such networks. Arguments about how to ‘cut’ the network are recognised in the literature as important (Strathern, 1996; Ren et al, 2012; van der Duim, 2007a), but how the question is resolved is never clear. Falzon (2009) uses the notion of ‘satisficing’ – making a decision about what is ‘good enough’ in relation to theory and practice: ‘one is guided by the scholarly literature on a particular topic, the current state of methodology, and one’s unfolding ethnographic insights on the ground’ (Falzon, 2009:12). Gad and Jensen (2010: 77) suggest that the decision about where to cut the network is, of necessity, made by the researcher, ‘inevitably assisted by practical conditions as well as intellectual considerations about what one wants to achieve’. This is a pragmatic view, and one which the academic constraints of producing research would tend to support.

However, other ANT writers think differently: ‘The boundaries are left open and are closed only when the people being followed close them’ (van der Duim, 2007a: 971). Verschoor (1997:58) suggests that ‘following the actors’ can stop when ‘the tactics, the strategies – in short, the practices – of the [informants] I followed are displayed. Until the display is saturated. And then I stop.’ Verschoor identified the point where description turns into explanation as the point where the network ends, while admitting that this point may be difficult to identify in practice.

However, Latour (1990) argues that in theory, this point is never reached, as one actor-network will inevitably merge into another rather than reach a finite and identifiable end-point. This issue
is further complicated in practice in an ANT study which explicitly seeks to uncover the working of power as a network effect. As we saw in Chapter 4, Latour relates power to the level of connectivity within actor-networks: ‘the small is being unconnected, the big one is to be attached’ (Latour, 2005: 180), leaving unresolved issues about where and how to ‘cut’, particularly in a network which turns out to be a ‘big one’.

In this study, ‘cutting’ the network was, in the end, a pragmatic issue. Although the extension to the fieldwork period meant that some participants could be interviewed more than once, so that important emergent ideas could be revisited, a cut-off point had to be established at the end of August 2015. The list of potential participants underwent several iterations as new names were identified, and it became clear that some of the people targeted would or could not participate. The final list of participants is provided in Section 6.5, where their role as actors in the analytical process is explored.

6.4 Research methods

Method is not, and never could be, innocent or purely technical. (Law, 2004: 143).

…in their relations of investigation, objects are made by methods and if that is the case, research becomes a question of what might be brought into being… (Watson, 2010: 37)

…every method is a framing device, an intervention… (Jóhannesson et al, 2015: 7)

Case study design involves detailed, in-depth generation of materials involving multiple sources of information, including observations, interviews, audio visual material, documents and reports (Yin, 2013). This study therefore uses a multi-method approach to generate materials which can support new ways of looking at the concept of host. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) (following Levi-Strauss), suggest that the interpretive researcher adopts a position best characterised as ‘bricoleur’, selecting a range of methods which produces ‘a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation’ (ibid, 2011: 3). As we have seen above, how these methods are used is guided by the ‘hinterland’ of the researcher’s methodological choices and research design.
This study focuses on relationships involving people, things, and ideas. Participants are characterised as “informants” on how the actor-network is constructed and held together’ (Ren et al., 2012: 20), but ‘the shape, importance and workings of the network are not known or to be taken for granted prior to its investigation’ (ibid, 2012: 21). The chosen methods were interviews and documentary analysis, supported throughout by reflexive observation relating to the plurality of settings which constituted the field for this study. These methods were intended to foster an iterative process, focusing on the integration and enacted connections of the identified participants, and designed to provide a range of channels through which actors could ‘speak’. The use of multiple methods in this way also enables the researcher to reflect on the different perspectives which arise, and to engage in reflexive scepticism about different ways in which outcomes could be viewed. This therefore becomes an important element in the effective presentation of results, particularly using observation to ‘follow’ non-human actors, and to identify absences, and this is incorporated into the narrative throughout the study.

Although some (e.g. Rubin and Rubin, 2012) argue that an analysis of documentary evidence and observation are important precursors to interviewing, in this study all three methods are used iteratively throughout the study, each source being re-interrogated in light of evidence derived from the other two sources. In purely practical terms, this process has to be iterative, because it may be necessary, for example, to interview key actors before accessing certain types of documents as they may be gatekeepers to such information.

6.4.1 Documentary and ‘multiple source’ materials

This includes a wide range of information derived from secondary sources, including meeting reports, email correspondence, ‘grey’ literature (policy, planning and strategy documents, marketing materials, and news media) and information gleaned from the web. Documentary materials have value for an interpretive researcher in that they can highlight how things and ideas can be presented differently in different sources. Yin suggests that documentary evidence is used ‘to corroborate and augment’ evidence from other sources (Yin, 2013: 107), and characterises these forms of data as ‘unobtrusive’, meaning that they are not created as a result of, or specifically for, the case study. Yin characterises the researcher as ‘vicarious observer’ in this: ‘important in reviewing any document is to understand that it was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case being done’ (ibid: 108).
However, in ANT research documentary materials have value in themselves as a source of material actors, such as ideas and discourse, which reflect, and often perform, multiple realities. Related information such as distribution lists can therefore also be helpful in identifying the role of documents in network formation, as can information about how the document came to be produced, by whom, and for what purpose. For example, the observation and tracing of logos on public sector documents, and particularly on tourism marketing materials, can provide valuable information about funding streams past and present. Thus, we can see an analytical focus on practice as well as meaning in interpreting these materials. In an ANT study, this is particularly useful because it provides a means of tracking the flow of ideas and discourse, and thus of identifying further brokers connected in the network.

Policy narratives are seen as key mediators in a fluid and dynamic policy context. In this study, a wealth of ‘grey’ literature in the form of planning and policy documents emerges throughout the period of fieldwork from information and insights gained from interviews, and from participation in public policy consultation sessions for new areas of policy. The main policy documents used are listed in Table 6.1 below, and discussed in depth in the chapters which follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENT</th>
<th>ROLE/NARRATIVE</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canal and River Trust/North Wales and Borders Waterway Partnership (2013) Strategic Waterway Plan Engagement Prospectus – looking forward to the next ten years. Northwich, Cheshire: CRT</td>
<td>Shows projects in Denbighshire which made successful bids for funding under the EU LEADER Plan for 2011-2013</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC/Cadwyn Clwyd (nd) Business Plan 2: Approved Projects 2011-2013.</td>
<td>Rural development strategy for Denbighshire in line with requirements of WAG</td>
<td>9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC (2011) Rural Denbighshire Local Development Strategy 2007-2013</td>
<td>Basis for economic planning (including tourism) for</td>
<td>9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCC (2013) Local Development Plan: 2006-2021 (WAG Local Development Plan)</td>
<td>Overall development plan for Denbighshire in line with requirements of WAG</td>
<td>Denbighshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC (2013) Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site: Supplementary Planning Document</td>
<td>First plan for World Heritage Site (prepared jointly with neighbouring counties of Wrexham and Shropshire)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC (2014) Llangollen and Llantysilio Town and Area Plan.</td>
<td>Rolling plan to meet needs of the community, managed through the Denbighshire Business Development Unit.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC/Locum Consulting (2011) Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site.</td>
<td>Wide ranging study looking at the opportunities for Llangollen as a result of the designation of the WHS</td>
<td>8, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAG (2009) Food Tourism Action Plan: ‘Food and Drink for Wales’</td>
<td>Food tourism strategy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Strategy and planning documents used in the study (Source: Author)

Further documentary sources relating to the generation of materials on ‘the past’ are provided in Chapter 7 (Table 7.1)

6.4.2 Interviews
Silverman (2007) argues against the use of interviews in qualitative research, asserting that it is best to use data that occurs ‘naturally’ to avoid researcher bias. However, we have seen above that no qualitative data is value-free. In interpretive research, interviews are seen not as neutral exchanges in which objective data are collected ‘naturally’ from an interviewee, but as active processes of co-creation between researcher and informant, ‘interactional accomplishments rather than neutral communicative grounds’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011: 150). The kind of story told through interviews is therefore prompted by the project, through the interviewer, about someone or something which is affected by the matters under consideration.

Alvesson and Ashcraft (2012) suggest that, rather than looking at different types of interview, researchers should consider what orientation will provide the kind of data required. This, they argue, provides a more effective link between epistemology and method, and hence a more transparent research design. In this study, several types of interview were used (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, cited in Alvesson and Ashcraft, 2012) at different stages: ethnographic (informal and impromptu interviews carried out while observing in the field); informant (repeated conversations with an expert); respondent (where participants are asked to share perspectives and experiences); and narrative (storytelling), but all of these were approached with a reflexive orientation, in line with the ontological and epistemological perspectives discussed earlier, with an emphasis on allowing ‘space for the unexpected’ (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010: 39).

Within this orientation, the interviewer is seen as ‘a situated cultural subject negotiating with other cultural subjects’ (Alvesson and Ashcraft, 2012: 244), in which the relationship between interviewer and informant is a key part of how the interview is later analysed. Attention is therefore paid not only to the types of questions to ask, but to the cultural identities and shared knowledge of both interviewer and informant, and on how communication takes place within the interview. Reflecting recent developments in thinking about interpretivist approaches in tourism research, sessions with human participants for this project took the form of ‘guided conversations’ around key themes rather than structured or semi-structured interviews (Westwood et al, 2006).

As noted in the section on ethics (6.2.1 above), the contributions of those interviewed can be shaped by the research and the context in which the interview takes place. This means that the researcher needs to be aware of how the purpose of the interview and her own role are explained.
to participants, as well as her expectations of those interviewed in enrolling them in the process. In this study, I introduced myself to interview participants with particular emphasis on the fact that I was a local, that I was very familiar with the town and the surrounding area, and that I had spent a lot of time there while growing up. This was a deliberate approach from the outset, in order to position myself as ‘insider’ as far as possible. It was important to do this in order to get an insider perspective on what local people felt was important in their community, and where tourism sat in relation to other matters of concern. Because of the ‘snowballing’ element of the study, it was also important that each informant recognised the significance of their own role in enrolling other actors in the ‘story’ that was being created. On reflection, this was a valuable approach, which was also carried through to some (although not all) of the broker interviews as the scope of the actor-networks widened beyond the local area. As the study proceeded, the relationships between ‘professionals’, ‘expert’ and the academic world, and the expectations of participants that a particular style of interview would be used, became increasingly clear. Often greeted by surprise as the nature of the interview unfolded – the ‘expert’ approach was replaced by a more symmetrical relationship between interviewer and participant.

The interview programme developed two distinct phases over the period of fieldwork, and this reflects the iterative nature of the process. The early interviews were very open and informal, establishing relationships and exploring the nature of the different relationships involved. I explained the project, and outlined the key areas for discussion, but the participant was encouraged to speak around the themes. Later interviews became more like conversations as ideas and themes which had emerged from the earlier ones, and from early stages of analysis, were introduced to test ideas and get alternative perspectives on viewpoints already received. Reflecting the close and iterative links between the generation and analysis of materials in this study, the evolution of questioning is developed further in Section 6.5, where the practices and processes of analysis are discussed.

In the second phase of interviews, the map shown in Figure 5.4, which I had commissioned from a local cartographer, was also used as a ‘prop’. This generated considerable interest among some participants, particularly among brokers working in the public sector, as it seemed to present a vision of the policy landscape that was new to them. This furthered discussion of evolving ideas, and elicited other brokers’ perspectives on the landscape of policy and practice which it showed.
This approach to interviewing also generated two further unanticipated, but positive outcomes, significant because they linked the use of interview to the other chosen methods. The first of these was the networking process that arose around my project as the different actors were enrolled as contributors, and a network of participants emerged. Hannerz (2003) asserts that networking is an important factor in the use of ‘modern’ ethnographic methods:

...personalising encounters in the modern multi-site field comes not so much from deepening particular interactions as from the identification of common acquaintances – from placing the ethnographer in the translocal network of relationships (Hannerz, 2003: 209).

The value of this became increasingly apparent as I was also enrolled by some brokers as a participant in policy consultations which took place during the months of fieldwork, providing, as a welcome by-product of the interviews, unanticipated opportunities to observe policy-making processes in practice. With increasing familiarity with some key brokers, I was asked to provide opinions on these processes, and to provide copies of my research when completed.

The second unanticipated outcome was the extent to which interviews generated other materials, some of it not available in the public realm, supplied on DVD. Interviews also led to more mobile approaches to the subject matter, providing unplanned opportunities for observation (see below) – a walk through the town with a participant to explain a point, an invitation (accepted) to participate in a local walking festival, a second (or even third) meeting with participants at the music or food festivals, attendance at the annual Town Meeting where key issues of importance to the town were discussed, an evening meeting of a group of tourism providers in a local pub to discuss collaborative activities. Although seemingly ‘messy’ in terms of research design, each of these was used as an opportunity to access materials which a more formal process of interviewing might have missed.

Thirty interviews were conducted, usually lasting around an hour (a few longer). They were recorded using a digital recorder wherever possible, and were also accompanied by field notes which recorded my reflections on these issues in order to improve transparency by being clear about how the interview is interactionally produced, and about my role in this production (Potter and Hepburn, 2012). A number of these people were encountered several times in the extended fieldwork period in 2015, and several further conversations were recorded in note form after the
conversations had taken place. The list of informants is provided, and their roles are discussed in Section 6.5 below.

6.4.3 Observation

…observations better capture the bodily, enacted, technologized and ‘here-and-now’ quality of practices because they focus on immediate physical doings and interactions… (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010: 39)

To observe a thing is not to be locked out but to be invited in to the gathering. (Ingold, 2010:4)

Observation can shed a different light on information which emerges from talking to people (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010). Additionally, and for this study, crucially, it also enables us to explore the behaviour of non-human actors (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Ren, 2011), to ‘follow’ actors into the past, and to explore the role of absences in the network. Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2002) distinguish between observation which occurs as a fundamental part of all research methods, and specific ‘naturalistic’ observation occurring during ethnographic fieldwork. Several authors (Urry, 2007; Falzon, 2009; Haldrup and Larsen, 2010) consider the way this latter ‘traditional’ view has been eclipsed by changes in technology and globalisation to change the nature of ‘community’ and the practices through which we observe it, so that observation takes place across scales in relationships and settings that are geographically situated in different places. This means that traditional approaches to observation may be ineffective, requiring a shift from ‘objective’ participant observation to more situated and reflexive practices. In this study, observation is both a reflexive analytical process and a method of focusing on particular non-human participants.

Observation has a particular role in ANT research, where humans and non-humans share the same analytical space, enabling us to give ‘co-performing non-humans a say’ (Picken, 2010: 259) by following ‘things’ which would otherwise be excluded in a purely human-oriented programme of fieldwork. As we have seen, non-human actors can include a wide range of media as well as objects, including photos, minutes from meetings, advertisements, news articles, sketches,
drawings, e-mails and written speeches and presentations (Jóhannesson, 2005; Ren et al, 2012).

Observation has a key role to play in ‘following’ these actors.

…how do you follow objects? Very simply, you find out as much about them in as many places in time and space from as many points of view as possible…[using] not only situational observation but also processes of observation that [are] attentive to the temporality of the …objects concerned (Lash and Lury, 2007: 20)

Lash and Lury suggest that observation of objects is best achieved by looking at them from different ‘viewpoints’, including the temporal, tracing the ‘social life of things’ (Appadurai, 1988) into the past (or pasts) as well as following them into multiple ‘presents’. However, Lash and Lury contextualise objects predominantly in relation to their cultural meanings, and trace how these meanings can be mobile within object-people practices in tourism. ANT looks beyond this semiotic stance to look at ‘things’ in terms of their connections and relationships – their ‘use value’. In attempting to flesh out a specifically ANT approach to following objects, Latour (2005) notes that:

Objects, by their very nature of their connections with humans, quickly shift from being mediators [active translators] to being intermediaries [passive]. This is why specific tricks have to be invented to make them talk…to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce scripts of what they are making others – humans and non-humans – do.

(Latour, 2005: 79, original italics)

Latour talks of ‘triggering the occasions’ where things can be made to talk, by studying innovation and change in actor-networks (‘it is only once in place that they disappear from view’ (ibid:80)), including accidents, breakdowns or strikes, and the role of what he terms ‘risky objects’, ‘when completely silent intermediaries become full-blown mediators’ (ibid:80). ‘Risky objects’ are identified through analysis, and their role is highlighted in the narrative accounts of this study.

Observation is therefore focused on both the interactions between human participants and the tourism objects and ideas and on the traces left by such interactions in the past. This became a method of both generating and analysing materials used in assembling the ‘story’ of Llangollen’s tourism past and the emergence of broker networks presented in Chapter 7, and the storyline
relating to the tracing of two key tourism ‘things’ in Chapter 8. Observation is also a useful way to identify absences (of noting what does not happen as well as what does), and is therefore an important tool in countering one of the key criticisms of ANT discussed earlier (that it does not account for absences). The account provided in Chapters 8-10 highlights the importance of absences in the relationships of formal tourism networks, and how recognising these absences is an important factor in tracing the actor-networks of hosting.

Observations were recorded iteratively in a series of notebooks throughout the study period, including reflexive observations about relationships between things observed during fieldwork and the conceptual framework for the study (Appendix 8). As the generation of materials progressed, further opportunities emerged which enabled me to attend various meetings as an observer, including policy consultations and regional tourism forums, and to participate in tourism activities in the destination, both as a tourist and a volunteer, enabling me to observe closely the relationships between these ‘things’ and the practices of tourism hosting. This included volunteering to work for one week at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod in July 2014, an opportunity that was repeated in 2015. I also participated as a tourist in the Llangollen Walking Festival, an annual event which I was again able to repeat in 2015. Both these provided opportunities for informal access to tourism brokers and locals, as well as additional opportunities for observation and further questioning of participants.

Achieving transparency about the way these observations are used in compiling the narratives is complex, but nonetheless important in ensuring the credibility of the research, and these issues are revisited in Section 6.5 on Analysis which follows.

6.4.4 Reflections on mess, method and quality: using ANT in tourism research

It has been suggested that although ANT offers ‘fresh and unconventional vistas for tourism research’, in practice ‘a partial hiatus exists between innovative theory and rather conventional approaches in empirical research’ (Cohen and Cohen, 2012: 2186). In seeking to counter this criticism, it is suggested here that examining the detailed implications for empirical research practice of adopting an ANT-based approach to tourism research can bridge this hiatus. The choice of method represents a ‘set of empirical interferences’ (Law and Singleton, 2013: 486)
through which materials are generated, contextualised, as we have seen (Section 6.2), in relation
to the researcher’s own ‘hinterland’ of knowledge and assumptions about the subject to be
studied, and about how methods are used (Law, 2004). This hinterland has been explored
throughout this chapter, in discussing philosophical, theoretical and practical issues which arise
when we ask questions about ‘how some groups, people or other entities have come to define,
illustrate, sell talk on behalf of or otherwise represent the tourism product or place instead of
others’ (Ren, 2010a: 201). These issues have been discussed above in relation to the Slow Food
account (Appendix 3), which shows how things, as noted in Section 6.3 above, do not always go
according to plan. Acknowledging this, it is argued, is an important contribution to the clarity
and trustworthiness of the account, and therefore to demonstrating research quality in a study
such as this.

Resolving these issues requires the researcher to adopt certain ‘character traits’ which shape her
approach to the generation of materials, traits which, in combination, form a significant part of
the ‘hinterland’ of our methodological choices in adopting ANT-based fieldwork (Beard, Scarles
and Tribe, 2016). These traits, extracted from the discussion above, include:

1) rethinking ‘the field’ by tracing relations through time and space, in hybrid, ‘non-
territorial’ environments (Ren et al, 2012: 21) independent of scale or location (see
Section 6.3.2).
2) asking questions about the researcher role which take us beyond reflexivity to ‘acting in
the network’ (Routledge, 2008) (Section 6.3.3).
3) seeking a different relationship between researcher and participant which challenges
conventional notions of research design by ‘following the actors’ (Latour, 2005) (Section
6.3.4).
4) making particular demands on choice and use of method in ‘following’ both human and
non-human participants (Section 6.4.3)

Acknowledging these traits in the account is important, enabling the researcher to bring the
personal into the account without straying into ‘self-revelation’ (Law, 2000). They are used in the
account in Appendix 3 to illustrate how assumptions made at the outset of a research project
may become redundant, not because of any failure in background research, literature analysis and
research design, but because things just didn’t turn out that way. Such assumptions should also
be drawn into the account as part of the ‘hinterland’ of the researcher’s methodological choices
(Law, 2004: 12), and they are accordingly referred to at various points in the narrative storylines in Chapters 7-10.

A fifth ‘trait’, the identification and tracing of ‘tokens’, can be seen as a network actor which synthesises method and analysis, and this is developed further in Section 6.5, on analysis, which follows.

6.5 Strategy for analysis and interpretation

6.5.1 What ANT says about analysis

The theorists’ interpretations are as much networks as any other combination of elements. (Strathern, 1996: 521)

Analysis based on ANT is premised on the fundamental assertion that ‘we are not dealing with different aspects of single reality, but different versions of it; versions that are both similar and different and diverse tools help to enact’ (Jóhannesson, 2005: 141, citing Mol, 1999). This shapes the way the analysis is approached:

…we cannot decide beforehand which of the actors in tourism networks is of most significance. Even though we undeniably have ideas about the roles the different actors are playing, their relations have to be described on the basis of empirical work…instead of beginning with the network effect (tourists/hosts) and explain from there, ANT proposes to trace and describe the network (relational practices) underlying these effects or categories…(Jóhannesson, 2005: 139)

Analysis in ANT therefore provides a way of drawing up relations between actors, but makes no assumptions about what those relations should look like: ‘we may be led by questions such as what this specific network affords, what is negotiated, what is included and authorised and what is rejected and made absent as well as how this is done through a number of processes and modes of ordering’ (Ren et al, 2012: 19).
6.5.2 Choosing an analytic strategy: the role of ‘tokens’

The purpose of the analytic strategy is to link your case study data to some concepts of interest, then to have the concepts give you a sense of direction in analysing the data. (Yin, 2013: 142)

As shown earlier, decisions made by the researcher at the outset determine how analysis is carried out and how the interpreted results are presented. In designing this study interview and various forms of documentary material, supplemented by field observations, were chosen as the most appropriate methods to generate the materials required to trace and understand the networks of tourism hosting. Interpretation of these materials represents the researcher’s understanding of the materials, based on an overall strategy using her chosen themes for analysis.

Yin (2013) provides four possible models for an analytic strategy for case-study research:

- Relying on theoretical propositions
- Working your data from the ‘ground up’
- Developing a case description
- Examining plausible rival explanations.

Most of the ANT case studies cited in the literature review for this study use a combination of the first, second and third of these strategies, using thematic ideas developed from their original question to organise the materials, and adding new themes derived from inductive analysis, writing their results up as an unfolding narrative case description. This study is essentially a story of how tourism works, with a theoretical focus on a single sensitising concept, the host, and a research design which focuses on the role of brokers in performing the role of host. The aim is to describe the workings of broker-host networks by ‘following’ these actors, and the output is a story about what took place as a result. The choice of analytic technique is therefore explanation-building. Yin asserts that ‘to “explain” a phenomenon is to stipulate a presumed set of causal links about it, or “how” or “why” something happened’ (ibid: 147), and to construct an explanation-building narrative based on some theoretically significant propositions.

Explanation-building in this way is an iterative process, making an initial statement and reviewing it repeatedly as analysis proceeds. This is well-suited to a case study where the nature of all the
actors, and the relationships between them, is unknown at the start of the analysis. As we saw in Section 6.3.4, in a single case study, this process does not necessarily end conclusively, but the outcomes can be compared with further case studies to elaborate the theoretical perspective further (Yin, 2013; Jóhannesson et al., 2015). Explanation-building is also, according to Yin, ‘fraught with dangers’, and demands ‘much analytic insight and sensitivity’ to ensure that research quality is maintained (Yin, 2013: 150).

In this study, a commitment to quality is shown by acknowledging the role of four ANT researcher ‘traits’ outlined in Section 6.4.4 above which underpin choices about research design, method choice, analytic strategy and in the construction of the account, demonstrating the transparency and authenticity which is required of qualitative research method and analysis. To these we can add a fifth trait which relates to understanding what ‘following the actors’ means in terms of interpretation and analysis, a subject which is seldom broached in ANT accounts.

The key mediator in an actor-network has been characterised through the concept of the ‘token’, defined as an actor which ‘both constructs the network and is simultaneously transformed by the developing network’ (Gaskell and Hepburn, 1998: 65). Latour (1993:51) characterises tokens as ‘quasi-objects’, which are ‘simultaneously real, discursive, contested and socially constructed’ (Nhamo, 2010: 466, paraphrasing Latour, 1993). In Gaskell and Hepburn’s work, the token is an assemblage of ideas, in their example an academic course. They trace the progress of the development of a new course by charting the way an assemblage of ideas is either taken up or ignored by individuals who see their interests translated within it. As the token is modified by association with these individuals, so the network develops, grows and is itself changed. In Nhamo’s paper, the token is the ‘global warming and climate change’ narrative, which attracts different groupings of actors through different leadership agendas relating to the token, in this example highlighting the potential political role of the token in the network (Nhamo, 2010).

A token is therefore defined as ‘a semiotic representation of an actor network, which circulates and is translated in the course of circulations performing the actor-network’ (Povilanskas and Armitiene, 2011: 1161). Their study, which is the first to employ the concept of tokens explicitly in tourism research, identifies and traces tokens through a combination of documentary analysis, qualitative semi-structured interviews and a quantitative survey. In this way, the ‘things’ identified as tokens (e.g. ‘cheap sun’, ‘robust environment’) are traced through analysis of printed tourism
literature, local tourism practice and visiting tourist choice, acting as a form of ‘tracer’ to produce an understanding of destination regeneration using ANT.

These examples also illustrate the iterative and interrelated nature of materials generation and analysis in ANT research. Tokens can therefore be seen as a form of password to understanding an actor-network, and are, as such, a significant focus for materials generation using different methods as noted above. This approach crucially also enables us to trace actors as they perform through time, using a ‘historically reflective ANT’ (Corrigan and Mills, 2012) in which the past itself is an actant (the ‘human and material factors that encourage people to act’ (ibid: 251)). This approach suggests that we can only be in touch with the past through a combination of traces, so we are influenced by dominant versions of the past and our interaction with those versions’ (ibid: 253). This was recently also demonstrated in tourism by Franklin (2014), tracing the agency of ‘bucket and spade’ as a significant foundational element in understanding the tourism space known as ‘the beach’. ‘Bucket and spade’ becomes a token which can be traced through the history of beach tourism, showing how ‘objects bring other times and other spaces into the here and now’ (Murdoch, 1998: 360).

Tracing tokens therefore becomes both method and analysis, and the identification of tokens is an important analytical step, which can take place at a very early stage in the research process. We can therefore add this to our list of researcher ‘traits’ summarised in Section 6.4.4 above, making a total of five reflexive dimensions of being an ANT researcher which need to be acknowledged in order to improve the transparency and credibility of the account (Beard et al, 2016). The role of tokens in analysis in this study is discussed further in the sections which follow.

6.5.3 Approaches to analysis

The materials generated for analysis in this study are in the form of documents and published images (Tables 6.1 and 7.1), recordings and transcribed interviews (see Table 6.2 and Appendix 6) and observational field notes (see 6.4.3 above and Appendix 8). Analysis was carried out manually and iteratively throughout the fieldwork period. The first phase involved a preliminary analysis of documentary material, designed to trace ‘Llangollen’ as a token through successive
layers of policy and provide a fuller appreciation of the policy landscape in preparation for the interviews which followed, and to contextualise the process of ‘following the actors’. This phase also led to the identification of some key broker roles within formal structures, again providing useful background for the interviews which followed.

As the second stage of fieldwork progressed, involving interviews with key brokers and observation of both the policy-making process and of the tourism offer itself, interview questions were modified and developed as the project proceeded. New ideas and questions emerged from earlier interviews and, most crucially, from periods of volunteering, participating as a tourist and attending meetings where policy was developed through consultation. As noted above (Sections 6.3 and 6.4), it also became apparent during this second phase that the process of tracing the key actors in Llangollen’s tourism also needed to look into the past, thus generating an unanticipated body of historical material through which significant human and, particularly, non-human actors could be traced (developed as a narrative field in Chapter 7).

Two broad dimensions of analysis emerged from these processes. The first is a ‘top down’ (deductive) analysis, organised using themes derived from the literature and in line with the conceptual framework (the ordering) for this study developed from this literature (Figure 4.3). A second, and concurrent, process of inductive, ‘bottom up’ analysis was also undertaken as new themes, and more importantly, new tokens emerged. These are now discussed in turn.

### 6.5.4 Deductive analysis

Deductive analysis for this study is based on the three modes of tourismscapes ordering discussed earlier (Section 4.3.1), strategic ordering and the associated internal and external relationships of practice. The use of these levels underpins the understanding of ordering as a ‘dance through time’ (van der Ploeg, 2003: 42), in which the three dimensions of ordering combine over time to produce ‘styles’ of practice, and this is reflected in the narrative provided in Chapter 7.

### Documentary analysis

Analysis initially largely concentrated at the ‘strategic’ level, beginning with policy documents relating to tourism (Table 6.1), with the aim of tracing Llangollen as a tourism place through the
policy landscape. The objectives of this were twofold – to determine the major policy themes and how they had evolved, and to carry out a mapping exercise to position policy making bodies and their policies in relation to one another. This preliminary stage provided background for broker interviews which followed, as it produced an overview of the formal structures of policy and practice in which the participants made their contributions, identifying the roles and relationships of public and private sector brokers, and suggesting paths and actors to follow in subsequent interviews.

Mapping for this process was done using post-it notes and flipcharts. The initial intention was to include all broker networks and policies on one sheet, but this proved too complex, so two sheets were used, one starting at the ‘national’ [Wales] level and one at the ‘local’, reflecting the hierarchy of formal structures within which tourism policy is made, and the relationships between tourism and other policy areas (Appendix 7). Key policy narratives were identified and traced through the structures, noting absences and gaps which suggested further questions to be raised during interviews.

These mapping sheets were also used as a ‘prop’ in some of the early interviews, particularly with those whose broker role had been identified through the mapping, in an attempt to draw out descriptions and opinions about the various relationships involved, and identify connections and hiatuses in these relationships. However, it soon became clear that most of the brokers interviewed did not have a thorough knowledge and understanding of, and engagement with, the level of complexity depicted in the maps. This, in itself, provided interesting insights into the working of policy networks, and, by highlighting gaps in practice, helped in developing an understanding of how some networks achieve durability and some do not. As more material relating to the landscape of tourism governance in the area emerged (mainly from the analysis of grey literature relating to tourism), I decided to commission an original map (presented as Figure 5.4 in Chapter 5 above, and discussed further in Chapter 10) showing the position of Llangollen within the policy landscape. As noted earlier, the introduction of this map as a prop in interviews proved a more useful tool in stimulating discussion about the practices and relationships involved. This shows how analysis and fieldwork were inextricably linked in this study. The insights gained from this initial phase of analysing policies also contributed directly to an invitation to become involved in some formal and informal meetings concerning consultations.
about policy-making as the study progressed, further illustrating the interactive and iterative nature of each phase of analysis.

Identity and ‘sense of place’ themes were initially traced through policy documents and strategic plans and where applicable in the written constitutions of various formal groups. These were also discussed wherever possible during interviews, with a focus on what they meant to the group or individual concerned, and whether and how they were reflected in practice relating to tourism. This proved a particularly ‘messy’ area to analyse, as many answers tended to reflect the principal and formal role of the participant, and often therefore also ‘official’ views of Llangollen as a tourism product. I also attempted to identify ideas about group ‘sense of place’, about the role of networking in building place identity, whether this differed between different broker networks, and whether there was conflict or contestation between these groups. These themes appear throughout the narrative, but are a particular focus of Chapter 9.

**Interviews**

Interview materials consisted of 25 recordings and transcripts plus detailed notes from a further five interviews or encounters where recording was not possible. As described earlier (Section 6.3.4), these participants were accessed via a snowballing process. My aim in carrying out these interviews was to generate materials about relationships between brokers in the networks of hosting. The first step was therefore to identify broker roles in relation to the literature, and to trace relationships between them. This proved complex, as it became apparent during interviews that many participants were involved in tourism in several different ways, thus adopting multiple and different roles at different times in the production and performance of tourism (so, for example, a public sector tourism professional might also be a member of a local voluntary organisation and a tourism provider through ownership of a self-catering property in a neighbouring village). Anecdotally, one participant (Informant 7) was a member of no less than 14 different committees in the town (apparently his secretarial skills were second to none!) so his knowledge and role as a mediator went far beyond the single broker role identified in the original snowballing process. It is also relevant to note at this point that 7 out of 30 of those interviewed, particularly public sector brokers (shown by * in the list below), changed roles during the 18 month period of fieldwork, and that some of these were interviewed twice during this time in different roles. This highlights the fluidity of these networks and the roles played by individual brokers within them. The implications of this are discussed further in Chapter 10.

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A series of categories identifies the primary role of each participant, and also any ‘secondary’ roles. It should be noted that ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ used here do not imply any hierarchy, but are used simply to distinguish between the broker role which was the main reason for enrolling them in the network, and other roles played by the same person which emerged later. These categories, derived initially from the literature on brokers discussed above, related to the nature of the informant’s role as a tourism broker:

- **PUL** – Public sector broker (local council)
- **PUC** – Public sector broker (county council)
- **PUN** – Public sector broker (national)
- **PRP** – Private sector broker (tourism provider)
- **PRA** – Private sector broker (tourism administrator)

Although the literature defines brokers as remunerated actors, the numbers of volunteers emerging as actors in these networks, and those who were also residents (or ‘locals’ in terms of the Cheong and Miller (2000) model) was also recognised in two additional categories.

- **V** – Volunteer broker
- **R** – Resident (local)

The process of ‘following the actors’ produced (of 30 participants) 14 whose primary role was as a public sector broker, 9 who were primarily in the private sector, and a further 7 who were in neither of these categories. The process of categorising these brokers raised an issue in building the narrative as to whether it was important to the account to note which ‘voice’ in relation to these different roles the participant was using when answering different questions, and how to deal with ‘off the record’ comments which might be controversial or which might identify the participant. Where a participant had multiple roles, I decided to note which of these roles was ‘speaking’ by indicating this after each quotation used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview code</th>
<th>Record T=Transcript N= Notes</th>
<th>Broker roles PRIMARY</th>
<th>Broker role(s) SECONDARY</th>
<th>Formal group membership</th>
<th>Role change *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 T</td>
<td>PUL/V/R</td>
<td>PUL</td>
<td>R, V</td>
<td>Cittaslow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 N</td>
<td>V/R/PRA</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>R/PRP</td>
<td>Cittaslow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 N</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cittaslow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 T</td>
<td>PUC/PUL/R</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>PUL/R</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 T</td>
<td>PRP/R</td>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Dee Valley Active</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 T</td>
<td>V/R</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V/R</td>
<td>Cittaslow; LCTT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 T</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vx14</td>
<td>LCTT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 T</td>
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<td>PRP</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dee Valley Active/Denbighshire Tourism Forum/NE Wales Tourism Ambassador</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 T</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 T</td>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>PRA</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 T</td>
<td>PRP/V</td>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 T</td>
<td>Vx2/R</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V/R</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Vx2/R</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V/R</td>
<td>Cittaslow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>PUC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 T</td>
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<td>PUC</td>
<td>V/R</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 T</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>PUC/V</td>
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<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>PUC</td>
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</tr>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>PRP/Vx2/R</td>
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</tr>
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<td>PUC</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 T</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 T</td>
<td>PRP/V</td>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Food trail group</td>
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</tr>
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<td>V/R</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Food Festival</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>PUC</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Vx4</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vx3/R</td>
<td>Formerly PRP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 N</td>
<td>PUN</td>
<td>PUN</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 N</td>
<td>PUC/V/R</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>V/R</td>
<td>LIME *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 T</td>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>PRA</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 T</td>
<td>PRP/R</td>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Dee Valley Active/Wales Dee Partnership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 T</td>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>PRP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Informant categories
A similar issue arose when looking at relationships between brokers which are characterised in the literature (e.g. Jennings and Weiler, 2006) as formal and informal relationships, where it was found that these types often overlap and merge through practice. I also looked for occasions when, as noted in the literature, brokers align around particular issues, with a specific focus on how this occurs, how these alignments come into being, and whether or not they evolve into durable networks. I then attempted to characterise both roles and relationships in relation to the three levels of ordering identified in the ANT theory: strategic, internal and external, thus removing any notion of ‘scale’ from the analysis.

Reflecting the idea that ‘strategic notions about how tourism should be performed’ can occur at any ‘level’ (see Section 4.3.1), and that these are not confined to formal strategies and policies, the interview materials were interrogated in terms of both the nature of the relationships between brokers (using themes from the literature, and particularly from Cheong and Miller’s (2000) paper on brokers and power relationships discussed in Chapter 3), the presence of ‘strategic notions’ within these narratives, and the nature of power and identity as effects within these relationships.

These deductive outcomes are used to build the narratives in Chapters 9 and 10, although it is important to emphasise that the materials generated through interviews are also used in the inductive process described below.

6.5.5 Inductive analysis

Inductive analysis was carried out using a form of situational analysis based on ideas from grounded theory which are regarded as a suitable approach to analysis in an actor-network context, and in particular to exploring the role of non-human actors (Clarke, 2005).

People and things, humans and nonhumans, fields of practice, discourses, disciplinary and other regimes/formations, symbols, controversies, organizations and institutions, each and all can be present and mutually consequential. (ibid: 72)

Situational analysis enables the researcher to bring together her own thought processes and influences and the materials generated through fieldwork by mapping ideas and concepts. The outcomes of this process emerge out of ideas developed from the interplay of material generated
through interviews and analysis of policy documents, and ideas about relationships gathered through participation and reflection during the process. The researcher is therefore present in the analysis through observations recorded as field notes, alongside her materials, and highlighting this is an important contribution to the authenticity and trustworthiness of the outcome.

Clarke (2005) suggests that situational maps can provide ways of articulating the elements in the situation and examining relations among them, creating a series of ‘analytic exercises’ (ibid: 84), in which ideas, quotes and narratives derived from interviews and observation are brought together, in a flexible graphic or tabular form as suggested in Figure 6.1 below, and the associations and relationships between ‘all the analytically pertinent human and nonhuman, material, and symbolic/discursive elements of a particular situation as framed by those in it and by the analyst’ (ibid: 87) are recorded in this form by the researcher through a process of reflection and memo-writing. These ‘maps’ are therefore designed to set out all the elements in the story, including those derived from deductive analysis above, to generate new relationships and uncover hitherto un-noticed ones.
In this study, it is suggested that situational maps are aligned with the concept of token, discussed above, replacing ‘situation of action’ at the hub of the diagram. The addition of some or all of the other elements to the map provides a way to illustrate how tokens are ‘simultaneously real, discursive, contested and socially constructed’ (Nhamo, 2010: 466), at the same time providing a guideline to the researcher about how such tokens can be interrogated during analysis. Although valuable, such maps do have limitations, as they have a tendency to produce a static and two-dimensional ‘snapshot’ rather than a fluid and dynamic image necessary to understand the multiplicity and fluidity of actor-networks (Law and Singleton, 2005). However, they are useful in showing how themes arising from analysis can be synthesised with empirical observations in relation to a particular research question. In this study, situational maps were used to analyse information relating to non-human actors which acted as ‘tokens’ in the networks under study, and examples are provided in Chapters 8 and 9.

**Emergent themes:** The use of these situational mapping techniques from grounded theory brought together materials from interviews and from observations recorded as field notes. As we have seen, observation can be characterised as a form of analysis as well as data collection, in that things are not only included because the researcher chooses to include them, but they are also positioned by how they were observed, and the questions the researcher asks in doing so. This highlights one of the ways in which the researcher ‘acts in the network’, an important trait in ANT research (see Section 6.4).

The identification of emergent themes was aided by the use of the concept of ‘token’ mentioned earlier. Tokens can be used as tracers, following ‘gatherings’ of ideas through which networks are formed and become durable. The discussion above has already described how ‘Llangollen’ was used as a token in analysing policy literature, highlighting dominant policy narratives in relation to the town, but also indicating absences from these narratives. The token ‘tourism’ was used in a similar way to identify and trace relationships of hosting in the governance of Llangollen (see Chapter 9).

This approach also enables us to identify new actors, particularly non-human ones, and to map the trajectories of things and ideas through the materials, analysing how they behave in the course of this path. As an example of this, as I embarked on my interviews a very powerful ‘gathering’ of ideas emerged, which was collecting a fluid and expanding network of actors around it. It quickly became apparent that a project (which had just received planning assent at the start of
my project) to build a large supermarket on the outskirts of the town was highly contested, and had generated fierce opposition as well as acceptance, both in the town and more widely. Although tourism was not the central issue in shaping these views, the ‘supermarket narrative’ generated networks which encompassed several key tourism brokers and groups, and drew in some key issues relating to ‘sense of place’ which are present in the account (developed in detail in Chapter 9).

Further ‘gatherings’ of ideas coalesced around two key non-human actors – one a tourist attraction, the other an event – which emerged from materials relating to relationships with broker-host networks in the past (developed in Chapter 7, and ‘followed’ through to the present in Chapter 8). At this point, a third token emerged (Chapter 9), which was then traced into the networks discussed in Chapter 10.

### 6.5.6 A word about absences

The literature around the use of ANT (discussed in Chapter 4) highlighted an important criticism, that in seeking to identify what is connected, ANT it does not consider what is excluded from the network. However, this has been addressed by several ‘post ANT’ theorists (e.g. Mol, 1999; Alcadipani and Hassard, 2010). A quote used earlier in this section highlighted the importance of asking questions about ‘what is negotiated, what is included and authorised and what is rejected and made absent’ (Ren et al, 2012: 19 emphasis added). We have seen earlier that exploring absences has become an important way of looking at tourism’s ‘controversies’ (Jóhannesson et al, 2015), a view which has important ethical as well as methodological implications:

> In seeking to be ethically accountable researchers, I believe we need to attempt to articulate what we see as the *sites of silence* in our data. What seems present but unarticulated? What thousand-pound gorillas do we think are sitting around in our situations of concern that nobody has bothered to mention yet? Why not? How might we pursue these sites of silence and ask about the gorillas *without* putting words in the mouths of our participants? (Clarke, 2005: 85, original emphasis)

In this study therefore, asking questions about what appear to be ‘sites of silence’ enables us to identify and account for gaps and absences in the networks of hosting. Absences can be difficult
to identify at first, but emerge inductively through questions about why things turned out as they did, rather than otherwise. Examples occur throughout the narrative, but to illustrate this briefly here, we can see that ‘the supermarket issue’ used as an example above shows how the supermarket itself was absent throughout, and now, at the time of writing, is ‘present’ only as an empty building with no planned future usage, yet, as we shall see in Chapter 9, it was present in many of participants’ narratives, and played a major role in their vision of the town’s touristic and non-touristic futures. We can also trace the role of things which are now absent, but leave traces from the past, or are translated into something else, and this is evident in the narratives provided in Chapters 7 and 8 which follow.

Tracing such emergent themes enables us to follow ‘messy’ objects and the different ways in which they are ‘performed into being’ (Law and Singleton, 2005), and is an important element in the narratives that follow.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored some important questions which arise in choosing an appropriate research design, methods and analysis in an ANT study. It began by exploring the key themes which underpin the decision to base research on the methodological toolbox offered by ANT, identifying the particular opportunities which arise from the decision to adopt this approach to reconceptualization of the tourism host. It highlighted the importance of acknowledging the ‘hinterland’ of the researcher’s methodological choices, and the role of individual and academic values, ethics and codes of practice in this. In particular, it focused on ways in which ‘quality’ is judged within the research community and considered how quality is demonstrated in this particular project.

The second part of the chapter provided a justification for the decisions made about research design, discussing the merits of using a case study strategy for this research, and concluding that a paradigmatic single case study using multiple methods of materials generation is an appropriate choice for a study in which generalisation to theoretical propositions is required. It then considered issues of how to ‘choose’ informants in ANT studies, based on a form of snowballing known as ‘following the actors’ from the point of departure outlined in Chapter 5, and broached
the complex question of where the study ends, and the challenges of ‘planning’ in a study such as this.

This was followed by a section which examined the choice of three specific methods – documentary and multiple source analysis, interviews and observation – and discussed their combined use in a fieldwork programme over an eighteen-month period in 2014-15. It emphasised in particular that method is performative, and explored the implications of this in relation to each of the methods used in this study.

The final part of the chapter discussed how the assembled materials were analysed, and highlighted the iterative and fluid nature of this process, and the close links between analysis and the methods discussed previously. It showed how the ideas assembled through the conceptual framework were translated deductively in the analysis, again showing the role of the framework as an ordering device in this study. In then discussed some questions relating to the way ideas also emerge inductively, and in particular the way ‘absences’ are included in such an analysis. These are then developed into four narrative fields which are presented as ‘storylines’ in Chapters 7-10 which follow.

In exploring these issues, new questions arose about the use of method, and in particular the necessity to demonstrate how choices about methods for the generation and analysis of materials are critical to the demonstration of research quality in a study such as this. The answers to these questions constitute an original contribution to the literature on ANT in tourism (Beard et al, 2016), by identifying five ‘character traits’ of the ANT researcher: rethinking ‘the field’, acting in the network, following the actors, admitting non-human actors, and tracing tokens.
SECTION C: NARRATIVE STORYLINES
Chapter 7  TRACING TOKENS: THE EMERGENCE OF BROKER-HOST NETWORKS

7.1  Introduction

Actor-network theorists set up narrative fields in order to show how effects are produced out of alliances between human and nonhuman entities. (Strathern, 1996: 520)

…places are historically produced material environments… (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 32)

As shown in the previous chapter (Section 6.3), case study design requires that the case is bounded by specific parameters, which might include time and space (Cresswell, 2013; Yin, 2013). However, as we have seen, this is a significant challenge for a study such as this, which requires that we embrace fluidity and change, where neither ‘time’ nor ‘place’ can be regarded as fixed or taken for granted, and where the context emerges as the study proceeds. As the conceptual framework for this study (Figure 4.3) shows, the context for this study is therefore the emergent broker-host networks through which ‘Llangollen’ as a tourism place is constructed and performed.

The starting point for this narrative of is therefore not the point of departure for fieldwork (Cittaslow Llangollen in 2014), but the place which seemed most appropriate to me as the beginning of the ‘storyline’ about broker-host networks and the performance of host. The narrative in this chapter arose from discussions during interviews with people whose testimonies included a significant knowledge and understanding of local history, and in particular how the town had developed its identity as a tourism place (specifically Informants 7, 12, 14, 19 and 25 – see Table 6.2). Most of these were residents of Llangollen, retired or semi-retired individuals formerly involved in tourism provision either as entrepreneurs or employees, who exhibited a keen sense of the town’s past as a tourism host, and the ways that this had changed over time. Their narratives included ideas about the past and the development of tourism which suggested further directions for me to trace the development of broker-host networks, and the key actors and ideas through which they were mediated.

Although not part of the original research design, it became clear as a result of these testimonies that ‘following the actors’ necessitated tracing certain actors into the past, and thinking about the
ways in which their traces are present in today’s broker-host networks. This chapter therefore uses material from the literature on the history of the area, and particularly from eighteenth and nineteenth century travel writing and guidebooks, and other commentaries by those who visited the town (see Table 7.1), archive documentary materials relating to tourism, mainly sourced from the Llangollen Museum and the internet, as well as the testimonies which emerged during interviews with participants. These are used to generate a storyline about the emergence of broker-host networks in Llangollen using the three modes of ordering which are present in the conceptual framework (Figure 4.3). This storyline also highlights the role of ‘tokens’ identified during analysis in this ordering, and shows how ideas originating in ‘the past’ are enfolded within these tokens. This analysis is then taken forward in subsequent chapters through situational mapping (see Section 6.5) around these tokens, and a number of the ideas discussed in this chapter are also present in the token ‘maps’ in Chapters 8 and 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source (full internet references in reference list)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel writing/Guidebooks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lovely Llangollen</strong> (biennial official guidebook published by Burrow and Co. Ltd (London and Cheltenham) for the Llangollen Urban District Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local histories</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.1  ‘The past’: documentary sources (Source: Author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas, J. (2007)</td>
<td><em>Tales of Dinas Bran</em> (<em>Castles of Wales</em> website)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tracing actors in the past in this way is a subjective process (Corrigan and Mills, 2012), undertaken and ‘infused with meaning’ (Weatherbee and Durepos, 2010:7) through the conceptual framework of this study, and situated in my own engagement with the ‘possibilities of the past’ (Srinivas, 2012) through analytical observations of the way these actors are present in the networks of hosting.

7.2 The performance of place: engaging with the past

ANT sees the social as a continuous process of ordering, through which to consider ‘real, historical, traceable assemblages of people, things, places and ideas held together by links and relations of different kinds’ (Candea, 2010, quoted in Baiocchi, Graizbord and Rodriguez-Muniz, 2013). The introduction of a historical dimension to actor-network study, of exhuming a ‘lost genealogy of material traces’ (Franklin, 2014: 269) has great conceptual value for understanding tourism. This section therefore examines the ‘dance through time’ (van der Ploeg, 2003: 42) of the emergent destination of Llangollen using Bärenholdt’s (2012) dimensions of performance of tourism places discussed in Chapter 2:

- Place as material – the physical environment – location and physical resources, weather
- Embodied place – composed of a series of emergent multi-sensual performances
- Sociality of place – the effects of encounters involving human and non-human actors
- Place memories and destination images – evident in both the personal records of residents and tourists, and in the images created by those involved in marketing the place as destination.
to produce an account of tourism ordering over time, and the role of different human and non-
human brokers in this. In doing do, it identifies brokers in the past - the people and things 
through which the development of a tourism ‘place’ has been and in some cases is still mediated, 
follows the evolution of the practices of tourism in the town, and traces some important touristic 
tokens which are key actors in today’s broker-host networks.

7.2.1 Place as material: tourism assets and resources

As shown in Chapter 5, tourism in Llangollen is performed against a backdrop of natural and 
historical assets which have played a continuous role in its ordering as a tourism place since the 
latter years of the eighteenth century. These assets include a landscape of steep limestone cliffs 
which overlook a wooded valley housing the River Dee where it runs through a narrow gorge, 
producing steep cliffs and year-round white water rapids. To the south of the river, the Berwyn 
Mountains form a wild and largely untapped resource of agricultural and wilderness moorland. 
These physical assets are combined with some significant heritage and cultural attractions, 
including Dinas Bran, a ruined castle traditionally associated with Arthurian legend and the 
medieval Welsh princes (Thomas, 2007) and Valle Crucis, the remains of a former Cistercian 
abbey dissolved in 1537. Within the Dee Valley, we can also add a number of 19th century 
transport features, including a well-known heritage railway, which links Llangollen with Corwen, 
a smaller Dee Valley tourism place about 10 miles (16 kilometres) upstream, and the Pontcysyllte 
Aqueduct and Llangollen Canal, which was granted UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 
2009.

The settlement began as a medieval bridging point of the River Dee, and from this point, the 
ordering of Llangollen is largely shaped by different forms of mobility. Located in a narrow 
valley, the town developed in the 17th and 18th centuries as a ‘gateway’ on the most direct (and 
therefore cheapest) carriage route from London to Holyhead and the Irish ferries, an extension 
of the Roman Watling Street. The settlement expanded from its role as what Informant 12 
characterised as a ‘ville etape’ – a concept applied to French villages located near to major 
transport routes providing a wide range of services to travellers passing through.
...it’s always been a place that people pass through...the stagecoach...they stopped here...what the French would call a *ville etape*, you know, it’s a stepping stone...so there’s always been businesses around that traffic, if you like, for hundreds of years, really. (Informant 12: resident, volunteer)

This is suggestive of local network formation around the passing trade generated by travellers for many hundreds of years, shaping its emerging character as a border town rather than a Welsh village, and is a starting point from which to follow the ideas, actors and practices of hosting which emerged from this.

Travel writer CG Harper, in his tourist guide to the Holyhead Road written in 1902, notes that the reputation of Llangollen suggested that the performance of ‘host’ was poorly realised in these early days (although we cannot be sure of the source of his views, which are not acknowledged in his account):

...pleasure in travelling - pleasure in such solitary and rugged scenery - was quite out of the question, and if travellers remembered Llangollen at all, it was as a place where the coach changed horses, and where the one inn afforded the worst cheer at the highest prices... (Harper, 1902: 205)

After the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland in 1800, the commercial imperative to improve connections saw the route transformed by celebrated architect and engineer Thomas Telford as the first and original trans-Britain highway, the Great Irish Road, or London to Holyhead Turnpike. Initiated in 1815 and completed in 1826, it reduced the journey time between London and Dublin by a full 10 hours, and was seen as a pinnacle of Georgian engineering achievement, providing a safe and reliable route through the difficult, if spectacular, terrain across Wales to the west (Keys, 2000).

Following these material actors – natural resources and significant transport links - enables us to trace the origins of Llangollen’s development as a tourism place. In the sections which follow, we can see how these non-human actors were recast as tourism assets through the embodied practices of the earliest tourists in the town, through the working practices of those who lived and worked in the town, and through the continuous re-ordering of the tourismscape which has occurred as a result of subsequent changes in practice and mobility to the present day.
### 7.2.2 Embodied place: ‘the tourist’ arrives

The social and cultural changes which led to the emergence of tourism in Britain (Löfgren, 1999; Franklin, 2014) are recognisable in the changed relationships between visitor and local in Llangollen which are evident in commentaries relating to the town in the late 18th century.

...in the last quarter of the eighteenth century the tourist sprang suddenly into existence. None were more astonished than the Welsh peasantry at this strange spectacle of people who had riches and comfort in their own homes travelling for pleasure and delight in their mountains and rivers; aye, and often walking, not for economy, but for love of that exercise, in strange places... (Harper, 1902: 205).

Llangollen has been performing the role of tourism host since the late 18th century, initially as a favoured destination for English aristocrats of a Romantic persuasion. At this time, it became fashionable to travel through wild landscapes, often accompanied by an artist who recorded the trip on canvas in the Picturesque style of the Romantic period (Andrews, 1989; Löfgren, 1999). Initially focused on European, and particularly Italian locations, this burgeoning fashion for wild and romantic landscapes was transposed to Britain as a result of the restrictions imposed on travellers by the Napoleonic Wars, and saw Wales re-imagined: ‘A country, long ignored, thought to be all that was ugly, became the very standard of beauty for some fifty years’ (Zaring, 1977:398). This fashion brought Romantic celebrities like JMW Turner, Wordsworth and Coleridge to Llangollen, and saw the town and its natural and cultural assets feature in the lavish accounts of an emergent body of travel writers, who set the route, tone and agenda for an emerging class of tourists (Löfgren, 1999):

I know no place in North Wales where the refined lover of the picturesque scenes, the sentimental or romantic, can give a fuller indulgence to his inclination [than Llangollen] (Pennant, 1778)

I stood amongst those frowning ruins [Dinas Bran] – “the antiquity of life” – to look on the smiling vale spread in beauty beneath, and enclosed on all sides by gigantic rocks and towering hills, reared by the almighty finger of Heaven’s own architect. The features of the landscape were the same as in days of yore, except the Peace had allured the happy flocks to gaze upon her pastures, and Security, the child of peace, had beckoned forth the husbandman to his labour, - to till the ground, and gather the orchard, to sow the crumbling fallows, and reap the golden harvest. (Roscoe, 1836: 115).
Llangollen’s key attractions for these early tourists were the natural assets described in the previous section - its wild landscape, enhanced by its often-gloomy weather and ubiquitous torrents of water, and its ‘romantic’ historical features, particularly the medieval Castell Dinas Bran, with its legendary associations, and the ruins of Valle Crucis Abbey. Both these early attractions feature in paintings from that time, imagined in a romanticised, often Italianate style which established how the area was to be both seen and experienced (Figure 7.1).

Particularly influential in Llangollen was a local landowner, Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, MP, dubbed the richest man in Wales at the time, himself a prolific traveller and patron of the Romantic artist Paul Sandby (see Figure 7.1) (Hughes, 1972; Hernon, 2013). Travelling through North Wales with Sandby and a party of friends in 1771, Williams-Wynn followed a route along the Great Irish Road, starting at Llangollen and ending on the West coast of Wales, a route which became an established itinerary for artistic visitors of the time (Hughes, 1972). Hughes notes that 1771 was ‘an early date for a patron to take a party of friends and a visiting artist to see such wild scenery…the first picturesque tour of its kind’ (ibid: 460), and shows how these itineraries became established as other, later artists followed in their footsteps.

These artists, and their aristocratic patrons, have been characterised as pioneers of tourism, institutionalising the link between travel and the ‘picturesque sensibilities’ which continue to underpin the way tourists are ‘taught’ to view the landscape (Löfgren, 1999: 21). As their experiences were published and read among their peers, translating ‘Wales’ by spreading the word about the benefits of travel to these hitherto ‘undiscovered’ areas of Britain, they could also be regarded as pioneer mediators of tourism knowledge, using emerging tourism information networks (travelogues, guidebooks and word-of-mouth) to enrol future tourists, and to set agendas for those who followed on how the landscape and other material assets were to be seen, sensed, and experienced. Locals were enrolled as performers in these accounts, and were also ‘taught’ by these early tourists how to meet the expectations in acting as host by providing negotiated services, such as accommodation, food, translation and guidance on selected attractions, but also by acting as romantically ‘authentic’ peasants. In terms of the analytical framework, we can therefore see that ‘strategic’ ideas about ‘how tourism should be performed’ came from mediation which was largely external to the town and its residents, and resulted in practices which enrolled locals into the performance of Llangollen as an emergent tourism place.
Figure 7.1 The ‘Picturesque’ in Llangollen

7.2.3 Sociality of place: The Ladies of Llangollen and the ‘invention of tradition’
In addition to its environmental assets and their artistic appeal, Llangollen also became a fashionable stopping-off point for members of Georgian London society en route to Dublin, and it is at this point that we can begin to identify and trace relationships of tourism hosting in the town itself. In addition to its natural non-human assets, its main attractions at that time were the Ladies of Llangollen, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, the daughters of two aristocratic Irish families who fled to Wales in 1780, reportedly to escape arranged marriages, and lived in Llangollen until their deaths in 1829 and 1831 (Mavor, 1971). Their idyllic and ‘Romantic’ rural lifestyle, with their devotion to learning, correspondence and diary-writing, and in particular their sexuality (Crowell, 2004; Oram, 2011), became a curiosity which attracted many high profile visitors:

...in the space of one week, 1-8 August 1821, Lady Eleanor records a present from Lady Caroline Lamb, visits from Lord Ormonde, no less than seven other Butlers, Lord Thurlow, Lord Maryborough and Lord Burguish, Prince Paul Esterhazy with his wife and secretary - introduced by a letter from the Duke of Wellington - Lord Kenyon and his three daughters, Lord Londonderry and Lord Valletort. (Bradbrook, 1949:192)

The academic and travel literature on the Ladies represents them on a spectrum from lesbian outcasts to romantic heroines, busybodies to Irish spies, but their undoubted flair for self-promotion, ‘building up a reputation for eccentricity in a spot where it might readily be observed’ (Harper, 1902: 196) and their wide circle of influential visitors, augmented Llangollen’s appeal to the travelling classes as a ‘romantic’ place to visit. The town became a ‘a halting-place on the great road between two kingdoms; with kings and princes, lords-lieutenant, peers, members of Parliament, and the whole social circle to which those two humbugs belonged travelling constantly to and fro throughout the year, within hail of their windows’ (ibid: 196). The Ladies home, Plas Newydd, which they created as a Gothic Revival ‘ferme ornee’ reflecting the Romantic ideals of the time, was visited by many. However, it is widely recorded, and is still related by today’s guides of the site, that no visitors ever stayed overnight (because of the Ladies’ wish for privacy). The Ladies therefore provided a considerable boost to the existing hotels and related services in the town.

The fame of the Ladies persisted after their deaths, and their role as actors in the evolution of Llangollen can be traced in tourist guides and travellers’ tales throughout the nineteenth century (e.g. Jenkinson, 1884; Roberts and Woodall, 1902). Harper again recorded their enduring role in the performance of place in Llangollen (Figure 7.2):
It would be quite impossible for a stranger to visit Llangollen for even the shortest space of time and then to come away ignorant of the Ladies, for photographs of them, statuettes, and paintings abound at every turn, and must prove an important source of revenue. It is no more possible to flee from the Ladies of Llangollen in Llangollen than it is to avoid Lorna Doone at Ilfracombe, or Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon. (Harper, 1902: 205)

Figure 7.2 ‘Ladies of Llangollen’ 19th century souvenirs (performing on ebay in November 2014)
In the years after their deaths, their home became, and remains, a significant object of interest for visitors to the town. Plas Newydd, although much-modified by subsequent owners, is now claimed by the ‘heritage industry’ as a pioneering example of the ‘invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), recognised as ‘the first and most flamboyant of a series of buildings playing with ideas of history and tradition: filtered by the vocabulary of the picturesque’ (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, nd). As such, it can be seen as a non-human actor around which broker-host networks including people, buildings, artefacts, stories, and more recently public policy, have coalesced in different ways for over 200 years (Figure 7.3). More recently, the Ladies have been reincarnated in some circles as pioneers of publicly-accepted same-sex relationships, and it has been suggested that Plas Newydd has become a site of lesbian and gay pilgrimage (Crowell, 2004: Oram, 2011), although this is not in evidence in the official guides to the site today, which remain rather coy on the subject.

![Motoring poster featuring Plas Newydd](Source: V & A Collections, 1937 - E.508)

To characterise the Ladies as pioneering tourism brokers, as represented in the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, is perhaps stretching a point, but they clearly had a significant role in the emergent sociality of Llangollen as a tourism place through their encouragement of the visits of the ‘great and the good’, the appeal of their home as an attraction, and through the proliferation
of tourism things in the form of souvenirs and guidebooks which followed them, and which remains in evidence in today’s tourism offer in the town.

7.2.4  The performance of place: the emergence of destination

The Georgian taste for the Romantic quickly waned and by 1830, the fashion for wild and isolated places had diminished (Zaring, 1977). In Llangollen, the Ladies both died as the Georgian era came to an end, and the town was no longer the fashionable focal point it had once been, although successive new owners of their home, Plas Newydd, ‘frequently the subject of most extravagantly overwrought eulogy, on account of the sentimental interest occasioned by the somewhat romantic history of the late eccentric residents’ (Black and Black, 1870: 169) continued to receive many curious, if less famous, visitors. CG Harper is again on hand to provide a vivid picture of the town’s 19th century development:

Is it not the business of the town...to find accommodation for tourists of every sort, with the result that it is become a place of many hotels and boarding-houses, and very different from the tiny village of Llangollen that disgusted the travellers of a century ago. (Harper, 1902: 181)

Documentary sources from the 19th century furnish detail on the nature of the growth of tourism in Llangollen, the human and non-human actors enrolled in the emergent networks of hosting, and the presence of ‘constructive efforts’ (Bærenholdt, 2012: 112) identifiable as the practices of hosting.

Victorian travel writer and social commentator George Borrow provides a detailed account of several visits to Llangollen in his travelogue *Wild Wales*, published in 1854. In his analysis of *Wild Wales* as a record of Victorian attitudes and behaviours relating to tourism, Hudson (2001) reads an ‘imperialist’ relationship between (Welsh) hosts and (English) guests into Borrow’s writings, and traces this back to the medieval conquests of the Welsh borderlands by the English. However, he also highlights several other factors which are suggestive of networks in the tourism ‘backstage’ of mid-19th century Llangollen. In particular, he demonstrates the role of knowledge in and through tourism networks, in that Borrow largely followed the routes, attractions and activities established by the Romantic aristocrats, with Llangollen a key stop on these itineraries. He also shows that Llangollen had developed a range of support services
catering for upper-class travellers. Borrow describes not only his accommodation (perhaps the first published record of a ‘self-catering cottage’ (Hudson, 2001) where he stayed in Llangollen with his family), but also highlights the other tourism services involved in his visit, from transport, catering and entertainment to translation and guiding services. It is clear from Borrow’s account that services were negotiated with locals on an individual basis, but that networks of provision were in place, particularly in relation to translation and interpretation services at major points of interest, to enable the needs of such travellers to be met.

Victorian Llangollen was therefore expanding into a prosperous tourism place. Its ordering as a transport focus had been reinforced by the construction in 1808 of a feeder canal as a source of water for the Shropshire Union Canal network, another project by Thomas Telford, which incorporated a complex series of aqueducts and tunnels to navigate the hills and valleys which lay between the source of the water (the Dee) and the canal itself in Shropshire. The importance of the canal as a means of transport was short-lived, eclipsed by the arrival of the railway in 1848, providing a link through from the industrial areas of North West England and the Midlands, eventually through to the west coast of Wales. At this late stage in the 19th century boom in railway-building, the development and route of the railway in Llangollen has largely been seen as a vanity project of certain local landowners (Lawton, nd), but, as we shall see in Chapter 8, it has been a significant actor in the broker-host networks of Llangollen ever since.

Hudson (2001) also notes major developments in 19th century technology and the way these were changing tourism in the area. In particular, he notes that ‘monuments’ of the industrial revolution were being translated into tourism attractions, and that Borrow visited the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct (completed in 1805) during his time in Llangollen. The almost-redundant canal was enrolled as a tourist attraction in 1884, with the town wharf offering trips across the Aqueduct on horse-drawn boats – a popular feature of the Llangollen tourism offer which continues to the present (Table 5.1). We can therefore see a shift in the ‘tourism knowledge’ relating to Llangollen which was conveyed through more up to date accounts such as Borrow’s as it moved away from the purely natural and Romantic to a wider range of attractions and interests.

This period sees the growth of mass tourism in Llangollen, and a re-ordering of the town as a destination, as the fashion for rail travel brought large numbers of day trippers. The railway acted
as a mediator through its marketing campaigns, spreading information about the town to the newly-industrialising areas of the English Midlands and the North-West, and through its role as a tour operator in the provision of organised day trips to visit the local attractions. As these posters from 1849 and 1857 (Figure 7.4) show, Plas Newydd (home of the Ladies), Valle Crucis Abbey, and Castell Dinas Bran continued to be the main attractions, with the addition, as noted above, of Thomas Telford’s Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

![Figure 7.4 Day trips to Llangollen by rail, 1849 and 1852 (Source: Shropshire Council Archives)](image)

The railway at Llangollen therefore had not only a symbolic value relating to its position as a railway town, and the social and economic status of the individual brokers within the town for whom the railway brought benefits, but was also a leading material actor in the development of Llangollen as a tourist place.

...this has been a tourism town since the 1880s...it grew up as a railway tourism town, it was a destination. This is the original destination! And it grew up, and people used to come and camp in all the villages up the valley, and they’d get the trek carts off the train in Carrog and put a trek cart through the village and camp there, and that stayed all through the wars and then immediately after the war of course every weekend we used to have special trains that used to come to Llangollen, and they’d turn up, and then on a Sunday you might have a train that had come from somewhere
like...Manchester. Three or four hundred people would get off! Come for the day in Llangollen, and
the park would be full of these people. [Informant 19, resident]

Interwoven with the traces of these significant non-human actors as they were translated into
tourism attractions, we can also trace the emergence of a ‘style’ of tourism practice, and the
evolution of relationships of destination management and marketing, and the networks through
which these were facilitated. There has been a formal business network in the town since 1906,
when the Llangollen Traders Association held its first meeting, but there is no explicit
engagement with tourism in the recorded activities of this group. A separate body, the Llangollen
Town Publicity Association (a committee of the Urban District Council) published a biennial
series of guidebooks (Lovely Llangollen) until around 1978. The record of this publication is
incomplete, but the fact that its 10th edition was published in 1950 suggests that it began well
before the Second World War, and those editions still existing provide a useful means of
identifying and tracing key mediators and broker networks in what was by then a well-established
and durable tourism destination.

Successive editions of Lovely Llangollen highlight the central role of the local council, and in
particular the Town Clerk, as significant tourism brokers in defining the local product, shaping
the tourism identity of the town, and promoting, managing and delivering tourism, acting as
brochure producer and distributor, and also as an agent for booking accommodation and other
attractions. Llangollen’s enduring tourism ‘things’ are also much in evidence through the pages
of the guidebook: Plas Newydd appears in different guises on the front cover of many of the
copies still available in the Llangollen Museum (Figure 7.5), and the main attractions for the
tourist were then, as now, activity-based – fishing, cycling, and boating. Successive editions of
the guidebook also show an evolving town brand - ‘The gem of North Wales’ (from 1921), later
‘the Welsh Tyrol’ (evident until 1959).

The Llangollen Chamber of Trade was formed in 1949, an active formal broker group with the
original aim of promoting Llangollen as a conference destination. This is the first appearance of
a body specifically orientated towards formal ‘strategic’ forms of ordering, aiming to direct the
way the town developed as a destination, and forming a specific formal network within the town
to do this. The role of the Chamber as a network actor is considered further through the
narratives in subsequent chapters, and particularly in Chapter 9.
In common with many other British tourism destinations, a major reordering of Llangollen’s tourism took place in the 1960s, again as a result of changes in the nature of mobility. The railway line was closed in 1968 following the publication in 1963 of *The Reshaping of British Railways* (a government document later known as ‘the Beeching Report’ which led to closure of a large number of railways throughout the UK). The car replaced the train as the tourist’s vehicle of choice, and parking problems became the dominant management narrative in the town. It is possible to identify this as the point at which the durability of the town’s tourism identity and networks begins to be challenged, as changes in transport technology again disrupt the relationships of tourism practice in the town. Plans soon emerged to re-open the railway on a voluntary basis, with the setting up of the volunteer-run Llangollen Railway Society in 1975. Over the last forty years, the line has been re-laid and the station renovated to provide a popular heritage railway. An important milestone was reached in September 2014 when the restored railway finally reached the town of Corwen, ten miles (16 km) away, thus creating an important tourism link between the two towns in the Dee Valley. The role of the railway in destination ordering, its multiple characteristics, and its relationships in broker-host networks is an important emergent theme of this study, and is analysed in more detail in Chapter 8 which follows.

This section has provided an overview of the development of Llangollen as a tourism place. Based on the conceptual framework (Figure 4.3) and the processes of analysis discussed in Section 6.5, it shows how ‘strategic notions about how tourism should be performed’ stemmed initially from tourism pioneers who set the ‘rules’ of tourist performance. It then explores the evolution of relationships of practice, and in particular the performance of non-human actors which became tourism assets by attracting networks of brokers, ideas and other tourism ‘things’ over a period of two-hundred years. These actors are followed into the present-day broker-host networks which form the narrative storyline for Chapter 8. The final section of this chapter describes the emergence of a touristic identity in Llangollen, a key non-human actor which is again traced into subsequent chapters.
The idea of *eisteddfod* – a competitive festival of song and dance in the Welsh language - is deeply engrained in Welsh culture, local eisteddfodau annually held in settlements large and small throughout the country. Immediately after the end of the Second World War, Harold Tudor, who came from a village near Llangollen but worked for the British Council in Manchester, floated the idea of an international music competition on the model of the traditional Welsh eisteddfod, which would bring together the countries of Europe after the conflict through the sharing of different cultures. His idea came from working with members of governments-in-exile after the war, and Tudor felt that Llangollen, which he knew well, with its existing and accessible mass tourist facilities and attractions, would be an ideal place to stage it (LIME, 2016).

Tudor gathered support from some key local brokers, mainly schoolteachers, who worked to engage the interest of the local council. The first Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod (LIME) was held in a tent on a field near the local school in June 1947. Invitations were sent to choirs and instrumental groups from all over Europe, with the promise of accommodation and hospitality in the private homes of the town’s residents. Chronicling the first International Eisteddfod, Attenburrow (1996) describes how the townspeople formed a series of committees – Music, Publicity, Grounds and Hospitality – and awaited the arrival of the invited groups, although no-one was sure that anyone would actually come, particularly because there was a railway strike in France that week…

But come they did and by devious routes - some sang their way across France in order to pay for road transport, others hitchhiked, others unknown to us had organised their own coach transport…. That it was possible for such an event to take place at all in any place within two years of the end of worldwide hostilities was, to say the least, impressive but that it should occur on an improvised stage, in a canvas auditorium, erected on the Recreation Ground of a small, tranquil, picturesque town in North Wales was perhaps something of a minor miracle. (Attenburrow, 1996)

In line with the thesis of this study, the population of Llangollen and LIME can therefore be regarded as performing the role of host through a network of brokers assembled and maintained through the actions of some significant mediators since its beginning in 1947. Although the key actor (Tudor) and idea for the festival came from outside the town, the role of host emerged as a local network of committees which enrolled the residents of the town and its surrounding
villages as volunteer organisers and hospitality providers. The original LIME was wholly funded by donations from the local community, and later supported by a Fundraising committee which was added to the original four. The first festival was a great success, and the event grew in size and popularity through the 1950s and 1960s, with increasing numbers of competitors from all over the world attending each successive year. The importance of LIME in the identity of the town is clear from the 1965 edition of Lovely Llangollen shown below (Figure 7.5), which introduces a new strapline, ‘Where all the World meets’ with images of Eisteddfod competitors in combination with one of the established attractions, Plas Newydd, the former home of the Ladies of Llangollen.

In 1952, a further ingredient was added to LIME, the presentation by local schoolchildren of an annual Message of Peace and Goodwill during the Eisteddfod, formalising its primary intention of encouraging international harmony in the post-war years. This tradition continued throughout the Cold War, and in recognition of this the town received a Flag of Honour from the Council of Europe in 1983, and was shortlisted for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. As a result of this
international recognition, a logo was designed during the 1980s at the behest of the local Chamber of Trade, with the strapline ‘Where Wales Welcomes the World’ (Figure 7.6), replacing the previous tourism branding and formalising the town’s sense of its own identity as both Welsh and welcoming. This remains as the town’s dominant tourism branding, and its significance as a non-human actor in the networks of hosting is revisited in subsequent chapters.

Figure 7.6 Llangollen tourism logo - fixing ‘host’ in the local identity (Source: LCTT)

7.4 Conclusion: Touristic ‘tokens’ and the performance of host

…the host must be clearly linked with a sense of place that they define as their own and have control over…the place must assert a sense of the host’s identity and their sense of self… (Sheringham and Daruwalla, 2007: 42)

Positioning the case within an actor-network tourismscape, this chapter describes the ‘dance through time’ of those actors and networked backstage relationships which have contributed to the ordering of tourism places using the multiple dimensions of tourism production and consumption identified by Bærenholdt (2012). This description highlights the role of some key human and non-human actors who might be regarded as historic brokers of tourism in the town. Using analysis based on the ANT approach to reconceptualization of ‘host as ordering’ in this study, it shows how sociotechnical effects (in this case tourism) are produced and maintained through relationships between human and non-human actors (ideas, such as ‘the Picturesque’ as well as material and technical actors, in this case the natural and historical assets which appear in this account as tourism attractions).
The above account tells the story of the development of tourism in a town which has performed as a ‘host community’ for over two hundred years, and where tourism is embedded in the everyday lives of the people who live in it (Franklin and Crang, 2001). At several points – during the time of the Ladies, at the height of the railway years and during the early years of the Eisteddfod - it is possible to recognise the presence of broker-host networks involving the human and non-human brokers described above. Within these networks, tourism emerged as an effect arising from the ‘constructive efforts’ (Bærenholdt, 2012:112) of a number of different individuals working in and through the past, from the writers and artists of the Picturesque, and the webs of touristic activity which surrounded the Ladies, through the local landowners whose efforts first brought the railway, and the residents of the town whose lives were changed in meeting the needs of the new touring masses, and the very real ‘host community’ which created and maintained the Eisteddfod in its early years.

In relation to the conceptual framework, we can therefore argue that Llangollen in this narrative is a ‘host community’ in the traditional sense, and that ideas about how tourism should be performed (strategic notions) are congruent both with the practices themselves, and with the tourism place in which they are located. Certain individuals can be seen as performing a broker role in assembling and maintaining these relationships of practice, showing their network power in shaping these relationships. In comparing this with Cheong and Miller’s (2000) BLT model, we can see that few of the individuals mentioned in this chapter were ‘local’ to the town, yet each in their way contributed to the emergence of touristic ‘tokens’ discussed earlier (Section 6.5), which play a significant role in Llangollen’s tourism ordering. Among these tokens, each with its own particular trace through time, we can include the landscape (a Picturesque location, ordered around the River Dee and its valley); historic places (Dinas Bran and Valle Crucis Abbey); a transport route (Telford’s road, canal and aqueduct); Plas Newydd (quirky home of the Ladies of Llangollen); a heritage railway and canal; and a globally recognised international festival of music (LIME).

To this, we can add a tourism branding which was created by locals to reflect their view of the town’s identity as host, embodying a sense of pride in both its culture and its welcome. The relationship between place brand and identity in the branding ‘token’, and the role of brand as a network actor in tourism places is a current one in the literature (e.g. Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011) and will be revisited in later chapters.
Each of these tokens has contributed to the ‘cultural repertoire’ (van der Duim, 2007a) through which Llangollen has historically performed the role of host, and which underpins its present-day tourism offer, acting as mediators in actor-networks which draw in tourism brokers from a wider sphere. This study suggests that the role of host is emergent through the relationships between these brokers, and that many of these broker-host relationships persist in the present-day tourism offering in the town. In the chapters that follow, further narratives will be presented which support this thesis.
Chapter 8  FOLLOWING THE ACTORS: TRACING TOKENS IN BROKER-HOST ORDERING

8.1  Introduction

Llangollen has been consumed as a tourism place for over 200 years. The previous chapter provides a storyline about the production of tourism in Llangollen, constructed using ‘the host as ordering’ theme at the heart of the conceptual framework for this study, and enrolling materials generated from an exploration of the town’s tourism past to trace the practices which led to the formation of broker-host networks. In doing this, it highlights the role of some key non-human actors, used in the account as tokens through which the relationships of hosting in the town can be traced, involving several long-standing tourism attractions, destination services, and the people who provide them. Three narrative themes are evident in this account:

- Tourism attractions as ‘gatherings’ of ideas and people around non-human actors
- How ideas of ‘place’ are co-created in networks which link the everyday lives of residents with touristic identity
- The productive network power of ‘external’ relationships with brokers who determined how Llangollen and its assets were to be experienced.

This chapter develops these themes using a storyline about fluidity and multiplicity in broker-host networks which focuses on two of the non-human actors from Chapter 7 during the period of fieldwork in 2014-15. It highlights the mutability of tourism ‘objects’ as network actors (Law and Singleton, 2005), and shows how their performance in relational space mediates the durability or otherwise of ‘host’ ordering. The narrative is based on ideas and themes which emerged inductively from documentary materials, interview transcripts and observational analysis, creating two interpretively complex ‘things’ (Ingold, 2010) which were introduced in Chapter 7 - the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod or LIME, and the Llangollen Railway.

These non-human mediators, or ‘quasi-objects’ (Latour, 1993: 51) were followed to trace the connections of practice which constitute their ‘backstage’ role in the broker-host network, using the analytic context of strategic, external and internal ordering relationships discussed earlier.
Analysis used situational mapping (see Chapter 6.5) to identify a range of themes relating to these tokens, through interviews with brokers in various network roles, and through observation of their performance in the tourismscape. These themes are then organised through this chapter into narratives which show how actors can be ‘simultaneously real, discursive, contested and socially constructed’ (Nhamo, 2010) across time and space, from their origins (Chapter 7) through to their present day presence and role in the practices of hosting. These narratives describe the prominent ‘front stage’ role played by both these actors, and then explore their role on the ‘backstage’ of tourism hosting. In both, we consider how each forms and re-forms as a token in the different networks through which they are followed.

Following this, the chapter then identifies a third actor, the river, as a focus for emergent tourism networks, and suggests that this actor is the key mediator of a new broker-host network token whose role is then traced into subsequent chapters.

8.2 Tourism ordering: Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod (LIME)

Figure 8.1 The main stage at LIME (Source: LIME)

If you ask people two things they know about North Wales, North East Wales, if you’re lucky, they will say the International Eisteddfod .... [Informant 15: local government tourism officer]

...it’s a quaint place, the Eisteddfod, I don’t mean to say that in a derogatory manner, but you can tell it’s not run by a slick professional organisation... [Informant 13: resident and LIME volunteer]

The Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod (LIME) is an established annual event which has played an important role in the identity and performance of Llangollen as a tourism host. As the first quote above shows, it is also regarded as having strategic importance in the tourism offering
and identity of the wider tourism area of North East Wales. As shown in Chapter 7, much of its early success can be attributed to the strength of local and international relationships generated and maintained through its pioneering spirit of promoting post-war international peace and unity through music. At the ‘internal’ level, this durability is largely attributable to the contribution made by the townspeople of Llangollen in maintaining the relationships of hosting over a period of 70 years. This hosting role is identifiable not only in its conventional sense, as local residents provided accommodation and hospitality in their own homes for competitors, but also in a wider, networked sense through fundraising activities, and a system of management committees of volunteers. These enduring networks, and the narrative of welcome which has persisted throughout the years, have, as we have seen, contributed significantly to the town’s sense of identity as a tourism host through its marketing strapline ‘Where Wales Welcomes the World’ (see Chapter 7).

However, from a position of great strength in the 1980/90s, the Eisteddfod now struggles to maintain its unique identity in the face of social change and increased competition. Recent Eisteddfodau have seen a fall in both international competitors and visitors, causing concern for the organisers, and raising a number of issues to be confronted to ensure its survival. These issues are contributing to changes in its position and performance in the tourism place where it has historically played such a central role, changes which mean that LIME has become a ‘risky object’ (Latour, 2005), taking it out of the ‘black box’ in which it has resided for so long, and making it a more visible actor in the landscape of policy and practice. At the same time, its formerly durable relationships with the town are also changing. Figures 8.2 and 8.3 show two phases of situational mapping designed to analyse LIME’s role in the relationships of tourism hosting, and form the basis of the account which follows.
Figure 8.2 Mapping material actors in a broker-host network: LIME as tourism host (Source: Author)
Figure 8.3: LIME: Broker-host ordering (Source: Author)

Internal relationships of practice
- Volunteers/committees
- Local sponsors
- Local suppliers
- Local tourism promotion

External relationships of practice
- Destination
- Visit Wales Events Strategy
- North East Wales (the local)
- Llangollen.net

Strategic notions
- Narratives of transformation/change
  - Welsh, controversy
  - Narratives of identity – welcome, local, ‘Welsh’

Absences of...
- National funding
- Railway
- Local tourism promotion

Absences from...
- Local networks – BAG, LPP, Dee Valley
- Local, public, private media
- Local, public, private funding

LIME: Broker-host network
- Peace Message, volunteers, tourists
- Actors: Pavilion, fields, tent, performers, competitors, parade.
8.2.1 LIME and tourism ordering: relationships of hosting practice

The success of LIME over the last 70 years has seen the continuing performance of the durable system of committees described above, in association with several key material actors – a field, with tents, a five-day international competition of traditional song and dance, and the Peace Message, introduced in 1952 and still delivered annually by local schoolchildren. Its durability was enhanced by the construction of a permanent building, the Pavilion, in 1992. The Pavilion was designed to reflect the Eisteddfod’s early years under canvas (Figure 8.4), and the enhanced facilities provided by this structure helped to maintain LIME’s competitiveness in an increasingly crowded international event market. The Pavilion has also, over time, been a mediator of both the internal and external ordering of tourism in the town, playing an important ‘backstage’ role in its tourism offer in different ways over the years since it was built.

![Figure 8.4 The Llangollen Pavilion (Source: Llangollen Food Festival)](image)

As shown in Chapter 7, the production of LIME is organised through an ‘internal’ network of formal committees which now involves nearly 800 volunteers (as well as a small permanent staff of 2-3, and a professional marketing consultant employed for the first time in 2014). Although the event lasts for only one week, it plays an important role in the lives of many residents - the
next year’s committees are formed as the previous Eisteddfod ends. Many volunteer committee members are local, but a significant number come from outside the area, and often from quite far afield. Some are former residents, people who grew up in, or lived in the area; others are people with connection through friends. Volunteering is also intergenerational – several volunteers had first become involved as children helping their parents, now their children are there too (one family had three generations of family members on the site at one point in 2015).

These volunteer networks have always been the link between LIME and the local community, representing an important relationship of hosting within the town. Several volunteers interviewed also have other roles as tourism brokers in the public and private sector (see Table 6.2), and the interview materials again highlights the close ‘backstage’ links between tourism and the everyday lives of many local residents. Although many of the volunteers are now retired, it is still common for local volunteers of working age to take their annual holiday to work at the Eisteddfod. However, it is proving increasingly difficult to attract new and younger volunteers from the local community to join, with the result that the traditional hosting relationships between LIME and the local community are showing signs of decay:

...you’re dealing with so many different generations now...it’s grown with these ones that are 70-something...it’s grown with them, but unfortunately as they are disappearing, there hasn’t been that new blood coming in, so that big change has got to happen...and is happening...and some like it, and some don’t...[Informant 28: private sector broker]

It is also now almost unheard of for LIME competitors to be accommodated in the homes of local residents. As a result, both the major ‘internal’ ordering relationships between the festival and the town are weakening, and LIME is increasingly seen as remote and separate, as shown in the quotes from locals below:

...the thing is about the Eisteddfod...local people are not as involved as they used to be because people used to stay in people’s houses, and that doesn’t really happen anymore...they have funding and they go to hotels and things...or the Eisteddfod puts them up...it costs a lot of money... so I think the Eisteddfod seems to be a bit far away...everything used to be coming into town... and a lot of other things have come into play, like Health and Safety, and insurance, which have stopped a lot of things happening...[Informant 12: resident]

...as the years have progressed, the Eisteddfod in my mind has changed...it’s got more internal, on the field, and everybody moans about it, all the traders in town moan about it, cos no one goes into
town...well, it’s not really true, because people do, but they all moan, because that is the traders’, shopkeepers’ wont, the moan, isn’t it? But basically people are on the field and they get bussed in and bussed out, so they can’t get anywhere and they’re stuck on the field, so it doesn’t really benefit...[Informant 25: resident]

In Eisteddfod week I don’t...I mean you won’t see a local person...[Informant 4: resident, public sector tourism employee]

The spirit of ‘welcome’ embodied in the town’s identity (see Chapter 7) is clearly diminished in these ‘host community’ quotes. However, the following testimony, expressed by a private sector broker recently employed by the Eisteddfod, is included as a balance to these widely-held negative perceptions, and is indicative of a shift in the relations of hosting. The Eisteddfod has, since its inception, featured a parade on its opening day, a colourful spectacle of competitors parading through the streets of the town in national dress (Figure 8.5). The Parade has come to signify the Eisteddfod both in the town itself and more widely: images of the parade are used in the promotion of cultural events in Wales from Visit Wales down to the local newspaper, and also feature on the Cittaslow Llangollen website. The following is the view of that consultant, on her first experience of the Parade after canvassing negative opinions from local traders:

... when the Parade actually happened, I was really not expecting much, I was expecting that it was this thing that ruins the town, pretty much...and I was actually...I was actually moved to tears at how ‘wow’ it was, you know, to have South Africans, black and white, in the sun there, it was so hot...singing this African...together...and there was this Japanese group in front of them ,and a Thai group behind them...and I literally turned to one of the stewards and I said ‘well where do these guys come from’, and he looked at me as though I’m an idiot, and said ‘well, South Africa’. And I said ‘what, they’ve actually come from South Africa’, because I thought, you know, Birmingham or somewhere...and he goes ‘yeah’...so that...even though I’d been told, I still hadn’t quite...and then to walk into the town and see the cameras, the people, the atmosphere....I was actually quite cross...it was that moment when you go...this doesn’t do anything for business?... [Informant 28: private sector broker]
Despite the weakening of relationships between LIME and the town, there are other ‘internal’ relationships of hosting involving LIME which remain durable, showing that, despite the fluidity of these networks, the event is entangled in host networks in many different ways. The tradition of local schools providing students for various roles during the Eisteddfod has been enhanced in recent years by the provision of formal ‘Welcome Host’ training funded by the Eisteddfod itself (largely in response to the success of the volunteer ‘games makers’ at the 2012 London Olympics). This volunteer work has recently been validated as a contribution to the ‘Community Challenge’ element of the Welsh Baccalaureate for school-leavers in Wales, giving it a formal and educational role, and a wider significance beyond the Eisteddfod itself. Among some of the Eisteddfod organisers, there was recognition of the importance of developing this role, particularly for the future job prospects of young people locally, and for the future of the town as a tourism host:

...that was very important because people were actually sitting down and thinking about what it was all about, and you get young people involved not to think about tourism as a tourist industry where you’re acting as some kind of...perhaps menial is the word...it’s not that at all, you’re part of an industry...you are it, you’re the face of the area...[Informant 19: Eisteddfod committee member]

The economic value of the Eisteddfod to the local economy was also highlighted:

...it brings an awful lot of money into the area, and it keeps people in jobs, and at the sharp end of the summer, the July end when the thing’s getting under way, the town’s a mass of colour, and it brings people in who spend money in the pubs, in the restaurants, and the Eisteddfod does tend to support
local businesses insomuch as all of our contractors are local...we spend money with them, we go out to tender, the guys who do the work on the field are all local, and that’s the economic impact, that’s where it’s pulling money in...[Informant 19: Eisteddfod Committee member]

It is therefore difficult to pinpoint the reasons for the shift in the relationships of hosting between LIME and Llangollen, which can be characterised in ordering terms as a move from an ‘internal’ relationship between the two to one in which the town of Llangollen sees itself as ‘external’ to the Eisteddfod’s own networks. There are suggestions that the construction of the Pavilion was the point of passage for this change, in that it in some way created a ‘home’ for the Eisteddfod that was away from the town (although it is in virtually the same location as it was before), as the following illustration shows.

A case of re-ordering: The Llangollen Fringe

The changing relationships of hosting are reflected in the establishment of an ‘alternative’ cultural festival, the Llangollen Fringe, now in its twentieth year. Taking place the week after the Eisteddfod each year, it is based in the Town Hall, and uses a number of small town centre venues such as upstairs rooms in pubs to provide a varied programme of comedy, music and drama. Non-profit-making, it is supported financially by Arts Council Wales and a local benefactor. It styles itself as small and independent - ‘the festival for the town in the town’ – yet manages to attract a range of performers with a national and international profile each year. Its small team of volunteer organisers have strong and productive links with businesses in the town:

It’s in the town you see...the Pavilion’s out on a limb...the town’s always regarded the Pavilion as ‘oh well, it’s just here, isn’t it?’ Whereas we do everything in the Town Hall...we did use the Pavilion one year for three nights, but it never worked at all...because the Pavilion’s too expensive to hire, from our point of view...the traders have said to me in the last couple of years that the Fringe in town... is a terrific boost to them, they get more out of the Fringe than they do out of the Eisteddfod...which I don’t think is really true, but I don’t know...[Informant 25: Llangollen Fringe Committee]

Despite its longevity, and for all the reasons discussed above, it is difficult to find collaborative local broker-host relationships around the Eisteddfod outside its own internal committee structure. The Eisteddfod has active representation at a senior level on several formal tourism
networks in North Wales (to be discussed in Chapter 10), but it is poorly represented in the governance landscape of the town (to be discussed in Chapter 9).

[the Eisteddfod has]...only been a representative on the Chamber [of Trade and Tourism] for one year, because again we felt that there was this lack of communication, and again you will find if you go to meetings that there will be members of this group or that who will turn round and say ‘the Eisteddfod does nothing for us’, ignoring the fact that the Eisteddfod pumps a lot of money into the area...
[Informant 19: Eisteddfod committee member]

These increasingly fragmented relationships, and the shift in formerly ‘internal’ relationships of hosting discussed above is highlighted by the fact that at LIME 2014 there was a complete absence of any tourism promotion on the Eisteddfod site – so no visible link with formal tourism brokers in the town (LCTT and TIC), and no representation by tourism bodies from the wider area (Visit Wales, or the local authority). This absence was raised in several interviews following the first period of volunteering at the 2014 Eisteddfod, and by 2015 a small tent run by Cittaslow and the Town Council had appeared on the field (suggesting that I was ‘acting in the network’ at this point). However, the TIC was still absent from the field in 2015.

These shifting relationships of hosting practice show the Eisteddfod becoming a ‘risky object’, undergoing network change in both ‘internal’ and ‘external’ ordering which are changing the relationships of hosting in Llangollen itself. This increased network visibility invites comparison with accounts in the ANT literature relating to other cultural festivals and events (e.g. Bærenholdt and Haldrup, 2006; Jóhannesson, 2007), which detail the way local (often voluntary) support combines with wider support from regional, national or international organisations to provide stability. The next section explores this wider, strategic support in the context of LIME and the wider broker-host networks in North Wales.

### 8.2.2 LIME in policy networks

My view is that that [the Eisteddfod] was the most...is the largest opportunity North East Wales has to promote itself locally, to a number of countries, to a number of visitors from different parts of the UK, and it’s completely missed... [Informant 15: local government tourism officer]

We’ve based our events strategy on two things...there’s the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, and the Rhyl Air Show...[Informant 18: public sector broker]
The strategic significance of LIME is recognised in documents including the Welsh Assembly Government’s *Major Events Strategy, 2010-2020* and the Denbighshire *Events Strategy, 2014-2020*. In both, it is represented as a ‘signature event’, defined as events which are:

...unique to Wales or distinctively Welsh in flavour, and reflect our culture, traditions and values. They enhance the image and cultural identity of Wales and provide a high quality experience for visitors... [WAG, 2010-20: 5]

However, this prominence is not reflected in funding for LIME. In addition to challenges to local authority funding and support over the past ten years, funding from WAG through the Arts Council of Wales has also proved difficult to access, for a wide range of reasons not solely restricted to wider cuts in arts funding:

...everybody says ‘well, you’re not national, you’re not a national eisteddfod, you’re an international eisteddfod, so you should be looking for your money elsewhere... [Informant 19: LIME committee]

This indicates the persistence of a degree of strategic ‘black boxing’, and weakened networks at the external and internal level of ordering. With increasing pressure on numbers and revenue, key decisions about fundraising, sponsorship and marketing have recently been taken away from the local committees and outsourced to professional brokers with commercial considerations to the fore. As a result, a number of changes have been introduced which are further challenging the relationships of hosting between LIME and Llangollen, its source of funding (shifting from public to private sector sponsors) and its traditional (but declining) customer base.

At the ‘internal’ level, the nature of the visitor experience has, over the past two years, been challenged by decisions which have been taken to enhance the ‘international’ feel of the LIME site, including (in 2015) changing many of the food suppliers to offer a wider and more international range of food choices to visitors on the field, and a greater emphasis on a ‘street food’ type of offering which did not prove popular with many of its older visitors. At the ‘external’ level, sponsorship and funding has, over the last two years, been sought from organisations with a national (Welsh), or even UK-wide profile, and recent initiatives have seen LIME begin to forge partnerships with hotels and other attractions outside the immediate area, in an attempt to increase the spread of marketing for the event, but also increasing the sense of separation from the town. This is leading to the re-alignment of broker relationships and shifting the associations of practice:
... the impact of the Eisteddfod shouldn’t just be limited to Llangollen...it should be felt across NE Wales...and you know again something else that we’re doing next year is...an idea of having Ambassador Towns, so you know, on our signage on the A483 [Wrexham bypass] it will say ‘Welcome to Wrexham – official ambassador town of the Llangollen Eisteddfod’, and in the past it’s always been, you know, Llangollen’s in Denbighshire, we don’t want to talk about that, whereas now we’re seeing it more on a NE Wales thing ... [Informant 24: local government tourism officer in adjoining county]

...so I’m now working with the National Trust and we’re going to do...um...afternoon teas, get on the bus, have the afternoon tea at Erddig or Chirk [NT attractions in neighbouring county of Wrexham], get on the bus, come to the Eisteddfod, and then get on the bus back to your car there [Informant 28: marketing consultant]

Perhaps the most significant shift in network mediation lies in recent attempts to ‘produce’ the Eisteddfod itself as a destination located in, but distinct from, Llangollen itself. This is most evident in a new area of the LIME website, llangollen.net, which positions LIME as the focus for a range of other tourism experiences in the wider area outside the town, enrolling new actors, such as attractions and accommodation providers, and further underscoring its move into the wider networks of tourism hosting.

...the other thing is on the website I’ve done this thing called Llangollen.net where it’s about destination, so instead of it just being about Llangollen it’s the LIME destination website which is connected to it, but it’s to pull in that 30-minute radius, so to be talking about Wrexham, to be talking about those other locations that you can stay...and the other thing is you know if somebody comes here for the day...if they do an hour here, maybe that’s enough, and then to know that they can then go on the canal, so that the...so it does become a destination...[Informant 28: marketing consultant, emphasis added]

LIME is therefore characterised in this storyline as a non-human gathering, or ‘token’, which enrols actors whose interests are translated within it. The dominant interest currently lies in producing hosting networks which will preserve its own future as a major event. Although its role at the heart of local broker-host networks is sustained through its volunteers, the work required to ensure the future survival of the Eisteddfod is weakening network connections with the place that bears its name, and developing a community of practice in networks in which the town does not have a high profile as a tourism place. This is drawing LIME into relationships with other brokers in networks beyond the town, based on its strategic role as a national and regional ‘Welsh’ signature event. However, as we have seen above, this status too is contested,
and the extent to which these new networks will afford the translations required to ensure its future is as yet unclear.

The second part of this chapter looks at another major tourism actor, the Llangollen Railway, and highlights its continuing role in Llangollen’s networks of hosting. In doing this, it highlights some similarities with LIME, and many differences, reflected in the fact that these two major attractions are seldom, if ever, found in the same network spaces.

8.3 Tourism ordering: The Llangollen Railway and the Dee Valley

The major role played by the railway in the ordering of tourism in the nineteenth and first half of the 20th century was introduced in Chapter 7. As a means of public transport, the railway acted as a significant mediator of hosting relationships at all three levels – the strategic (in its promotion of Llangollen as a ‘day trip’ destination with a particular set of tourism assets), the external (in its practical marketing efforts) and the internal (in its relationships with other providers in the town during the boom years of mass tourism). The railway and its networks shaped ideas and expectations of place, and drew Llangollen into an ongoing relationship with tourists from other parts of the UK. Löfgren (1999) describes the role of the railways in defining aspects of nineteenth century tourism which coalesced around the idea of the ‘trip’, a networked experience of things and ideas in which the railway was almost invariably the central actor, a point of passage providing access to a relationship between tourists and tourism places, defined by a sensibility with its origins in the Picturesque.

Löfgren adds that the value accorded to landscape and wilderness elements also generated local pride in and identity with these sights which led to the development of a new-found sense of place related to tourism assets, conceptually linking the development of tourism hosting to the everyday lives of the people living in tourism places and adding an ‘identity’ dimension to the idea of host. The railway’s role in promoting Llangollen and its attractions to a wider audience brought 19th century tourism marketing to the town, enrolling its array of key attractions into the tourism offer. This role as a major actor in broker-host networks lasted as long as the railway continued to bring thousands of day and weekend trippers to the town. The analysis of the role of the railway in the ordering of tourism hosting in Llangollen is shown in the ‘token’ maps in Figures 8.6 and 8.7.
Figure 8.6 Mapping material actors in a broker-host network: the Llangollen Railway (Source: Author)
Figure 8.7 Llangollen Railway: broker-host ordering (Source: Author)

INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE

'The Train'
- Multiple tourist experiences and activities
- Communities of practice: Fringe, Walking Festival, Food Festival, Volunteers (restorers)
- The town
- Employer (Town Plan)
- Ordering (historic identity: pride)
- Product (year-round tourism)

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE
- Fringe
- Walking Festival
- Food Festival
- Volunteers (restorers and operatives)

INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE

'The Railway'
- Funding: DCC/Cadwyn Clwyd
- Promotion: NE Wales brochure
- Stakeholder: BAG, LCTR, DTP, LIP
- Dee Valley destination narratives
- LIME

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE

'Focus of Dee Valley destination networks?'

STRAIGHT NOTIONS

'World Heritage Site'
- Branding narratives

ABSENCES from...
- Working museums?
- Entertainment venues?
- Focus of Dee Valley destination networks?

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE

'Working museums?'
- Entertainment venues?
- Focus of Dee Valley destination networks?

INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE

'The Town'
- Employer (Town Plan)
- Ordering (historic identity: pride)
- Product (year-round tourism)
- Communities of practice: Fringe, Walking Festival, Food Festival, Volunteers (restorers)

STRAIGHT NOTIONS

'Working museums?'
- Entertainment venues?
- Focus of Dee Valley destination networks?

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE

'Focus of Dee Valley destination networks?'

STRAIGHT NOTIONS

'World Heritage Site'
- Branding narratives

ABSENCES from...
- Working museums?
- Entertainment venues?
- Focus of Dee Valley destination networks?

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE

'Working museums?'
- Entertainment venues?
- Focus of Dee Valley destination networks?
The closure of the railway in 1968 had an almost instantaneous effect on the town’s hosting practices. The supply of tourists, which had reached its peak in the 1950s, was immediately severed. Llangollen was no longer connected by rail to Liverpool, Manchester, and other major population centres to the east. The railway tracks themselves, all the signals and associated equipment, and at least one of the smaller stations immediately up the valley, were removed within six months of the closure of the line, although Llangollen station itself remained more-or-less intact. The railway therefore vanished, seemingly overnight, from the place-making sensibilities of tourists and tourism promoters. The absence thus created itself became a major actor in shaping the town’s own ideas about how tourism should be performed (strategic ordering), and the fragility which ensued once the durable network of tourism provision had been broken was (and still is) evident in the fragility of strategic ordering in the town’s tourism networks (see Chapters 5 and 9).

As this re-ordering of the destination took place around the car as the dominant mode of transport, a new set of roles and relationships developed around the railway. In the early 1970s, it became the focus of attention for a group of steam enthusiasts. Llangollen was not their first choice, and tourism was not initially on their agenda. However, the Town Council, who had bought the land from the railway company after closure, agreed to lease the remaining station buildings and the first three miles of (former) track up the valley to the west to the volunteer group. The restoration of the line began in 1974, and the first train ran on 60 feet (20 metres) of re-laid track in 1975, an event attended by over 1500 people (Llangollen Railway, nd), mainly steam enthusiasts from other parts of the country, but also locals interested in the new project, to see the sight of steam again in the town. This initial success had the effect of enrolling local interest in and support for ‘the railway’, and a programme of local fund-raising, and a series of donations in kind (track and rolling stock, equipment and signage from major organisations such as Shell, ICI and British Nuclear Fuels) from elsewhere in the country enabled the formation of the Llangollen Railway Society in 1977. ‘The railway’ was therefore re-engaged as an important actor in the everyday life of the town, but now also more widely connected in networks (originally networks of enthusiasm) which extended well beyond the town itself.

The Llangollen Railway began to attract networks of tourism brokers when it was licensed to carry passengers again in 1981. The first train carried 700 passengers (again mainly steam enthusiasts) on a journey of ¼ mile (0.4 km) out of Llangollen station. In the years that followed, a touristic identity began to be attached to the railway as successive phases of restoration reached
further stations up the line. This enabled it to enrol new funders such as the (former) Wales Tourist Board who recognised its potential as a major tourist attraction and provided funding to rebuild some of the stations. This shift in identity also saw the introduction of the first of what is now an extensive programme of themed trains – the first ‘Santa Special’ ran in 1985, and ‘the railway’ became a tourism product in a rapidly expanding UK heritage tourism sector (Rhoden, Ineson and Ralston, 2009).

...many years ago they used to come by train, when the train still arrived in Llangollen, and then now they come and see the train because it’s a heritage train! And they show their children...it’s quite strange...[Informant 19: resident]

At the same time as its new touristic identity emerged, ‘the Railway’ also reassumed a second role in the life of the town. Many residents have grown up with the restoration as part of their lives, and in interviews demonstrated an unexpected level of knowledge about the details of track rebuilding materials and engine maintenance! It was frequently mentioned by participants, citing its key role as a major actor in several touristic and non-touristic aspects of everyday life in the town.

...they’re an important employer, and unsung heroes really...and of course there’s always conflict, isn’t there? People don’t like having steam trains puffing past their houses...not so bad now, people are quite proud of it now, but at first people were very unhappy about their dirty windows, and the house shaking! But they’ve got used to that now...[Informant 12: resident]

...there’s no urgency to [promote the town], because we’re so busy, and there are complaints that there are too many tourists about ...and the railway’s always bringing people in... [Informant 6: resident, LCTT member]

The line reached the small village of Carrog, 8 miles (13 km) to the west, in 1992, and the railway with its array of vintage steam and diesel locomotives and carriages developed from that point to become a significant tourism attraction, the only standard gauge heritage steam railway in North Wales, carrying, by 2014, over 160,000 customers a year (Table 5.1). The railway now offers a programme of special events throughout the summer and at weekends throughout the rest of the year, designed to attract a range of different markets alongside its enduring attraction for steam enthusiasts (Figure 8.8).
The re-opening of the Llangollen Heritage Railway, and its shift from public transport to tourism attraction, has, over the years, had a further significant effect on the ordering of the town as a tourism host. Previously, as a mode of transport, Llangollen was the place where people got off the railway to spend a day in the town. As a tourist attraction, however, the restored line begins at Llangollen and travels up the Dee Valley, and Llangollen has become the place where people get on the train, usually spending the day visiting other places in the valley, often breaking their journey to have lunch at Carrog, before returning to Llangollen at the end of the day. This created a need for all-day parking in Llangollen, which contributes to the congestion in the town, but takes people away from the town centre, and its shops and cafes, for most of the day.

In October 2014, during the period of fieldwork for this study, the reconstruction of the line achieved a significant milestone when it reached the town of Corwen, 10 miles (16 km) away, giving it additional distinction as the longest standard gauge heritage railway in Wales. The importance of this project and its domination of local tourism agendas provided a valuable focus in analysis on the role of the railway in the present tourismscapes of Llangollen, and in particular helped to render visible its relationships with formal and informal tourism broker networks.

8.3.1 Broker-host networks and the Llangollen tourismscapes: tracing ‘the railway’

Using an actor-network approach based on the concept of broker-host networks, it is possible to identify a number of significant relationships between the railway and various formal networks of tourism hosting. The most durable of these involves the large number of volunteer steam
enthusiasts on whose work the economic success of the railway depends. The Llangollen Railway Trust currently has around 1500 members. Although the basic functions of maintenance of the railway and station are carried out by local volunteers, the railway has members from all over Britain who come to crew the train at weekends, act as tourist guides for the station and workshops, and supervising the ‘Steam Experience’ for paying customers seeking to drive a steam engine for a day. This volunteer network coalesces around the token ‘steam train’, with the fundraising and actual building work required to complete the line at Corwen currently acting as the key mediator of the network. ‘The train’ itself also constitutes the major attraction for tourists, drawing several different categories of visitor, from steam enthusiasts to families, day trippers to walking groups, offering experiences constructed around a range of different products, from themed weddings and ‘driver experiences’, to real ale, cream teas, Santa Specials and Thomas the Tank Engine.

However, interviews and policy documents suggest that ‘the Railway’ (as distinct from ‘the train’) constitutes a second token which has a number of different network roles. As shown in the previous chapter, ‘the Railway’ as an organisation has always had an important role in promoting the town, and despite its transformation from mode of transport to heritage attraction, it continues to play this role through its status and marketing activities. Widely characterised as an iconic heritage attraction, images of ‘the Llangollen Railway’ (train, station and scenic valley) were chosen as the front cover of the first brochure for Visit Wales' new marketing area North East Wales, published in 2014. It currently ranks second to the Llangollen Wharf and Canal Boats as a paid-for tourism attraction in Llangollen, and its weekly programme of events throughout the year makes a significant contribution to one of Denbighshire’s main tourism strategy objectives – to make the area a year-round destination.

...you’d never see anybody in Llangollen between January and March, after Christmas to Easter, basically, except for the odd canoeist, you’d see no-one...but now the railway's open most weekends and it’s now become a destination from the railway point of view, the railway’s brought people in, Thomas brings people in...as long as you’ve got something that attracts people, they come in and they spend money...[Informant 25: railway volunteer]

The Railway can therefore be seen as an important tourism broker in its own right, like LIME, a major actor in broker-host networks which, particularly through its marketing activities, bring ‘Llangollen’ to a wider audience. However, unlike LIME, it maintains significant ‘internal’ and
‘external’ relationships of hosting as a result of its diverse roles, both within the town and beyond. These relationships are explored further in the next section.

8.3.2 The railway in the policy landscape

As a major attraction, the Llangollen Railway PLC is also a member of a number of formal tourism groups, indicative of a significant role in several ‘backstage’ collaborative broker-host relationships. These groups (discussed further in Chapters 9 and 10) include the local Chamber of Trade and Tourism (LCTT), the Dee Valley Business Action Group (BAG), the public-private Denbighshire Tourism Partnership, and the industry group North Wales Tourism. Its significance is noted in the Llangollen Town Plan, and support for the railway, as a key employer, to achieve its business model is a prominent item in the Town Plan Action Plan.

‘The railway’ is also widely regarded as a significant tourism ‘stakeholder’ in the town, and is regularly invited to contribute to participatory bodies such as those listed above. However, although its active performance in fostering a tourism identity and sense of place is evident throughout the networks of destination marketing in North East Wales, North Wales and Visit Wales, its role as an active network mediator is contested locally. In particular, the perception that ‘the railway’ does not co-operate effectively in some of the local formal networks of tourism production and delivery was frequently mentioned:

...they work uniquely in themselves, by themselves, for themselves... [Informant 5, activity tourism provider]

...at the moment it’s not really fulfilling anything besides fulfilling the visitor numbers for the railway... [Informant 15: local government tourism officer]

These hints of controversy suggest that the railway’s translation from mode of transport to tourist attraction is perhaps not fully complete in the minds of both local residents and local authority strategists. The railway received an explicit mention in the recent (but now ended – see Chapter 10) Action Plan for the Tourist Strategy North Wales, 2010-15, under the heading ‘Efficient transport’: ‘Promote railway network and Llangollen Railway to encourage exploration’, suggesting that a transport function for both the local community and for visitors has in the recent past been envisaged for the railway, and some feel that it has the potential to offer a ‘green’ form of transport up and down the valley with an extended timetable for locals,
although there is no suggestion that this is currently being considered as part of its future development.

[it’s] run as a heritage railway not a transport system [Informant 19: public sector broker]

...at the moment their timetable doesn’t really start until 11 o’clock, so whether they can be persuaded to do an early morning train that brings ramblers out at 8 o’clock, takes the schoolkids back to here [Llangollen] for nine o’clock, you know, that would be the perfect...[Informant 15: Dee Valley resident]

As a recipient, through the Llangollen Town Plan and other funding initiatives (see Chapter 9), of significant amounts of funding for the completion of the Corwen extension, there is also a certain amount of criticism that the railway does not play a wider role in community and tourism development in the area:

...I think it’s quite tricky to work with them......maybe it’s because the expansion of activities on the river, in particular, I think it’s taking people time to catch up with the size of it, and whether or not they believe that they’ll get the kind of trade that they’d expect by working in sort of reciprocal...together...[Informant 29: tourism provider]

...it doesn’t have a strategic officer who’s talking at the right level about economic development of either the railway, or some seconded officer from Denbighshire who could kind of roll it in...it is the most important thing really ...[Informant 15: public sector broker, local authority]

There are suggestions here of the absence from local host networks that were evident in the discussion of LIME above. However, despite this, tracing ‘the railway’ through participant narratives enables us to see networks of connections which are seemingly absent from the formal networks of the town, and shows how collaborative broker-host networks exist informally and independently of these structures. The railway has a number of ongoing working relationships with other tourism enterprises, and has played a role in the co-creation of some emerging tourism initiatives in the town, largely based on established annual events such as the Food Festival, the Llangollen Fringe Festival and the Llangollen Walking Festival. The evolution of these collaborative products represents ‘internal’ ordering based on mutual benefit – also attracting funding through ‘external’ relationships.

...for the first time this year we’re co-operating with the railway in Llangollen...in the past they’ve done beer trains, but this time they’re having one on the Food Festival weekend fully linked in with our marketing and PR so that our efforts are completely joined together...the goodwill and the
development of it is priceless, you know, co-operating with the railway, and the beer train costs the food festival absolutely nothing extra... but it’s getting Llangollen working together... [Informant 7: Food Festival Committee, emphasis added]

...with the Fringe, we’ve used the railway about four years running now... we used the Jazz band last year... Jazz Train we called it, which went down very well, and the railway now do it... so this year we did a Blues Train, and that’s gone down very well... [Informant 25: Fringe committee]

The role of the railway is also recognised more widely as providing a successful model for developing community-based volunteering, seen strategically (see Chapter 10) as an important platform for developing small tourism and non-tourism enterprises in neighbouring areas:

...that’s the great thing about the railway, you know, some of the guys, when they get tired or they’ve had enough, it’s ‘oh I’m packing up and going home’, and it’s accepted, you know... but that’s one thing we’re going to be doing, I think, it became apparent... if there’s something that we can... some sort of structure, template, model we can develop with communities for that sort of sustainability... [Informant 16: tourism professional: business development, emphasis added]

This ‘strategic’ comment again highlights the entanglement of tourism actors, such as the railway, in the everyday lives of locals – in this case by providing an environment (the reconstruction of the railway line) in which community-based volunteering can thrive.

‘The railway’ therefore exhibits a number of significant network relationships which make it a key broker in Llangollen’s tourism, acting in different and fluid ways as a mediator of the town’s tourism offer, but also playing a major role in the everyday life of the town and its residents. Its role in the future ordering of tourism is also important. The recent arrival of the railway in Corwen has been a significant point of passage for the networks of hosting in the area. The railway is one of a number of tourism ‘things’ – objects and policy narratives – currently aligning around the Dee Valley, which brings together a multiplicity of non-human actors discussed in the previous two chapters – landscape, river, the A5 (Thomas Telford’s ‘Great Irish Road’), the Llangollen Canal and the World Heritage Site as well as the railway which are already important tourism attractions. Although no formal project exists with the title, the Dee Valley has become the focus of strategy and action planning for a number of broker networks, and is, as a result, beginning to receive significant levels of funding from different sources. It has also resulted in the focus of tourism governance moving away from Llangollen itself and towards the emergent destination, with the railway readily identifiable as an important actor in the network. The tracing of the Dee Valley as a network focus is developed further in Chapters 9 and 10.
8.4 Conclusion

Chapters 7 and 8 have shown how tracing tokens can highlight the way non-human actors perform in the networks of hosting, building and maintaining internal and external relationships with brokers of different kinds, and translating different strategic notions about how tourism should be performed. This chapter shows the fluidity of these tokens, and their changing relationships of hosting over time which shape the way tourism is ordered by tracing two tokens which first emerged in the narrative of the past in Chapter 7. This provides further storylines which explore the gathering of strategic ideas, actors and practices around them, highlighting the mutability of tourism ‘things’ as network actors (Law and Singleton, 2005).

The two storylines in this chapter show how things act as ‘fluid’ and ‘fire’ objects (Law and Singleton, 2005) as they appear, disappear and re-appear in different guises and relationships in various strategy and policy documents, and in the life of the town itself. We also see that (despite a certain amount of fragility) both these attractions are ‘big’ in ANT terms – connected, through policy and practice, to wider networks of hosting. We see the changes in the active relationships around LIME which are realigning the festival away from the town, focusing on its role as an international product with regional or even national significance, rather than a central stakeholder in Llangollen’s tourism identity. We also see the changing but still dominant role of the Llangollen Railway in destination ordering, and the emergence of new gatherings around the token ‘Dee Valley’ which have accompanied this dominant position.

The use of the broker-host concept and its ANT associations allows us to see how these tokens – LIME and the Railway - have become significant actors as they emerge from the past, playing an important role on both the ‘back’ and ‘front’ stages in Llangollen today, but seldom, as noted earlier, encountered in the same tourism ‘space’. We can also ask whether they act, through the strategic notions that surround them, to create absences and gaps in the networks of tourism, and possibly even as barriers to the enrolment of new actors which might refresh the attractiveness of the town as a tourism place? Is the absence of a coherent ‘vision’ about how tourism should be performed in Llangollen recognised, and are there brokers in place who have the relationships required to allocate resources to remove these gaps? This chapter shows how the work of tourism ordering can be understood by ‘following’ non-human actors, and how the role of tourism host is embedded within the active and fluid networks in which these actors
perform, rather than in the formal networks of local tourism governance. In light of this, we now turn to these formal networks and begin to explore the relationships of practice within the formal networks of tourism in Llangollen and beyond.
9.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have considered the emergence and nature of broker-host networks in Llangollen. In line with the conceptual framework and ANT methodology of this study, these chapters focused on relationships of practice between human and non-human actors, including people, things and ideas, and the way these networks have influenced the evolution of Llangollen as a host community. The discussion ended by showing how ‘gatherings’ of ideas and actors around specific tokens provides an insight into the location of the activities of hosting, and suggested that many of these are outside the formal networks of tourism which shape the landscape of policy and practice.

Llangollen today is a busy tourism ‘honeypot’, with a range of natural and cultural assets, and an established and expanding activity tourism sector. In Chapter 5, which provided background to this case study, several management issues were pinpointed through the narratives of formal tourism networks, narratives which assumed the presence of an active body through which these issues could be resolved. The storyline in this chapter describes the search for the active work in the formal networks of governance in Llangollen of ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’ (Locum Consulting, 2011). It uses materials generated through interviews and documentary analysis, to locate the ‘constructive efforts’ (Bærenholdt, 2012: 112) of those involved in hosting, analysed using the three ‘levels’ of ordering (strategic, external and internal – see Chapters 4 and 6.5) as a guide to developing the narrative. Beginning at the fieldwork point of entry with the awarding of Cittaslow status, it looks for tourism ordering by searching for relationships and practices which constitute broker-host networks within the town, and seeking to identify and trace the practices of tourism hosting within them.

This storyline brings into focus the question of who are Llangollen’s tourism ‘stakeholders’, and the nature of the role they play in broker-host networks as conceptualised in this study. In this context, several of the actors from previous chapters reappear in this narrative, and ‘tourism’ itself emerges as a token which is traced through the networks of practice, with a particular focus on the allocation of resources. The account also traces Llangollen’s touristic identity in these
networks, and explores the relationship between identity and tourism provision in the town. Quotations from interviews are used throughout as eye witness testimonies from which to trace the networks of tourism hosting, and are combined with reflexive observations from fieldwork in a third ‘token map’ which shows the emergence of the Dee Valley as a significant token within these networks.

9.2 Tourism and ‘the local’ in broker-host networks

The chosen point of departure for this study was Cittaslow – a designation attached to Llangollen Town Council since September 2013 - which carries with it a series of statements about the nature of community and how its members want to see their town develop. This part of the account, based on interviews which followed different human and non-human actors from this starting point, highlights issues of power and durability in broker-host networks, and, in line with the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 4, positions the production of tourism as a network effect arising from relational practices of hosting occurring in the everyday lives of the people of Llangollen. Although tourism is non-statutory in local government in the UK, the practices of hosting are entangled in different aspects of public policy as ‘internal’ and ‘external’ relationships of practice, involving different groups represented as tourism stakeholders, and these are explored in this section.

The decision by the Llangollen Town Council to seek Cittaslow status in 2013 had its roots in a policy initiative from the local authority, Denbighshire County Council, aimed at encouraging greater community engagement in decisions about resource allocation, and part of the county’s wider Economic and Community Ambition Strategy, 2013-17. This initiative entailed drawing up a series of Town and Area Plans covering the whole county in order to identify priorities for future funding decisions. The role of these plans is to mediate in two key areas: the relationship between the local authority and its constituent areas, and the deployment of increasingly scarce local authority resources. The Plans, and the towns or areas they represent, can therefore be seen as competing entities in the context of limited local government funding (discussed further in Chapter 10).
Although the consultation process for these plans involved a wide range of groups, community representatives and individuals, the local Town Council was significant mediator of the consultation process for the Llangollen Town Plan. In common with similar bodies throughout the UK, the Town Council is comprised of elected, but non-remunerated, individuals who have control of very limited budgets, but who are often called upon to represent ‘the town’ as a key stakeholder. The Llangollen Town Council has several members who have previously worked, or are currently working professionally in tourism in the town (including three who had been employees of the TIC at various times over the last 20 years), bringing a body of experience and expertise in relation to tourism issues past and present. In terms of the Brokers-Locals-Tourists (BLT) model (Cheong and Miller, 2000) discussed in Chapter 3, the Town Council represents a network of locals who collectively act as a broker in negotiating how funding is attracted and used in the town.

In deciding how they would like to see the town represented in the Town and Area Plan, the councillors decided that the six themes covered by the Cittaslow Manifesto (provided in full in Appendix 2) aligned with many of the views they had canvassed in the town about what sort of place the residents wanted it to be. Sections 4 and 5 of the Manifesto relating to tourism and hospitality are shown in Figure 9.1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGRICULTURAL, TURISTIC [sic] AND ARTISAN POLICIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Development of agro ecology</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Protection of handmade and labelled artisan production, (certified, museums of culture, etc)</td>
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<td>4.3 Increasing the value of working techniques and traditional crafts</td>
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<td>4.4 Increasing the value of rural areas (greater accessibility to resident services)</td>
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<td>4.5 Use of local products, if possible organic, in communal public restaurants (school canteens etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6 Education of flavours and promoting the use of local products, if possible organic in the catering industry and private consumption</td>
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<td>4.7 Conservation and increasing the value of local cultural events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Additional hotel capacity (beds/residents per year)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.9 Prohibiting the use of gmo in agriculture</td>
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<td>4.10 New ideas for enforcing plans concerning land settlements previously used for agriculture</td>
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<th>POLICIES FOR HOSPITALITY, AWARENESS AND TRAINING</th>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Good welcome (training of people in charge, signs, suitable infrastructure and hours)</td>
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<td>5.2 Increasing awareness of operators and traders (transparency of offers and practised prices, clear visibility of tariffs)</td>
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<td>5.3 Availability of “slow” itineraries (printed, web etc)</td>
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<td>5.4 Adoption of active techniques suitable for launching bottom-up processes in the more important administrative decisions</td>
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<td>5.5 Permanent training of trainers and /or administrators and employees on Cittaslow slow themes</td>
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<td>5.6 Health education (battle against obesity, diabetes etc)</td>
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<td>5.7 Systematic and permanence [sic] information for the citizens regarding the meaning of</td>
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The Council discovered that the notion of ‘welcome’, an underlying idea of hosting in the collective identity of the town, was an important part of this vision. This is perhaps unsurprising given the evolution of the town’s chosen identity and branding discussed in Chapter 7.

So they [the county council]…were hoping that each town would develop its own sort of document which would define how it saw itself and how it wanted to be treated…the Cittaslow goals seemed quite similar to what we were groping towards anyway…to do with getting the population involved in planning, making the thing convenient for people, welcoming, you know, all those kind of goals, and they all seemed to be the things we were aiming at… we were trying to flesh it out and compare it with the County Council’s own aims and objectives and Welsh Government policy and things ….we were trying to make a wish list of things where we could genuinely have some influence…[Informant 1: resident, volunteer, town councillor – emphasis added]

This latter point, relating to the exercise of power in the context of wider policy networks, pinpoints a second reason for the Council’s decision to seek Cittaslow status. In the months leading up to the Town Plan consultation, a project to build a large supermarket on the outskirts of the town had generated considerable debate and opposition, leading to the weakening, split and virtual demise of the local business association, the Llangollen Chamber of Trade and Tourism, as a result of the conflicts and differences which had arisen among its members (discussed further in Section 9.3 below). Although many residents were in favour of the supermarket, a significant proportion of the business community feared it would have a negative impact on the town. The plans to include a café, and a meat and deli counter in the supermarket would, it was widely felt, damage the many independent businesses in the town, and reduce the vibrancy of its High Street, which, as noted earlier, is recognised as one of its key attractions for tourists. The proposed location of the supermarket on the edge of the town would also, it was felt, take away much of the tourism ‘passing trade’ on which many of the shops, and particularly food outlets in the town relied.
...what makes Llangollen different to most other towns is that we’ve got an active High Street. I suspect we’re going to lose it, and the knock-on effect of that is that we’ll lose tourists, especially if there are boarded-up shops that have been boarded up for two years, and they’ve just got posters for concerts that happened years ago, and out of date graffiti and stuff...why would anybody want it?

[Informant 1: local councillor, KLS member]

Highlighting again the way tourism is entangled with other forms of ordering, and the controversies which arise as a result, the ‘supermarket issue’, and its role as an actor in the tourismscape, became a second driver of the decision to seek Cittaslow status, as different factions in the town aligned around opposing viewpoints. The wider planning processes which led to the supermarket decision had also highlighted to the Town Council the weakness of its own position in opposing the plans, and its frustration with its lack of power in the landscape of local government in the area created a determination to find a way in which their voice might be heard more clearly in the future:

...they would also have a bit more clout because other people had done it, internationally, so you can...it’s not just us saying ‘we think this is a good idea’, we can say ‘look, all these people all over the world think it’s a good idea...and we agree with them’. [Informant 1: Cittaslow bid committee]

Following the successful bid, Cittaslow is now administered through and funded by the Town Council, and is also intended to foster a relationship with the other five Cittaslow towns in the UK, and more widely with over 120 towns around the world (although there was no evidence that this was actually taking place at this early stage in its life). The overall aim of the bid was to demonstrate that the town was well-run, along sustainable principles, with the expectation that this would assist the town council when applying for funding from a range of sources such as the Welsh Assembly Government or different agencies of the European Union (a theme developed further in Chapter 10).

The requirement to be re-assessed every two years means that Cittaslow is very much based in practice. The designation can be lost if improvements are not demonstrated in all areas of the Manifesto, so the impetus to show progress makes for positive decision-making and action. The development of formal networking is an important part of what the community is trying to achieve through Cittaslow – its main focus over the period of this study was the establishment
through its website of a co-operative network of local businesses. This has been translated more widely into a ‘Buy Local’ scheme that is currently being promoted through shops in the town by Cittaslow at the instigation of a local pressure group, Keep Llangollen Special, and by some members of the Llangollen Chamber of Trade and Tourism, through a project to develop a business and community hub for the town in a vacant building in the town centre. Recently, it has also managed, on behalf of the Town Council, a consultation over traffic congestion and the management of traffic flows within the town, with the aim of getting this included in the Town Plan in the future.

Cittaslow Llangollen can therefore be characterised as an emergent network involving a set of ideas generated in a wider network (Cittaslow International) which has coalesced locally and internally around a specific issue or challenge (‘the supermarket’) arising out of a perceived threat to the town’s identity, and a weakness in existing networks in the town, a weakness which was held responsible locally for the lack of effective opposition to the supermarket plan. Its ‘strategic’ input therefore encourages ordering based on sustainability and conservation - ‘keeping the town special’ for both residents and visitors. The role of tourism host is implicit in its strategic vision for the town, although Cittaslow itself is not generative of relations of tourism practice, either at the ‘internal’ or ‘external’ level of ordering.

My tourism-focused account of Cittaslow provided here shows how tourism can enact a particular version of an issue (Ren et al, 2015), how it overlaps and connects with other forms of ordering, and how controversies can arise out of ‘political’ differences between these viewpoints. The role Cittaslow Llangollen has identified for itself as a campaigning body has also generated controversy in the town around different narratives of localism. The following quote shows how small factions can threaten the establishment of durable networks, and raises questions about the durability of broker-host networks in the face of contentious issues:

...when you go on their site [Cittaslow International], it’s not political, it’s not to do with fighting big corporate organisations...the Cittaslow Facebook page for Llangollen, though, was being run by people from the Keep Llangollen Special group...and they’re really against it [supermarket], and they started using the Cittaslow thing...and a lot of us said ‘you shouldn’t be doing this’ because Cittaslow’s not about fighting people, it’s about people all working together ...
[Informant 6: LCTT officer, Cittaslow committee member]
The supermarket issue and the Cittaslow application process also brought the nature of the town into focus, and generated widespread questioning about identity, and about what residents valued about the town. A local pressure group, Keep Llangollen Special (KLS) (slogan ‘a place with sense and a sense of place’: www.keepllangollenspecial.org.uk), was formed with the explicit aim of supporting and protecting local businesses in the face of the supermarket threat. In response to this, a local Facebook site, Llangollen Gripe (www.facebook.com/LlangollenCouncilWatch), presents an opposing view, which often challenges the actions of elected representatives on key local issues. This proliferation of groups in the town is an emergent theme relating to broker-host networks which will be revisited later.

The choice of Cittaslow as a starting point for this study did not, as envisaged in the original research design, provide me with direct access to networks of tourism provision. Although ‘strategic ideas about how tourism should be performed’ are present in the Cittaslow Manifesto, these are not currently translated into relationships of tourism practice in the town. Indeed, ‘following the actors’ from this starting point highlights the absence of ‘internal’ relationships of tourism practice in the formal governance of the town. There are suggestions in the literature from other Cittaslow case studies that the touristic aspects of Cittaslow can be at odds with the other Manifesto criteria (Semmens and Freeman, 2012), and that the requirement to meet all of the criteria can create significant challenges in tourism places (Presenza et al, 2015). Thus we can see how dissonance between the strategic narratives of a global organisation such as Cittaslow and the ideas of the locals who seek to implement them can lead to the failure to translate into relationships of practice in the places where they are enacted.

This also highlight the ways that tourism is entangled with other forms of ordering (Jóhannesson et al, 2015), and show how the role of host can be present as a ‘strategic notion’ in these networks through a sense of welcome in the local community even if the relationships of practice are absent. Just as the presence of the idea of ‘welcome’ and its associations with ‘host’ in the original motives for the Cittaslow application had prompted my original decision to use this as a starting point, so its clear absence from the immediate outcomes of the application prompted questions about why this should be so. Why, despite the prominence and popularity of the ‘Where Wales Welcomes the World’ logo, its presence on the Cittaslow Llangollen website, and the explicit reference to a welcoming community in the Cittaslow application, was
there so little evidence of networks of tourism provision in the town? Why had my engagement with Cittaslow failed to produce actors which would lead me to the networks of tourism hosting, through ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’? These questions are developed further in Chapter 10 which follows.

The account provided in this section also shows how a non-human actor (the supermarket) can mediate network development, and yet remain absent throughout. Although not explicitly related to tourism, the supermarket and the issues that arose were present in participant narratives throughout the period of study, seen as having the power to change, and possibly damage, both the town and its tourism offer. The supermarket issue also had an enduring effect on key narratives relating to the town’s sense of its own identity. As a network effect, tourism itself seemingly has only a limited role in this account, yet it is present throughout, entangled in the issues which dominate the everyday lives of locals, and embedded in relations which transcend the local. The next section examines this presence further by tracing ideas about ‘tourism’ through the practices of resource allocation and funding.

9.3 The network power of resources: tracing tourism funding

As noted above, the Llangollen Town Plan (2012-2020) is the medium through which local authority funding is allocated to specific projects. Llangollen is therefore in direct competition with all the other towns and rural communities in the county for funding attached to a number of different Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and European Union (EU) ‘pots’. The Plan is a dynamic entity, in a constant process of change as specific projects are completed and new requirements are identified. Although the Plan is ‘owned’ by the community, through the consultation described above, and through an elected county councillor who acts as the Town Plan Champion, it is managed by officers from the county Economic Development Unit, who also manage the process of getting new projects included in the plans. Decisions about what to include therefore relate to the dominant strategic narrative of that part of the council:

So it’s how to...you still need to take on local needs, but it’s how you develop that into...and we’re looking at it...you know, we are Economic and Business Development...what’s the economic gain or benefit through doing that action, and how will it help regenerate and make the town? [Informant 20: County Council Officer, Economic and Business Development]

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This view again highlights the need to ‘expand the field’ in tourism research (Ren et al., 2015) by considering the ways tourism overlaps both with everyday lives, and with the relationships of governance and policy through which these are ordered. The Llangollen Town Plan is a mixture of concrete targets and a set of aspirations about what sort of place the community wants the town to be. When questioned about the role and place of tourism in the Llangollen Town Plan, local government officers made it very clear that the priority for spending was the needs of the residents (perhaps unsurprising given the non-statutory nature of tourism in the landscape of UK local government). Despite this, several vision and aspiration statements in the Town Plan relate quite clearly to its identity and role as a tourism place (Figure 9.2).

**Vision for Llangollen**

We want Llangollen

• to be a place with its own unique identity
• to be a place where the younger generation will stay and / or return to live and work
• to be a place with employment and affordable housing
• to have a good health care for all ages
• to be a place which caters for the needs of residents and visitors and fosters mutual respect between these groups
• to provide a visitor offer that is of higher quality and value
• to continue being the place ‘where Wales welcomes the world’

**Jobs**

There is potential to promote and encourage higher value tourism to Llangollen which could result in more people employed in higher paid jobs.

There is potentially a market for outdoor pursuits that hasn’t yet been fully exploited including the opportunities the river offers for both canoeists and anglers.

Llangollen Steam Railway as well as being a visitor attraction, provides employment and apprenticeships in its business and engineering workshops.

**Place**

Llangollen is a popular tourist destination for day visitors. There is an opportunity to turn day visits into longer stays.

The signage in and around the town is of poor quality and confusing.

There is insufficient parking in the town centre although parking provision at the Royal International Pavilion has provided some relief.

The weekly market occupies part of the coach park in Market Street car park reducing the amount of parking space available.

Llangollen is within the extended Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the World Heritage Site buffer zone.

Llangollen is within range of the cruise ships docking at Liverpool offering tours to passengers.

**Figure 9.2** Selected ‘vision’ and ‘aspiration’ statements from Llangollen Town Plan, 2013-20
These statements demonstrate recognition of the importance of tourism in both the identity and the future prosperity of the town, and the plan contains some ongoing tourism targets. However, specific actions relating to these targets do not feature in the Action Plan, and therefore do not feature in funding proposals, indicating that tourism aspirations do not engender power in the relationships of local government funding.

... it wasn’t called tourism, it was called jobs and community benefits, but they’re interlinked, because Llangollen is a tourism town all the year round...but it was quite a strong feeling if I remember rightly...that...um...tourism gets associated with low paid jobs and seasonality, and that they didn’t want, so it didn’t come out as a priority, it was more about jobs and improving life for the community...[Informant 21: public sector broker]

The process of managing the plans is also complex, taking place through layers of formal local government:

Informant 21 They’re run through what we call Member Area Groups [MAG], so each area, which is Llangollen and...well actually the area is the Dee Valley, so the members, the elected members and the county council members get together, I think it’s every six weeks, isn’t it? And we’re a standing agenda item on that...so the local member is the Town Plan Champion...so that’s how it runs.

LB Right, so how does something get onto that agenda? Is it just a continuous process of looking at it, or ...how does a real action come up...if somebody in Llangollen or a group of people in Llangollen wanted something to happen...is there a process for that?

Informant 21 I wouldn’t say ...it’s an informal process, and that’s one of the things I think needs refining a bit...if there is a group of people, like the business group or whatever, they would tend to lobby the local member, or town clerk, and then it filters back through that Member Area Group [Informant 21: public sector broker]

There are two important issues to note here in relation to the way tourism is entangled with other forms of ordering, and how funding is allocated. The first is that the management of the funding process for projects in Llangollen takes place in the context of the Dee Valley Member Area Group (MAG), a formal network of brokers which includes representatives of several other Town and Area Plans as well. The town is therefore both competing for resources and collaborating within the same formal network. The second is the role of local politicians as ‘gatekeepers’ in mediating the content of these plans despite the fact that they are nominally based on the view of a wide range of stakeholders. The Llangollen Railway and the Pavilion (see
Chapter 8) are the only tourism assets mentioned specifically in the current Plan, highlighting their economic importance to the town. LIME is a noticeable absentee from the Plan, despite its contribution towards training local school-leavers for jobs in tourism. The Plan also highlights the importance of the Dee Valley to the economy of the area as a whole (although the Plans are not made, and resources not allocated on this basis). This theme is developed later in this chapter in relation to the development of active hosting practices in the area.

The narrative in the previous two sections suggests that despite the recognition by residents and their local representatives of the importance of tourism in the town (an underlying ‘strategic notion’ that tourism is both welcomed and important), there is little sign in community-based policy and governance (as represented by Cittaslow and the Town Plan) of the relationships and practices required for durable broker-host networks. The next section uses a closer analytical focus on tourism practice in the town to explore this further.

9.4 Tracing tourism: looking for network

There’s a lot of energy in Llangollen that turns up in groups. [Informant 12: resident, LCTT member]

The dominant role played by tourism in Llangollen is perhaps not evident in the account provided in the previous sections, which suggests that it is difficult to trace tourism practice in networks of governance within the town. However, almost everyone interviewed for this study was currently, or had been in the past, involved in tourism in Llangollen in some way (often through multiple roles: see Table 6.2). Most local participants recognised the importance of a buoyant tourism sector in the future prosperity of the town, and the ‘supermarket issue’ brought the fragility of many of the existing businesses into focus:

[Tourism is]...the main economy in Llangollen, the only business, actual industry is the print works...and actually they've just made thirty people redundant, so it’s not...tourism is the big industry. I mean, even the butchers, the bakers, the candlestick-makers (because they do have one!), they all rely on the tourists to come and buy their products... it’s not just the locals that are buying their products. I would say if you went to the butchers and said to them, you know, how much is local trade... this time of year [March] it’s definitely local, with tourists. In the height of summer I would say it’s going to be predominantly tourists. [Informant 4: Town councillor, TIC Manager]

...everything eventually relies on tourism...accountants, solicitors, they’re all relying on each other really, aren’t they... [Informant 12: LCTT member]
...there’s nothing much else in town other than shops, and the tourist attractions. Quite a few of the shops are obviously tourist-based, and even those that are not are quite tourist-based. Both the greengrocers for instance do a delivery service to hotels and cafes (and old people’s homes and anybody else) but that’s a large part of their business is delivering to the tourist industry...

[Informant 1: local town council, Cittaslow]

The Cittaslow Working Group was able to assemble a convincing body of evidence relating to tourism provision in the town, and the bid scored well on the ‘hospitality and community’ criteria in its submission:

...the hospitality part of it is actually quite high, you know, the number of people saying about Llangollen being a friendly town, and people being welcome in the town and things like that...

[Informant 4: Town councillor]

But not everyone is clear that this is where the key community focus should lie:

[...it’s] is a bit odd, hospitality and community, because frankly they’re sometimes at odds with each other, aren’t they...? [Informant 1: Town councillor, Cittaslow]

The absence of tourism issues from the formal networks in the town is also demonstrated by the fact that there is no mention of the importance of tourism in the local economy, or indeed any reference at all to tourism, in the new (2014) Cittaslow Llangollen constitution (Appendix 4). This absence was also reflected in many of the interviews with residents.

I think everyone who lives here is fairly conscious that tourism is our major industry...um...[pause]...so we’re all kind of beholden to it, but not everyone’s very thrilled about that. [Informant 1: Town councillor]

...I don’t think... (sounds awful)...Joe Bloggs local person realises how much money... tourism is important, and how much, you know, if the tourism wasn’t there, how much they would lose by it not being there. I mean it’s always annoying in the main street on a busy weekend that you can’t even walk on the street, on the pavement in your own town, you know, it’s all that type of thing, and I think that’s what the locals aren’t particularly keen on, when you can’t even get into the shop that you want to get into. [Informant 4: town councillor, TIC employee]

...at one time there was quite a strong view of locals, you know, ‘more bloody visitors, we want the town to ourselves, these visitors coming here clogging up all the car parks’, and all that sort of thing,
you know, but you have to say, you know, if we didn’t have visitors we wouldn’t have half the shops here...[Informant 7: volunteer, LCTT member]

This ambivalence is particularly evident in the practices of the local business network. The Llangollen Chamber of Trade and Tourism (LCTT) is the official body representing tourism businesses in the town. The objectives of its current constitution (Figure 9.3) have a clear focus on tourism and partnership working:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Develop areas for self-generation of income and secure resources to market and promote Llangollen as having a clear and distinct image, which will distinguish it from other places and embrace its special characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 To ensure effective communication and dissemination of information to the membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Create a reputation for ‘quality’ and ‘value for money’ and promote ‘best practice’ through the improvement of retail, catering, accommodation, attractions, events and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Develop and promote Llangollen as an all year round quality destination by working together with all other groups and organisations whose prime object is the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 To foster a spirit of unit, friendship and inclusion for the benefit of the Llangollen community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 To proactively seek mutually beneficial partnerships</td>
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</tbody>
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**Figure 9.3 Llangollen Chamber of Trade and Tourism Constitution, 2015**

As we saw in Chapter 7, there has been a trade association in the town since 1906, and some form of tourism body since at least 1947. The Chamber’s recent history has been shaped by some significant individuals who have dominated the nature and role of the Chamber, sometimes to its detriment. Its current form dates from 2009-10 when the Chamber of Trade and Tourism emerged from a merger of previously separate organisations dealing with trade and tourism, and its energies have been largely directed at the ‘supermarket issue’ in recent months, leading once again to splits and divisions, and a falling off of membership as a result.

Although the LCTT is a volunteer group, it is, nonetheless, the official body through which ‘tourism’ is represented in Llangollen. As such, it is a formal broker network with internal and external relationships involving tourism, representing the town on several formal tourism bodies
(see Chapter 10). As with the Town Council, it is regularly identified as a key stakeholder by tourism brokers working outside the town, particularly local government brokers working with strategies which call for partnership working. The Chamber is therefore frequently called into action to represent the town in different consultations and initiatives involving tourism (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 10).

However, an interpretation of the testimonies of several informants suggested that its role as the town’s main formal tourism stakeholder exists more in the policy and practice of those who seek partnerships than in the actual practices of the Chamber itself. Despite its title, the fact that tourism is now the main employer and supporter of businesses within the town, and the presence of the tourism logo ‘Where Wales Welcomes the World’ on its letterhead, members of LCTT professed ignorance and confusion about the governance of tourism in the area, and more widely about the policies and practices of Visit Wales at regional and national level. The mantra that the town has reached its tourism carrying capacity featured in several interviews with Chamber members. Tourism management is seen as something that happens somewhere else, with no ownership of initiatives designed to be implemented at the local level.

I don’t think there’s any real need [to work with the county council]…I think…there’s specific problems here for tourism, just things like parking, and we get into these debates about signage, and the A-frame things on the pavements, and we ask for them to be taken away and they keep getting put back! But I don’t think there’s any real need, for example, the website, that needs some organisation, to set up the website, we’d like to develop it further now…we could do with some money to do that, so we need to get in touch really with the various people… [Informant 6: LCTT member]

…it [the town] promotes itself…because of the rich variety of things going on…we’re doing very well in terms of trade… the place is…and the traders are saying it’s all very buoyant … …there’s no urgency to [promote the town], because we’re so busy, and there are complaints that there are too many tourists about …and the railway’s always bringing people in, and so… that’s why that’s not really happening, and there’s a question of whether it really needs to happen anyway if other people are doing it for us… [Informant 6: LCTT member, emphasis added]

…I do wonder if some of those shops, if they were to be doing different things, selling different things, they might find that there’s a whole different group of people that want to spend their money…[Informant 5: activity tourism provider]
The Chamber is responsible for the town’s ‘official’ tourism website, www.llangollen.org. Inclusion on the site is restricted to Chamber members, who are mainly businesses within the town, and the site has no links with businesses or tourism attractions in surrounding areas (including the Dee Valley). The site maintains a regularly-updated weekly calendar of events in the town, but does not link with other promotional sites for tourism (such as the new Destination Denbighshire website (discoverdenbighshire.co.uk), or the Visit Wales marketing area North East Wales – see Chapter 10). The Chamber has been unable to raise the funds to upgrade the site, and its members are unwilling to contribute to this. As shown in the last chapter, in the vacuum thus created, the LIME website is adopting the role, and including selected links to such providers (although this is in its infancy at the time of writing). In ordering terms, this shows an absence of ‘external’ relationships – those relationships which enable networks to function (van der Duim, 2007b), and shows how, even on its official website, Llangollen remains largely isolated from online communities which focus on tourism in the area.

The ‘messiness’ that characterises formal tourism networks in Llangollen can be demonstrated through a narrative provided below, which was generated by following the actor ‘town map’ through the materials.

**Looking for network – the curious case of the Town Map**

Town maps, funded by local advertising, and given away free to visitors, are a common feature of Tourist Information Centres (TICs) throughout the world. However, the provision of such a map is problematic in the case of Llangollen. The TIC is managed by the private trade organisation North Wales Tourism (NWT), which is funded by membership fees from participating tourism organisations. The TIC itself is funded by Visit Wales through the local authority (Denbighshire County Council). The TIC therefore focuses on promoting members of North Wales Tourism (although non-member attraction organisations are also given space), but they are only allowed to promote accommodation providers who are accredited by the Visit Wales accommodation grading scheme (Visit Wales, 2016a). It emerged during interviews that very few accommodation providers in Llangollen participate in the Visit Wales accreditation scheme, preferring instead to rely on websites such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com for customer ratings and recommendation, so very few accommodation providers in Llangollen can be officially represented by the TIC.
The successful Hamper Llangollen Food Festival, held annually at the Pavilion in October, produces an attractive and useful town map each year, entirely funded by contributions from exhibitors and other local businesses, including accommodation providers, but the TIC cannot use this map because of the requirement to focus on NWT members and Visit Wales accredited accommodation. At the time of writing we are left with the curious position where the Food Festival map is stored ‘under the counter’ at the TIC and given to visitors on request, although no ‘official’ map exists! The TIC have asked the LCTT if they would produce a map, and a local tourism entrepreneur has offered to design it, but the Chamber was unable to persuade its members to contribute financially to a second map, as they had already contributed through the Food Festival.

The issues around the town map demonstrate the network power of ‘things’ such as funding arrangements and the narratives associated with accreditation, exercised through formal bodies such as industry associations (NWT) and destination management organisations (Visit Wales) which can mitigate against the production of something that would have the potential to act as a focal point for the development of broker-host networks – a Town Map which enrols local brokers in its production, and is accepted in the ‘official’ networks of tourism. This shows another notable absence which highlights the lack of network durability and the controversial position of tourism in the life of the town.

In terms of the analytical framework, the LCTT represents a set of practices which we can term internal relationships of practice. Despite its constitution, which states that one of its key roles is to work with other groups, in practice it seldom does so. Through its secretary, the Chamber receives and disseminates information from ‘outside’, but all its actions and perspectives are ‘internal’.

... I think that’s the key thing, the networking of local...not gossiping but sharing the local information...you know, who’s moving around where, who’s taking over which shop, that sort of thing...[Informant 6: LCTT member]

However, it is relevant to note that, as mentioned above, the Chamber was, during the period of study, at a low point following disagreements over the supermarket issue which led to a number of resignations, and a lack of confidence suggested in comments made by a number of the members interviewed:
This is just local shop keepers, café owners, restaurant people, and the odds and ends like me. [Informant 6: LCTT member]

...we’ve gradually been trying to increase the membership, but it’s not all that...tourism’s a small part of it, you know...the Tourism Association, you know, they have their own website, and, you know, they were doing quite a lot, in terms of getting grants to promote Llangollen, you know, leaflets and that sort of thing, and now that’s all stopped...[Informant 7: LCTT member]

...people in Ruthin [neighbouring town] say ‘I wish we’d got what you’ve got’...but whether we do enough...I think the railway do, they do a lot of promotion, and the canal boats, but the town itself, I don’t know if we do enough really... [Informant 7: LCTT member]

...the Chamber of Trade I feel is a talking shop...you don’t really get anywhere, but they think they do...I go to the Chamber of Trade because I know the people, and it keeps me in touch with the gossip...[Informant 25: LCTT member, railway, food festival, fringe]

...they’re still trying to get them to work together, to understand that they must work together, it’s the only way...it’s common, this is what happens everywhere, how do you get people to work together? People are selfish really, and if they don’t see that there’s something in it for themselves, they won’t bother, and people are always ready to complain and point fingers.’ [Informant 12: LCTT member]

The lack of engagement with wider networks by the LCTT has created a space which is being colonised by other networks – Cittaslow and Keep Llangollen Special, introduced earlier. In a town which has over a hundred community groups devoted to different concerns and interests (Collinge and Gale, 2013), the absence of ‘tourism’ from the agendas of any of these groups means that no group or network in the town sees tourism issues as a priority.

Everybody has their own interests, which is fine, and you know I’ve got all ...little subgroups. But when it comes to the development of tourism within that area there should only actually be one group with nominated individuals who...who can either make decisions or go away discuss and come back and put a case for something. I just feel sometimes that they’re...[pause] just swimming around, floundering, and nothing substantial comes out of it. [Informant 30: tourism provider]

It is important to note here that this has not always been the case, and that the local community has, in the recent past, made several attempts to generate functioning local tourism networks. In particular, an initiative known as the Llangollen Partnership (2007-10) represented an attempt to bring all the factions of the town together, largely focusing on issues relating to tourism:
...the idea was to get everyone working together so that if an issue came up, instead of the Chamber of Trade writing, instead of the Tourism Association writing, instead of the Town Council writing, or the Civic Society, they were all in it together, they all knew what was happening, and part of the meeting would be taken up with ‘what’s happening in your organisation at the moment’...sort of thing, so there was a flow of information, everyone sharing information, it was quite good really, it’s a pity it’s gone...[Informant 7: resident and volunteer]

The Partnership (‘we decided that partnership was the in word at the time’: Informant 7) was created to access EU funding for tourism projects, including the development of the Pavilion as a venue for conferences and events throughout the year.

As with Cittaslow, the Partnership again highlights the way brokers can align around specific issues. It also shows the productive power of resources (Cheong and Miller, 2000), and the way this can shape relationships of practice in a tourism place to find a way of harnessing this power within the wider networks through which this power flows.

...the Partnership had some influence in saying to the county, you know, ‘we want this’, all the groups round the table, the Chamber, the railway, all had an interest in trying to make things happen, so we were able to influence them a fair bit...but that’s gone now...[Informant 7: resident and volunteer]

The Partnership succeeded in attracting funding through the WAG to conduct a survey of Llangollen residents to find out which tourism activities they felt should be encouraged, as a prelude to devising a strategy to apply for further funding. However, it failed to achieve the consensus it was seeking, and foundered for the lack of a unifying narrative of tourism development.

...towards the end we were looking for a project, a thing to focus on so that people would get involved and give us their support, and all that kind of thing, but...well, it just didn’t happen. [Informant 7]

Despite the recognition of the need for such a group, and the clear motivation in the town to direct collective energies to building relationships (evident in the proliferation of public groups with ‘political’ motives discussed earlier) the absence of a tourism-focused group such as the Partnership in Llangollen may explain the absence of tourism issues from the Town Plan (see Section 9.3). The demise of the Llangollen Partnership and the struggles of the LCTT are both ascribed in the testimonies above to the lack of a ‘project’ through which the energies of the
town could be channelled. We saw in the previous chapter that the ‘big’ and connected tourism actors - LIME and the Railway - are constructed in networks which are both within and beyond the local, suggesting that the combination of ‘everyday and touristic structures’ (Franklin, 2012:112) is incompletely translated in the case of Llangollen.

9.5 Translations, host reordering and emergent destinations: the Dee Valley

The previous chapter ended by describing the alignment of a number of non-human actors around an emergent token, the Dee Valley, and in this final section, we revisit this as a ‘risky’ object in which processes of translation are clearly evident. This enables a focus on the ‘active’ formation of broker-host networks, and the translations needed for durability. We saw earlier that the Dee Valley is the focus of the network through which competing Town Plans are administered, the Member Area Group (MAG) comprising the elected county councillors from all the local authorities in the Dee Valley. The proceedings of the MAG are not publicly available, so it is not possible to explore further how funding decisions are made or channelled through this body.

This alignment is also visible in the Dee Valley Business Action Group (BAG), a network comprised of local business representatives, local councillors and public sector brokers from the county Economic and Business Development Unit. The following testimony, from one of the public sector brokers involved in the BAG, shows its role and membership as multiple, and tourism as a key feature of its ‘work’:

"It’s integrated within everything, you know, economic development and tourism, because the nature of the businesses here they are very heavily interlinked, but that network has been...gosh it’s nearly ten years, isn’t it? It’s an overarching body if you like, or network of advice, where underneath it’s representation from both Corwen and Llangollen, so you’ve got the members from each of the areas, the respective business, or Chamber of Trade as it is in Llangollen, Corwen Business group, Corwen Partnership, Llangollen Partnership, which is now no longer, and they suggested that the Cittaslow be on that instead, it’s about bringing everyone together in the whole of the Dee Valley, so it’s information sharing and gathering, so everyone’s working to the same hymn sheet and working to the same agenda, so the railway’s been very keen on that and they sit on that and they’re invited, so it’s how the valley as a whole can benefit from the initiative going on, which obviously is tourism as well as other business...works...you know...economic development of that area...[Informant 21: public sector (local authority) broker]"
Again, this body does not produce public records of their meetings, so it is difficult to examine its network role in any detail. However, from this quote, the BAG’s relationships appear to be mostly ‘internal’, with no evidence of any ‘external’ relationships. LIME is not invited to the group, although the Railway clearly features as an important mediator in the work of the group.

Distinct from the BAG, and in a move which represents a breakaway from the LCTT, a group of adventure and activity tourism providers in the town have formed their own group, Dee Valley Active, which has emerged out of links to wider networks outside the area, including a North Wales initiative called Calon Antur (Heart of Adventure) now in association with the Visit Wales ‘Year of Adventure’ project for 2016 (see Chapter 10).

...this[Llangollen] as the hub really...is what I’d like to see...and help bring this town and this valley not just this town, but connected to the outdoor industry is exciting for me really, it’s got so much potential to become so much more......I think what we’ve [Dee Valley Active] achieved in the first year is phenomenal in comparison to other areas, and we are getting questioned from different areas around the country, and the Welsh Government are very interested in how this group’s come about and how it’s working ... [Informant 5: activity tourism provider]

...it was basically a place once a month where we could meet up, and we would discuss...um...we would discuss...[pause]...we’d plan different ways of marketing the Dee Valley from the perspective of an outdoor company, or companies...and whatever was put out as a plan would have to...um...would have to benefit each company, and benefit the valley as a whole, and not be specifically individualised...[Informant 29: activity tourism provider]

...I think most of the companies...I think all of the companies come together, which is quite unusual, because they’re almost like vying for each other’s business, so it’s very unusual that those businesses have come together – it’s nice to see... [Informant 4: TIC Manager]

However, despite Llangollen’s longstanding reputation for outdoor holidays (see Chapter 7) the activity sector is another area which generates controversy around tourism issues in the town, and some (particularly hotel owners) see it as threatening undesirable stag and hen weekends.

...I think it’s just a different organisation that’s grown because the Chamber wasn’t catering for them basically... it’s difficult to know what’s going on with them...not that we need to know...but you would have thought that the Chamber of Trade would have encompassed it [Informant 7: LCTT member]

But does the town need these ... extra activity tourism? [Informant 6: LCTT member]
The Dee Valley token ‘mapping’, which began life as an analysis of the river as an actor, is shown in Figures 9.4 and 9.5. One of the initiatives of the Dee Valley Active group is the establishment of a ‘Dee Valley’ guide qualification in association with a local college. Supported by EU project funding (see Chapter 10) this is intended to give local operators a competitive advantage over the many non-local groups which also use the environmental assets of the valley:

…if you go to this valley, people are running courses from all over the country, coming in to this valley and running them, but what this will give is that little bit extra for the customer, because the knowledge that they’re going to get…by the way that flower is this…or the history of that castle there has gone back from here, and…um…just as a little extra bit really, and we recognise that to be an exciting little addition that we can create for the providers of the valley. [Informant 5: tourism provider]

These developments are overshadowed by a further controversy – the contested nature of the river itself. Fishing has been present in the tourism offer since the beginning of the 20th century, and successive editions of Lovely Llangollen (Chapter 7) highlight the Dee as a well-known and leading centre for recreational and sports fishing. This usage co-existed with the use of the river for canoeing for many years. However, the rapid recent growth of activity and adventure sports on the river, including rafting, paddle-boarding and canyoning, has led to an ongoing debate about river use, an issue which, being based in different interpretations of UK law, is far from ‘local’. This brings a new dimension to ideas about co-competitive relationships between tourism brokers discussed earlier, again showing the entanglement of tourism in other forms of ordering.

In addition to its potential for expansion in the fast-growing outdoor adventure and activity sport sector, the potential to develop cultural and heritage tourism in the Dee Valley, and the role of non-human actors such as the Railway, is, as noted in Chapter 8, also recognised by policy makers:

…they’re [the railway] the major key to the Dee Valley, that whole transport network… if it’s understood and easily accessible… [Informant 15: public sector tourism officer]

[re future plans] …to encompass the Dee Valley being like a living transport museum in the area, cos we’ve got the benefit of the World Heritage Site, you’ve got a heritage railway, and you’ve got a canal… then you’ve got two areas of …not deprivation, but places that need developing, Corwen here needs developing, and the place round the Aqueduct…very deprived area…so what we’ve got to do is develop Froncysyllte to keep it as a World Heritage Site…that’s the strategy I see for the Dee Valley. [Informant 18: local authority (elected) lead member for tourism]
Figure 9.4  Mapping material actors in a broker-host network: the Dee Valley (Source: Author)
DEE VALLEY BROKER-HOST NETWORK?

Actors: River, canal, railway, WHS, walking routes, Llangollen, Corwen

RELATIONSHIPS OF PRACTICE (internal)

Tourism river users – fishing, rafting, canoeing [multiple and controversial tourism issues]

Railway [see Figure 8.7]

Public and private sector networks – Dee Valley Member Area Group (Public sector); Dee Valley Business Action group (Private sector)

Tourism promotion – Dee Valley Way; Dee Valley Ale Festival (2016); www.deevalley.org

Local – Dee Valley News (website, formerly Llangollen News)

STRATEGIC NOTIONS

Wales Spatial Plan – international tourism potential (with WHS)

Denbighshire – ‘living museum’

Funding – AONB/Cadw wyn Clwyd supporting emergent communities of practice – Wales Dee Partnership; Dee Valley Active; World Heritage Site

DESTINATION?

ABSENCES OF...

Communities of tourism practice linking Llangollen and Corwen, and World Heritage Site

External relationships of policy and practice

Destination?
Thus we can see how ordering at the ‘strategic’ level is aligning with both internal and external relationships of practice from which a new destination is emerging. This re-ordering is bringing new concerns and a different focus on networks and their construction, particularly in overcoming years of competition between Llangollen and Corwen, the two key towns in the Dee Valley:

...they’re always jealous of each other, and you know...and it goes back to the railway as well, because Corwen unfairly in a way were seen as the poor relation to Llangollen in terms of tourism...you know, you go round Llangollen and it’s busy, all the time, and Corwen really wanted that...[Informant 21: local authority broker]

It’s more about information sharing between the businesses of the two towns, in a way...there was a...hilarious situation...well, it was quite serious...in Corwen they have an unmanned toilet, where you just put money in the slot, so in theory they’re open all day, 24 hours. In Llangollen you have manned toilets...and Corwen was very jealous of these manned toilets, and Llangollen was very jealous of these 24-hour toilets...so it was quite an interesting discussion! But it’s interesting...you learn from that discussion, don’t you...[Informant 20: local authority broker]

This was also an issue recognised by the Llangollen Partnership, which saw the Dee Valley as one of its key areas for development:

...it was getting the two areas...two towns...to talk together, you know, to know what was going on, how we could help each other, and things like that, you know, particularly with the railway...you know, the railway was the main topic of conversation, because it was moving into Corwen, and what was Corwen going to do when it was there, you know, how to prepare for it... [Informant 7: resident, volunteer]

This idea of the Dee Valley as a destination is therefore beginning to be translated through the alignment of policy and funding networks, but the process is incomplete. As shown above, the idea of the valley as a ‘host community’ is not yet translated into the everyday lives and perceptions of the people who live there, and the brokers involved have not yet found a way to facilitate this through the multiplicity of groups that already exists:

...we sort of hesitate to say ‘What the Dee Valley needs is another new group!’ [Informant 14: public sector broker]

This further highlights the challenges of ‘co-competitive’ broker relationships (Nalebuff and Brandenburger, 1997; Grängsjö, 2003; Gibson, Lynch and Morrison, 2005), involving
competition not just between brokers in a particular sector, but between tourism places where competitive rivalries run deep in the lives of local communities. Although these types of relationships are not specifically discussed by Cheong and Miller (2000), they are a key element of ‘partnership’ working which is now central to so much tourism policy.

The *Wales Spatial Plan 2004-2024* highlights Llangollen as the only place in North East Wales with an international role in tourism, and shows the importance of the Dee Valley for its future development.

> The Dee Valley and estuary have significant potential for heritage, tourism and leisure, especially in conjunction with the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and the Marcher castles on the Welsh border...[Wales Spatial Plan 2004/8: 224]

The designation in 2009 of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal, part of which is in Llangollen, increased this international profile. This new attraction is also emerging as a significant non-human actor which is reinforced the reordering around the Dee Valley, a factor which is also reflected in the allocation of resources for tourism in the area.

> And the World Heritage Site...so it would be good if we could think...together...it would be good...it would then open things up for the railway going into Corwen, and all of that really... [Informant 16: public sector business development officer]

> ...these relationships that have been built are very new...but I think are important and needed to happen in order to make it work for the whole valley...[Informant 29: activity tourism provider]

The way these different forms of ordering coalesce around the Dee Valley is highlighted in the map shown in Chapter 5 (Context) and revisited in Chapter 10.

**9.6 Conclusion: Multiplicity, controversy and absence in the networks of hosting**

This chapter has explored in some detail the *work* that occurs in tourism networks in Llangollen, and has shown how relationships form and re-form outside the formal networks of practice. It has also shown that despite an ongoing impetus from residents to network within the town, the relationships of practice that form have tended to be short-lived and unsuccessful in supporting tourism. In fact, many in the town exhibit a form of ‘bunker mentality’ towards outside networks which limit the amount of connectivity – both physical and virtual – with brokers in other tourism spaces.
ANT thinking suggests that strategic notions are translated into practice through internal (related to the performance of tourism) and external (necessary to enable the performance of tourism) relationships (van der Duim, 2007a). So does this approach help to identify broker-hosts active in the backstage of tourism in Llangollen? As we have seen, ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’ was an assumed group automatically included, and therefore normalised, in the narrative of a particular group of brokers (Locum Consulting) performing a consultative role in a relationship with the local authority (Denbighshire County Council). We can regard this as an ‘external’ relationship between the council and a group of brokers who have the power to shape narratives about a tourism place – producing a report on tourism issues for the local authority. The recommendation was included in the report without any reference to who these people might be – it just assumed that they exist – a normalising narrative which cast absent actors in a non-existent role! As we will see in Chapter 10, this report also normalised narratives of problematic management issues and challenges around the delivery of these tourism products.

The storyline developed in this chapter describes my attempts to ‘follow’ local tourism actors, and to describe their relationships with image and policy makers in wider backstage networks of hosting. ‘Strategic notions about how tourism is/should be performed’ were therefore first sought in the formal networks of governance in the town, accessed from the starting point of the Cittaslow application, which itself embodied a particular strategic notion in relation to tourism in the town. The storyline shows that although there are structures in place through which tourism could be prioritised to ensure the economic future of the town, the ‘strategic notions’ on which these bodies are based all relate to the future of Llangollen as a successful and sustainable community, rather than about the future development of tourism. The local council and Chamber of Trade and Tourism do not identify tourism issues despite a widespread recognition that it is central to the town’s future. Brokers active in the vibrant arena of local politics focus in the main on issues other than tourism, although the focus on maintaining the quality of the public realm, and in particular the preservation of independent shops in the town centre, are also central to the maintenance of one of its key tourism assets.

So can we find ‘those with responsibility’ outside the formal networks of tourism governance? As we have seen, Bærenholdt et al (2004) identify several different types of network present in the production of tourism, but suggest that these ‘work’ through ‘porous’ destinations which exist independently of place. The storyline in this chapter tends to support this view, in that it
notes the absence of durable relationships of practice within these networks relating to Llangollen as a tourism place. This also brings into question the notion of ‘stakeholders’ and their role as representatives of the host community which is such a dominant narrative in tourism management (see Chapter 3). Despite the efforts of the Llangollen Partnership (2007-10) there is no body at present working to ensure the future of the town as a tourism place, despite the fact that at least two of the formal bodies discussed here are regarded as key stakeholders in tourism consultations involving external bodies, particularly those involved in the formulation of tourism policy.

This is important, in that it shows how multiple realities are enacted in networks, and how these are incorporated into policy and practice in the wider context of tourism provision. In particular, it highlights black-boxing in the way ‘stakeholders’ are identified and enrolled in tourism networks, and suggests that stakeholder roles can often be created in the practices of tourism managers, rather than in the practices of the groups nominated as representatives. We can also see as a result of this that we can challenge the notion of ‘stakeholder’ as representative of local tourism interests in a partnership-dominated landscape.

Developing the storylines provided in Chapters 7 and 8, the narrative in this chapter also shows that key tourism actors remain the same (the attractions and the brand), but the congruence of ordering noted in Chapter 7 is no longer readily identifiable. ‘Following the actors’ shows how a focus on multiplicity and absence leads to a different understanding of broker-host networks. In particular, we can see that the notion of a ‘host community’ as centred and ordered in relation to a specific place, with a unified view of something called ‘tourism’ is challenged by this encounter with what one of the participants called a ‘community of parts’ [Informant 12] – parts that are lacking in the associations and relationships found in durable networks of hosting. Some of these ‘parts’ are themselves enrolled in multiple networks (to be explored in Chapter 10) while others have very few functioning relationships at all.

So how does the ‘host community’ engage with Llangollen as a tourist destination? This chapter highlights the multiple ways in which tourism is entangled with, and embedded in, the everyday lives of those who live in the town. However, perhaps for the first time in its history as a destination, and despite the durability of the branding ‘Where Wales Welcomes the World’, the idea of hosting and the destination in a local sense is disappearing from Llangollen’s own sense of place. The dominant tourism narrative encountered in the town is that is at capacity, with vibrant tourism businesses. However, this is at odds with the way Llangollen is perceived in
wider networks, which characterise it as a town with significant issues relating to the fragility of some of its tourism assets requiring resolution to ensure its future as a destination. How these multiple ‘realities’ shape the wider networks of tourism hosting is discussed in the final storyline in Chapter 10.
Chapter 10  POLICY, PRACTICE AND THE CONTESTED SPACES OF HOSTING

The ordering moment is, to a large extent, located with those who are able to specify where we are heading…images of the future almost irresistibly define what we do today. (van der Ploeg, 2003: 4)

…places have multiple contested meanings that often produce disruptions and disjunctures… (Sheller and Urry, 2004:1)

10.1 Introduction
This study characterises the host as an actor-network, and identifies broker-host networks as the sites of tourism hosting. These networks have been explored in previous chapters through narratives based on three different storylines about an established tourism place with a strong local identity as a ‘host community’. These narratives show how tourism issues are entangled with the everyday lives of those who participate in the networks of tourism hosting, but that ‘black-boxing’ occurs around formal structures (such as Town Plans or formal business networks) which can conceal absences working against the formation of durable networks.

Analysis of interview transcripts and policy documents shows that this has resulted in two dominant but contrasting ‘backstage’ narratives around the future of Llangollen as tourist place, identified on the one hand as an established and successful ‘jewel in the crown’ with thriving businesses and iconic attractions, and on the other as a problematic ‘honeypot’ with associated issues of fragility, congestion and overcrowding.

The storylines have also shown how following non-human actors enables us to trace the work in tourism networks, highlighting the way tourism things can become tokens, collecting gatherings of people, ideas, and other things, into active and durable networks which stretch beyond the local. An exploration of the networks of tourism by tracing the gatherings of brokers, ideas and practices surrounding two key non-human actors, an attraction - the Railway, and an event - the Eisteddfod - show that both are actors which have been instrumental in the ordering of Llangollen’s tourism offer, roles which can be traced back in time in shaping the identity of the town as a tourism place in different ways. Chapters 8 and 9 also describe an emergent third
token, the Dee Valley, which is in the process of translation into a host network (a translation which is incomplete at the time of writing).

Despite its apparent durability, Llangollen is now seen as facing a number of challenges, noted in the Locum Report of 2011, itself, as shown in the conclusion to the previous chapter, a significant network actor. These challenges relate to the fragility of the town’s economy, and particularly its local businesses, and the resultant threats to the public realm on which much of its traditional attractiveness is based. In addition, there are also specific tourism threats not identified in the Locum report. The Eisteddfod itself is beset by ongoing challenges to its durability (Chapter 8). A further threat, not identified by Locum, but present in other strategy documents (to be discussed in this chapter) is its competitive position in Wales in relation to the key growth area of activity/adventure tourism.

We have seen in earlier chapters that the landscape of tourism governance within the town is punctuated both by ‘black-boxing’ and by absences, which challenge the future durability of tourism planning in Llangollen. This chapter explores ‘the future’ through the relationships of practice within the wider policy landscape and the role they play in performing the role of tourism host in Llangollen. It presents a final storyline which interprets the complexity of the policy landscape (introduced in Chapter 5) using the broker-host concept in line with the conceptual framework for the study. It focuses first on the strategic narratives that travel through it, and the internal and external relationships of practice in formal and informal networks that result. As in previous chapters, the storyline presented here is based on the premise, discussed in the section on analysis (6.5) that strategic notions can be found at any scale, and that the internal and external relationships that emerge also transcend the conventional structuring of policy and practice into local, regional and national scales. The chapter maintains the focus of Chapter 9 in seeking to identify a key, but so far absent group of brokers identified by Locum as the key to the town’s future, ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’, to locate ‘the performative work and other constructive efforts made by hosts’ (Bærenholdt, 2012:112) and to identify the work of enactment, maintenance and repair required for durable broker-host networks.
Modes of ordering can be seen as ‘coherent sets of strategic notions about the way tourism should be performed’ (van der Duim, 2007a: 970). Each set of strategic notions acts as ‘the backbone of a particular strategy and the related decision-making processes’ (ibid) and therefore brings a separate set of practices which are delivered through internally and externally congruent relationships between people, places and things. Strategic notions guide practical action and shape judgements about the spatial practices which emerge as a result. We have seen in Chapters 8 and 9 that ideas about how tourism should be performed in Llangollen have resulted in absences and ‘black-boxed’ attitudes to practice, and that in the absence of formal internal and external relationships of practice, durable network formation is more apparent in the fluid networks which coalesce around tourism ‘things’. This section explores how ‘the local’ is produced as an effect in the formal strategic landscape of tourism in Wales, by tracing the formal networks which exist for the delivery of tourism strategy. It is followed by a section which examines the internal and external relationships of practice emerging from this strategy as they relate to tourism in Llangollen.

Wales is a small country and tourism is devolved from the United Kingdom government to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). Formal strategic notions about how tourism should be performed in Wales therefore stem directly from the WAG Tourism Strategy Partnership for Growth, 2013-2020 (and its predecessor Achieving Our Potential, 2000-2013), delivered by WAG through its destination management organisation, Visit Wales. As a first stage of analysis, an overview of the strategic landscape of tourism in Wales was created using movable post-it notes on flipcharts, in an attempt to find links between strategy and various related policy-making bodies that might be involved in delivering tourism strategy (Appendix 7). This mapping exercise shows the complexity of the strategic landscape as related to tourism in Llangollen. The exercise showed that although Visit Wales has primary responsibility for the delivery and funding of the Action Plan for this strategy, through partnerships with a range of bodies including other WAG departments, local authorities, destination management partnerships, industry and trade associations (WAG, 2013), the generation of ‘strategic notions’ about tourism in Wales is far more complex than this. Multiple strategic visions are found in the national Sustainable Tourism Framework (2007); Food For Wales, Food From Wales: food strategy for Wales (2010-20); Cultural Tourism Action Plan, 2012-15; and Event Wales: a major events strategy (2010-2020), all running concurrently,
and each delivering their own particular ‘vision’ of tourism in Wales. A further significant
dimension was identified relating to the support and funding of tourism activities in Wales
through the WAG/EU Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, and the need to demonstrate
adherence to different EU requirements to access this funding, and this is discussed in more
detail later in this chapter.

The mapping exercise also showed that the relationships through which these strategic notions
are delivered is also complex and fluid. Until 2015, the national tourism strategy was delivered in
North Wales by the Tourism Strategy North Wales, 2010-15, produced by Tourism Partnership
North Wales (TPNW), one of a regional ‘layer’ of brokers constituted as public-private sector
partnerships through which a significant proportion of WAG tourism funding was allocated. The
Action Plan for the Tourism Strategy North Wales was therefore an important actor in decisions
about tourism funding priorities in North Wales for this five-year period, and Llangollen is
mentioned specifically in several parts of this Action Plan. Along with the three other regional
tourism partnerships in Wales, TPNW came to an end in September 2014, and was replaced in
January 2015 by the North Wales Tourism Forum, a consultative and networking body with no
responsibility or budget for commissioning projects or allocating funding. This change
represented a significant reordering in the funding of tourism initiatives in North Wales, with the
removal of a major group of brokers from the strategic network, and a major change in the
dominant narrative of networked practice at this level.

The North Wales Regional Tourism Forum was established in 2014 to drive the delivery of the tourism
strategy in the region. The forum meets quarterly to discuss and review tourism developments and to
bring together key stakeholders within the region. (Visit Wales, 2015, emphasis added)

As with TPNW, the North Wales Tourism Forum sits in an essentially hierarchical structure of
governance, and is designed, as the quote indicates, to drive the delivery of the strategy in North
Wales. The pathways and relationships envisaged for this are reflected in the membership of the
Forum, which includes regional and national officers from Visit Wales, members of national
bodies involved in tourism, and the chairs of the North Wales local authority destination
partnerships and the associated local authority tourism officers (but excludes elected local
authority members who were involved in TPNW). Feedback (off the record) from interviews
with some participants involved in the early meetings of this new body suggests that the ‘driving’
metaphor is not entirely welcomed by the destination partnerships, who feel that it fosters a narrative of strategy being ‘handed down’ to ‘stakeholders’, rather than engaging with broker networks in deciding how strategy is delivered.

The Action Plan for Partnership for Growth adopts an approach to tourism marketing based on ‘iconic products’ (WAG, 2013). In 2015 it was decided by Visit Wales that 2016 is the Year of Adventure, 2017 the Year of Legends and 2018 the Year of the Sea. This approach determines dominant tourism marketing narratives and sets priorities for future tourism funding and development, and therefore constitute powerful network narratives as they ‘travel’ through formal networks of policy and practice.

The funding allocation responsibilities of the regional tourism partnerships were absorbed into three national (Welsh) tourism funding bodies, the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF), the Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF), and the Partnership for Growth Fund (P4G), supplemented by the existing Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS) aimed at providing specific tourism business support. Although this new system of funding is in its infancy at the time of writing, it is clear that funding decisions delivered through these bodies are much more closely aligned with the national government tourism strategy than previously, and that the removal of a major actor (TPNW) is changing the power relations of tourism resource allocation, and therefore the relationships of practice within these formal networks.

...everyone knew who everybody was, and everybody knew where the money was located, and we've drifted into this situation where that doesn’t happen anymore, we've got, or we've had TPNW, we've got North East and North West Wales, we've got the different partnerships, and it sounded well, but at the local level there’s quite a misunderstanding of what’s supposed to be going on...[Informant 19, private sector broker]

In particular, it increases competition between local authorities for tourism project funding, and is seen by some as favouring those counties with major tourism projects. In North East Wales, this is seen as negative because of the dominance in the North Wales tourism offer of ‘big’ activity and adventure projects outside the area, such as Zip World (zipworld.co.uk) and Surf Snowdonia (surfsnowdonia.co.uk). There is a fear that the less spectacular forms of adventure represented in the North East Wales offer (and particularly in Llangollen) will be disadvantaged in this competitive environment. The Dee Valley Active group of activity tourism providers (see
Chapter 9) can be seen as a response to this threat, both as a ‘co-competitive’ broker network which can have a louder voice in wider networks, and through the education activities currently under way to enhance the competitiveness of the local ‘adventure’ offer.

It is important to note here that most of the interviews for this study took place before the details of the TPNW reorganisation were announced, so they represent speculation by those interviewed about different courses of action following the end of TPNW, and what new challenges might arise in light of reductions in both domestic and EC budgets for tourism support. However, comments relating to previous experience of strategy implementation suggest that ‘strategic notions’ such as those expressed through the national tourism strategy are significantly diminished by the time we get to the level of specific tourism places. The following quotes from tourism professionals show the difficulty of translating formal strategic notions into practice.

…it’s a really strange one because how we’re selling the products can change from year to year really, or even month to month, depending on what the product is, and things like that...oh, I know you’re talking about ‘this is Wales’ and Llangollen, but it does change depending on what’s the biggest thing at the moment...[Informant 4: Former manager, Llangollen TIC]

Even Visit Wales, they’re bombarding with ‘local, local, local’ all the time... ‘Use local images, use local this...’ You know it’s quite funny because Visit Wales used to be ‘this is your tag line, this is what you do’, and you still have them, but now we’re supposed to evolve them to be more local... [Informant 4]

...they were saying that the focus should be on destinations, but it’s difficult to know what you mean by destination...there are...there’s the destination of Snowdonia...and then within Snowdonia there’s um... for example, Portmeirion...is a destination, you could say...in Snowdonia...and Llangollen is a destination in North East Wales, or in Denbighshire...but it depends how you want to break it down...[Informant 10: senior tourism professional industry body]

...when you go to the seaside you have fish and chips, when you go somewhere else you want something that’s local to the area, or what’s prolific to the area or something, or predominantly Welsh...you know, we have people specifically... looking for cawl, the Welsh soup, particularly for it,
because they’ve read about it, so you know it’s nice that some places now actually are serving it.
[Informant 4]

[NOTE: Cawl is a type of soup or stew, based on lamb and leeks, and originally from south-west Wales (Freeman, 1980). It has been widely adopted as the ‘national dish’ of Wales. Although there is no tradition of eating cawl in North-East Wales, where the equivalent is lobscouse, based on a similar Lancastrian dish, ‘cawl’ is now served in some of Llangollen’s cafes as the ‘national’ dish.]

Jóhannesson (2015: 182) characterises policies as ‘realities in the making’. The above quotes show the multiple realities currently inhabiting strategic notions relating to place branding in Wales. This was clearly highlighted by Pritchard and Morgan (2001), in discussing strategic issues of branding at the national level in Wales. The current strategy, with its focus on product development and ‘place building’ raises further questions about the nature of Wales as an imagined tourism space, and, more importantly, the way this multiplicity impacts the nature of relationships of practice. The quotes above highlight the ontological politics at work in place branding, making some versions of reality ‘more real than others’ (Law, 2004).

Visit Wales has devolved ‘Sense of Place’ to ‘the local’ since 2004, when it produced worksheets for tourism businesses designed to encourage ‘Sense of Place’ thinking by identifying ‘things’ in their local area (they include food, history and heritage, language, the great outdoors or design and decoration) which are ‘uniquely Welsh’ (Visit Wales, 2016b). Despite the longevity of this project, the quotes above also highlight the scope for confused notions of ‘product’ and ‘destination’, and perhaps explain why ‘Where Wales Welcomes the World’ has persisted in Llangollen despite its lack of networked links with any formal strategic notions of place, showing how ‘strategic notions’ can be enacted at any ‘level’ in broker-host networks. We also have here an echo of the ideas discussed in Chapter 2 relating to the role of different brokers in the way destination ‘stories’ are constructed (Moscardo, 2012), and how these can both validate and diminish local identity.

The next section develops the exploration of the Llangollen tourismscape by tracing the internal and external relationships of practice through which these notions are enacted.
10.3 The tourism policy context: relationships in practice

This section looks at the relationships of practice in the formal tourism broker networks which have emerged from the implementation of strategic notions expressed at the national level, shown on the map as a multi-layered landscape which overlays Llangollen as a tourism place (repeated here as Figure 10.1). It examines the multiple realities enacted through the different policy narratives which travel through the broker networks of these formal tourism entities, expressed through their policy documents and through the understandings (elicited through interviews and attendance at consultation sessions) of brokers acting in the networks. It shows how, in addition to the national strategic priorities, other priorities are also adopted and absorbed as networks shift, merge and adapt, blending different strategic notions about how tourism should be performed to align with local needs and politics. It also demonstrates how power is invested in the internal and external relationships of practice between these entities, and asks questions about how power circulates between them through the allocation of funding and other resources.

The main policy narratives relating to each of the four areas on the map as they relate to Llangollen are:

- North East Wales: destination marketing
- Denbighshire: destination management
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): sustainable tourism
- World Heritage Site: conservation and tourism development

These are each discussed below, before a final section in which Llangollen is traced through the resulting broker-host networks.
Figure 10.1  Llangollen tourism areas (Source: Author)
10.3.1 North East Wales: Destination marketing

North East Wales is one of thirteen marketing areas designated by Visit Wales and charged with delivering the regional destination marketing dimension of its tourism strategy, *Partnership for Growth (2013-2020)*. It consists of a strategic public sector marketing partnership between the tourism officers of three local authorities, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. Reflecting the dominant themes of the national strategy, the main emphasis of its marketing policy is on partnerships, ‘place building’ and products.

...it’s a geographical location, but the brochure itself is really more about products...the heritage, countryside, Welsh language, food, drink, those kinds of things... [Informant 9: tourism officer]

The strapline *Altogether Brilliant* was chosen to emphasise the increased value for tourists generated by combining the three counties into one tourism offer. The first North East Wales brochure, *Altogether Fun 2014*, was released in May 2014 during the period of study (featuring, as noted earlier, the Llangollen Railway on its front cover).

The brochure reflects the dynamic and somewhat unstable nature of place building under the new national strategy discussed above. ‘Place’ in this case is about the area – North East Wales – created by the collective positioning of the three local authorities as a ‘landscape of opportunities’ (Visit Wales, 2014). Although the space is ‘named’ as North East Wales, the place being built in this case is predominantly ‘Wales’ and its current brand values – language, culture, history and ‘warmth’ with an emphasis on localism. ‘Welshness’ is delivered through generic ideas about culture, language and food, rather than ‘place’ in any local sense.

As a result of this, Llangollen does not currently have a strong identity in North East Wales marketing. In common with other towns and villages, it ‘floats’ through marketing materials, appearing in different guises depending on the dominant narrative and its relationship with key tourism products. The Railway and the World Heritage Site, identified as iconic attractions (and, as we saw in Chapter 9, forming networks along the Dee Valley which are shifting the network focus away from the town), are given prominence in the brochure, but key attractions such as LIME appear under different headings (in this case under a cultural offering entitled ‘*We don’t do ordinary*’).

The introduction of the new North East Wales brand provided a valuable entry point in the interviews – a ‘situation of novelty’ (Latour, 2005) from which to generate discussion about local
tourism governance, and to highlight significant relationships and absences in broker-host networks. In particular, although the brand is based on a collaborative network involving three local authorities, there is a strong narrative of competition, and particularly an awareness of the brand in relation to other, stronger, brands in North Wales, in the way participants think about the brand:

I do think that the North East Wales brand is a good idea, because when we travel around places, we talk about Denbighshire, and Flintshire, and Wrexham, but nobody knows where they are...everybody knows where Snowdonia is...but if you say North East Wales, people will say ‘I can picture where that is...I don’t know what’s there, but at least I have an idea of where you’re talking about. [Informant 8: tourism provider]

...when we were discussing the marketing area of North East Wales, you know, there were a lot of voices who were saying ‘should we just call ourselves North Wales and all do our marketing together?’...because if you’re living in London, you’re going to say ‘I’m going to North Wales this weekend’, you don’t say ‘I’m going to Wrexham,’...you know, North Wales is just the buzzword, and it’s what people know, isn’t it...but we came to the conclusion let’s go with North [East] Wales because you obviously don’t want to get rid of such a strong brand as Snowdonia, or Visit Anglesey, or Conway, and that would have more negatives than positives really, so I think you know North East Wales is working well for us...the key now is making sure that the businesses in Denbighshire and Flintshire start to kind of get behind the brand now. [Informant 24: tourism officer, emphasis added]

...now it is North East Wales we’ve just got to get behind it and make sure that it works really...[Informant 11: tourism provider, emphasis added]

If North East Wales is our brand, whether you like it or not, that’s where you’ve got to be. [Informant 15: local government tourism officer, emphasis added]

However, the power of the brand to attract gatherings of ideas and brokers is less clear, raising questions about the effectiveness of the strategic notion of ‘place building’ discussed in the previous section. A number of participants, particularly in local government, noted the absence of networked relationships around the brand:

...there’s no actual forum for North East Wales...it’s about a brochure at the moment...that’s my view from the outside...I am on the outside...which committee do you go to? [Informant 15: public sector]

I can’t see one thing that’s bringing these three together to market them as North East Wales, there’s no one single destination management document bringing North East Wales together...there’s no real strategy, which surprises me really...[Informant 16: public sector broker]
...I think the tourist aspect of North East Wales is always an add-on to local authority officers...there isn’t one North East Wales officer who pulls it all together...(Informant 15: public sector broker)

...as long as those people at the top of each of those groups are constantly talking to each other, then it must benefit everybody, and those three groups annually could come together, although they come together each month...that’s how I would imagine it would go....[Informant 8: tourism provider, activity]

It is also possible that much of the perceived strength of the brand among tourism brokers in the area, both public and private sector, lies in the fact that it is a potential conduit for funding through the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund. The following interview took place before the announcement of the new funding arrangements discussed in the previous section, but it indicates how power relationships can shift in and between networks when the allocation of resources is involved.

At the moment we put a bid in as a marketing area, and we imagine that that would be the same....so it would be a combined... It’s very complicated, because we have two...when we do a bid to TPNW, we have...marketing is done as North East Wales, but destination management is done on a county by county basis...so it’s very confusing I think for everybody ...[Informant 9: tourism officer]

There are therefore a number of issues which seem to work against the formation of stable networks of brokers around the brand. The confusion shown in the quote above, caused by the multiple realities being enacted in overlapping and contradictory networks, is one factor (discussed in more detail in the next section). Although, as suggested by some of the earlier quotes, there is a broadly favourable perception of the new brand, the dominant narrative of ‘we must get behind it’ shown in the quotes above, is still a work in progress, particularly in Llangollen.

Several participants suggested that in some respects the three counties are competing as well as collaborating within the network, and that this is reflected in strategic as well as practical concerns:

... the strategy sometimes is that...you want to convince someone that...you’ve got to trust each other’s county as well...that if they go to the World Heritage Site, that Wrexham will want everyone to go to Wrexham won’t they, but I want them to go to Llangollen or up the Dee Valley, yes? ...but then people don’t realise where they are...Denbighshire or Flintshire, they just come and visit Wales, so
what you’ve got to do is identify specific towns and specific areas in your plan without them feeling that they haven’t left anywhere…make sure they’re in Wales, but actually subtly get them to come to Denbighshire without them realising that they’re here! [Informant 18: local politician/elected member]

This is also reflected in relationships of practice. Although Wrexham has fewer tourism assets and a very limited track record as a tourism place, it has recently been positioned as the focal point of the new brand, with the initiation of a successful Tourism Ambassador programme, a public-private sector network which has succeeded in enrolling previously reluctant local businesses from throughout the region, including representatives of Llangollen businesses.

Developing from a primarily marketing role, this local initiative merges into practice, offering training, networking and a range of benefits to tourism businesses which gives it a competitive edge in some aspects of the strategy, in return for which members agree to collect and submit tourism data to the partnership. By late 2015, the Wrexham Ambassador scheme had been translated into a collaborative North East Wales Tourism Ambassadors scheme, showing how the designation of a marketing area can generate internal relationships of practice between competing brokers, mediated by an individual with a strong sense of purpose.

10.3.2 Denbighshire: Destination management

A planned approach to destination management in Wales allows local tourism communities to decide what is most important to put in place to maximise visitor satisfaction and to stimulate local support for tourism. (Welsh Assembly Government, 2013: 24, emphasis added)

Denbighshire (blue on the map), the local authority in which Llangollen is currently located, has a designated tourism broker role as one of the three members of the North East Wales tourism marketing partnership, but it also has responsibility, as specified in the national strategy, for destination management. This role, as defined above, comprises two activities – ‘maximising visitor satisfaction’ and ‘stimulating local support for tourism’ - which we can also characterise as broker-host practices located in the ‘backstage’ area of tourism.

This, then, is the body officially recognised (as in the Locum document) as ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’. However, we have already seen in Chapter 9 that destination management is not present as a function in the governance of Llangollen, and we can
also see here that the destination in question here is Denbighshire, or perhaps even North-East Wales. So can we identify relationships of destination management practice which will show the existence of an effective broker-host network in fulfilling this role in Llangollen itself?

Tourism in Denbighshire is covered in two major planning documents, the *Economic and Community Ambition Strategy* (2013-17) and the *Local Development Strategy* (2014-20) which define the external relationships of practice for tourism in the borough. These provide the pathways through which economic planning takes place in the county, and are the strategic ‘parents’ of the local Town and Area Plans through which local authority funding is allocated (Chapter 9). Strategic notions about tourism within the county therefore reside within non-touristic networks of brokers whose practices are shaped by its non-statutory status in terms of local authority funding, and its potential for contribution to employment in economically marginal coastal and rural communities.

...the ECA Strategy in a nutshell could be summed up as Jobs, Growth and the Attractiveness of Denbighshire, and that could be for visitors, that could be for residents, that could be for business...

[Informant 9: local authority tourism officer]

Perhaps reflecting its non-statutory status, these networks of practice within the local authority do not prioritise tourism. The strategic notion highlighted in the quote at the start of this section privileges the role of local communities in destination management, but we have seen the low priority of tourism in the Llangollen Town Plan discussed in Chapter 9. So where are the networks and relationships which would enable this strategic recommendation to be implemented?

During the period of this study, the small Denbighshire Marketing and Events team produced and launched three tourism planning documents, the *Destination Management Plan* (DMP) (2014), the *Events Strategy* (2014) and the *Tourism Growth Plan* (2015). Llangollen itself (along with other specific tourism places) is absent from all three documents, although the Eisteddfod is mentioned as a model for future development in the *Events Strategy*. However, the DMP recognises the need to engage and create functioning relationships, both with other parts of the council and with members of local communities. The DMP is to be delivered within Denbighshire through an executive Steering Group consisting of senior council officers from different departments (Highways, Countryside Services, Business Development) – the ‘people’ mentioned in the quote below - working alongside leading members of the business community.
...the Destination Management Plan is about getting tourism-related things onto people’s agendas...an aim to really co-ordinate activity and to make sure that tourism influences that activity as much as it possibly can... [Informant 9: local authority tourism officer]

Internal and external relationships of tourism practice are fostered through the Destination Denbighshire Partnership, established through the DMP in 2015. The Partnership is a public-private sector partnership of brokers, including elected members, senior professionals and selected members of the business community, and has an advisory role in the delivery of destination management in the county. As we have seen, the Partnership is also represented on the North Wales Tourism Forum as a conduit for the delivery of the national strategy. This represents an ‘external’ relationship of practice. Its ‘internal’ relationships are focused on the Denbighshire Tourism Forum, an established public-private sector body which performs some of the functions of a tourism association, but is not constituted as such. Attendance at Forum meetings during fieldwork highlighted the difficulty in sustaining a network which requires that private sector actors, many of them small tourism businesses, participate voluntarily in destination management activities for an area as large as a rural county.

Although Llangollen-based businesses participate in the Forum, and are also represented on the Partnership, there is a gap between the work of these formal tourism bodies and the local authority mechanisms for tourism funding. The DMP explicitly prioritises the importance of effective alliances between the DMP and the Town and Area Plans:

...one of the things we’ve really focused on in our Destination Management Plan is the relationship of the Destination Management Plan to the Town Plans, so... I’m meeting all of the Town Champions, those are local politicians who as the name would suggest are the champions for their town and area, and I’m talking to them about the Destination Management Plan and its relationship to the Town and Area Plans...[Informant 9: tourism officer]

We have already noted the absence of tourism issues from these Plans in Chapter 9, and the Denbighshire Business Development officers responsible for the Llangollen Town Plan had, at the time of interview, no evidence of the two teams working together to implement the DMP through the Town Plans.

This quote also pinpoints the significant mediating role of elected local (county) councillors in the various networks through which tourism issues could be pursued at the level of an individual tourism place. As shown in Chapter 9, formal networks are in place to achieve these
connections, but the effectiveness of the network in relation to tourism depends on the interests of the local member concerned. In the case of Llangollen, the relevant local member (the Town Champion identified in the previous quote) did not emerge as a significant actor in the ‘following’ process, although he was on the list of potential participants drawn up at the start of the project, and refused to participate in the study, possibly reflecting priorities which do not include tourism issues at the local level.

Alongside these formal destination management responsibilities, Denbighshire also carries out marketing activities for the county as a destination, reflecting the sometimes-competitive nature of the North East Wales marketing partnership. As a local authority, Denbighshire has, over the years, been a conduit for funding under various different schemes broadly related to EU rural development policies (part of the Common Agricultural Policy). Some of this money has been channelled into digital marketing initiatives which have seen the development of various websites and apps which focus on tourism in the county. Many of these projects have tended to be short-lived, and to lapse once the project funding period ends. The most recent, Digital Denbighshire, provides suggestions for tourism activities at different points throughout the county, including Llangollen (http://www.digitaldenbighshire.co.uk/place/Llangollen).

Positioning the county is complex:

...we are aiming I suppose at a certain type of market, so we would be looking at maybe...bearing in mind what we have...possibly more family-friendly kind of environment in terms of the...though we have lots of...I mean we don’t want to get stuck in one kind of particular group...families are a market that are important to us...we have coast, we have countryside, we have fairly gentle countryside...so that doesn’t exclude family groups. We do have a certain amount of adventure as well, we want to talk it up, so we have Llandegla mountain biking, all the physical activities that are in Llangollen...so we’re not saying we haven’t got anything like that, we’re saying that we may be more of an educational, starter type of county, that maybe the images in there reflect that a bit more. We want to show that we have a certain sense of adventure, we’re not at the same time saying that we’re maybe trying to compete with Snowdonia...which is more full on...[Informant 9: local government tourism officer]

This view does not necessarily tie in with the aspirations of the adventure industry in Llangollen (Chapter 9). It also pre-dates the announcement of the Visit Wales Themed Years initiative mentioned above, which will see the Llangollen activity offer packaged together with the very competitors from which Destination Denbighshire seeks to distinguish itself. A further layer of
complexity in promoting adventure sports in the area is introduced through the sustainability narratives of the Protected Area status of much of the county, and this is discussed in the next section.

10.3.3 Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB: Sustainable tourism

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (pink on the map) is largely in Denbighshire, but also covers parts of Flintshire and a small area of Wrexham. The AONB is mainly funded through the EU Rural Development Plan, administered by the Rural Development Agency Cadwyn Clwyd. The role of Cadwyn Clwyd as a tourism actor is discussed further below.

As a Protected Landscape, the AONB has no explicit brief relating to tourism, but its focus on landscape conservation, farming and sustainable rural business clearly has implications for tourism in the area. In pursuit of its conservation role, the AONB is linked with other protected landscapes in the UK. It also holds a EUROPARC Charter designation (Europarc.org), which conveys further strategic functions relating to Protected Landscapes, and to sustainable tourism in particular. This requires it to maintain a Sustainable Tourism Strategy (latest version 2015).

... we have a remit to ensure that tourism doesn’t impact too greatly on natural beauty...but...we also have a remit to ensure that the AONB designation is relevant to the local economy, to health and wellbeing, and all that kind of thing...so we have this dual role...we don’t have a tourism remit, but obviously the AONB needs to be relevant to...you know...and obviously tourism businesses were very supportive of the AONB designation because, you know, that’s what they’re selling, isn’t it, natural beauty. That’s what brings people here, isn’t it? [Informant 14: public sector broker]

Llangollen became part of the AONB in 2011, following a period of consultation, when the Dee Valley was added to the Clwydian Range AONB, more than doubling the former area. The expanded AONB occupies a distinctive position in the tourism landscape in North East Wales, in that it now contains the core of the rural tourism offer of all three counties. The expanded area also brought the World Heritage Site (see 10.3.4 below) within its boundaries. The expansion brought significant tourism-related challenges, many of them related to the ‘entanglements’ introduced by the inclusion of Llangollen. The previous area was entirely rural,
with a tourism offer based on the natural and historical assets of the Clwydian Range and an emerging focus on local food. However, the strength of the tourism offer in Llangollen was seen by some as potentially damaging to the lesser-known attractions further north, and the focus on conservation brought Llangollen’s ‘honeypot’ issues to the fore.

The AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2015 shows the network power of Llangollen as a tourism actor. The strategy identifies Llangollen as both a strength and a challenge for the AONB. As the only town within the Protected Area, the strategy identifies issues with its accommodation offer, and uses the same narrative as the Locum Plan in noting the fragility of some of its businesses and the poor quality of aspects of its public realm. However, it recognises the value of its established attractions, and in particular notes its potential for attracting new categories of tourists to the area, both in relation to the Visit Wales Year of Adventure and to the World Heritage Site (see below). In addition, it notes issues of landscape quality in some of the more popular activity tourism locations in the Llangollen area, advocating restriction and management in pursuit of its conservation agenda, which is potentially at odds with plans afoot in other networks to develop this sector.

Before its enlargement in 2011, the AONB had a history of successful tourism initiatives through EU funding initiatives relating especially to the development of self-sufficient ‘communities’ of tourism practice involving networks of small businesses in the tourism sector (details removed due to lack of space). It therefore has an important potential role in consolidating and coordinating Llangollen’s tourism, bringing together some of the marketing and management networks which are currently fragmented through the divisive nature of tourism governance in the area. In particular, it is an important mediator in aligning funding and management around the Dee Valley as an emergent destination, providing resources for a range of initiatives discussed in earlier chapters, including support for the Llangollen Railway through the development of a new station at Corwen, for the Dee Valley Active group of tourism providers in the form of a new local guide qualification, and funding and facilitating an arbitration role in long-running issues relating to river use on the Dee by activity sports and fishermen.

Relationships within the AONB are also mediated by Cadwyn Clwyd, a Rural Development Agency which works on behalf of the three North East Wales counties to administer a range of grant applications, including the latest round of EU/WAG Rural Development Plan funding under the EU LEADER scheme. LEADER stands for ‘Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économique Rurale’, which translates as ‘Links between the rural economy and development
actions' (Cadwyn Clwyd, 2016). Through earlier phases of the Rural Development Plan, LEADER has provided funding for several tourism initiatives, including the Llangollen Food Festival which, after several years of support and funding is now reaching self-sufficiency. The previous Plan also funded a report on tourism development in Corwen.

A new tranche of money through the EU LEADER scheme, around £6.6 million over the three counties, was approved in May 2015. This seven-year phase does not contain explicit tourism initiatives, but invites applications for funding under five themes (Cadwyn Clwyd, 2016):

1) Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources
2) Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
3) Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
4) Renewable energy at community level
5) Exploitation of digital technology

The Denbighshire Local Development Strategy (2014-2020), which commenced in January 2015, also proposes LEADER funding around these themes, reflecting a set of strategic notions about tourism which are largely related to landscape conservation and support for rural businesses, including tourism businesses. Cadwyn Clwyd is currently inviting bids from a range of groups and individuals, with a focus on ‘community groups’. Proposed projects:

…must make a contribution towards jobs and growth and should contribute towards tackling poverty in the rural area... (Cadwyn Clwyd, 2016)

Proposals for tourism initiatives in Denbighshire under this strategy, particularly in relation to the first two themes, privilege the central role of the AONB, and highlight the importance of collaborative working with all three councils. It is important to note that at the time of writing, Llangollen itself has not been able to apply for this funding because of the absence (discussed in Chapter 9) of an effective broker network through which to channel a bid.

Cadwyn Clwyd has recently (2015) merged with a neighbouring development agency, bringing rural parts of the county of Wrexham into its area, and this has provided an opportunity to apply for funding for the World Heritage Site, most of which now falls within its boundaries. This is the final strategy actor explored in this study, and is the subject of the next section.
10.3.4 UNESCO World Heritage Site: Conservation and tourism development

The area shown in yellow on the map, now regarded by policy makers at all levels as the most important single tourism resource in North East Wales, represents an actor-network in which a number of non-human actors are assembled as a tourism ‘thing’ under the strategic narrative of the UNESCO system for recognition of significant sites. The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS covers an area some 11 miles (18km) long, over three counties, Denbighshire, Wrexham and the English county of Shropshire. Its key asset, Thomas Telford’s famous aqueduct, lies in the county of Wrexham, and the remainder, traditionally known as the Llangollen Canal, lies within both Denbighshire and the AONB. The canal in Llangollen has been a tourist attraction since Victorian times, and horse-drawn Canal Boat day trips over the Aqueduct are now a major attraction in the town in terms of numbers.

However, we can again see tensions between competitive and collaborative networks, as the WHS is seen first and foremost as the key asset in Wrexham’s tourism offer. The site is currently run by the Canal and River Trust, an independent UK-based charity, and managed by a Steering Group which includes local authority tourism officers and elected members as well as representatives of different interests in the area. No funding is attached to the UNESCO designation, and the Wrexham (aqueduct) section of the site lies within an area of social and economic deprivation. Tourism marketing positions the aqueduct as an iconic attraction (both in Visit Wales at the national level, and by North East Wales). The fact that the Aqueduct itself is in Wrexham has meant that the Llangollen section of the site, and the town of Llangollen itself, has been largely absent from the dominant marketing narratives in relation to the site, and the Locum Report noted:

Llangollen would benefit from much closer association with the World Heritage Site designation and the implications of quality that are implicit within it. Consideration should be given to redefining and designing the Llangollen brand to incorporate reference to the WHS canal and every opportunity should be taken to promote this. Ultimately, the name Llangollen should aim to become synonymous with the World Heritage Site. (Locum Report, 2011: 8)

Although Llangollen has a national profile as a focus for canal boat holidays, a durable role within the WHS has not yet been identified for the town, a factor which is again largely attributable to its lack of local networks, and to the fractured nature of WHS funding, which comes from three different local authority sources. Funding has been made available through the AONB/Cadwyn Clwyd for signage and other improvements in the Llangollen Canal section of
the site, but this has not been carried through to other sections, so there is no uniformity of signage and interpretation across the site.

The WHS is unique in that it is identified in strategy and policy from all the bodies discussed in this chapter as of importance.

...we've got a conflict because [of] the World Heritage Site being in Wrexham, Llan in Denbighshire [this is local perception of how it does or doesn’t work] but I actually questioned...how Wrexham worked with Denbighshire and other interested parties, but ... they tried to persuade us that they are working together, but all their suggestions seemed to push their own local authority...their own agenda...[Informant 13: resident]

This section has examined in detail the different ways key policy actors and their narratives perform tourism in the area, and shows how Llangollen is ‘entangled’ in all these policy narratives. It highlights gaps in the networks of hosting which result in absences, particularly in relation to Llangollen as a ‘host community’, which would not be evident from a conventional analysis of policy and practice. By mapping tourism strategy and its implementation in Wales, it has shown how ‘strategic notions about how tourism should be performed’ exist through all ‘levels’ of tourism policy and practice, from the local to the national and international. It has also shown how the interplay between the multiple realities enacted in this landscape of governance can cause internal and external relationships of practice to become confused, and in some cases break down altogether.

The next section returns again to Llangollen, providing an overview of these entanglements, identifying durable networks and absences which are reflected in issues of identity, branding and power in broker-host networks.

10.4 Tracing ‘Llangollen’

...by 2012 Llangollen will have been supported in its role as an important tourism hub through the protection and enhancement of the town and it’s wider environment. (Denbighshire Local Development Plan 2006-20: 6)

...major regeneration projects are vital to boost the economy, project [sic] such as the extension of the Llangollen Railway into Corwen and economic benefits resulting from the World Heritage site
nomination (UNESCO) in Llangollen. These are projects are [sic] of vital importance, not only in terms of developing the tourism offer but these major regeneration projects will reflect a general growth in confidence in the local area and provide a significant boost to the area’s prosperity. (Rural Denbighshire Local Development Strategy 2007-13: 29)

...I think there’s opportunities in Llangollen, and the opportunity that’s there is the accommodation and the activities and the attractions work together, because it’s one town in the valley there, which lends itself to a working together...[Informant 10: senior private sector broker]

The storyline developed from these materials shows Llangollen as a contested site in terms of governance and funding, and a contested space in terms of policy and practice. The previous sections of this chapter have described the tracing of policy narratives and their networks in the landscape of tourism policy and practice as it relates to Llangollen. In combination with the previous chapter, it therefore chronicles a search for a network constituting ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’ in the current landscape of governance.

Perhaps the most important point to note is that in terms of strategy, Llangollen is not seen as a destination, so none of the policy narratives relating to the layers of policy shown in the map and discussed above construct Llangollen as such. Indeed, it could be argued that the dominant strategy narratives seek to spread the benefits of tourism throughout the region/county, with no emphasis on developing the offer in Llangollen itself. In policy terms, there are therefore no ‘gatherings’ of tourism ideas around Llangollen, and it is difficult to find any examples of the implementation of either of the two strategic actions provided in the first two quotes above. Yet as we have seen, it is still performed as a tourism place with its own identity and brand.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the translations which accompany change cause networks to become durable. Thus, we saw in Chapter 9 the changes which have gathered around the ideas of Cittaslow, which were congruent with the way the town saw itself, thereby enrolling the support which enabled the accreditation to be achieved. The local networks produced through relationships around the changing employment in the town, the fear of over-dependence on tourism jobs, and the issues around the proposed supermarket demonstrate resistance to further tourism development in the town. Local residents have a clear understanding that making Llangollen a better place to live conflicts in many ways with further tourism development, resulting in a passive resistance to engagement with tourism. This has resulted in significant
absences which prevent the formation of durable networks of tourism hosting in the town, particularly the low profile given to tourism issues in both the public sector (through the Town Plan) and the private sector (through the LCTT). Paradoxically, we have also seen the strength of the tourism branding ‘Where Wales Welcomes the World’ in the identity of the local community, which retains an almost iconic status despite the progressive and continuous weakening of the town’s links with the Eisteddfod, and a reduction in the strengths of the relationships between the festival and the town.

Despite these absences, there are successful and expanding tourism initiatives, in particular the growth of different festivals in the town, which can be seen as generating networks of association. Although LIME itself is largely absent from the networks discussed earlier in this chapter, new initiatives including the Food Festival and the Walking Festival (both recently supported by Cadwyn Clwyd but now becoming self-sufficient), and the Fringe Festival are well-established. By tracing the links of the railway, we have also been able to identify a reordering which is producing a new destination, the Dee Valley, and we have seen in this final section of narrative that this new destination is also evident in both formal and informal networks through the AONB and the WHS. We have also seen the contribution of public-private sector partnerships through the emergence of specific groups of brokers in collaborative ventures, in particular the Dee Valley Active group of activity and adventure tourism providers supported by the AONB and funding through Cadwyn Clwyd.

This study suggests that the role of host is emergent through the relationships between different groups of brokers, so we can return to the ANT concept at the heart of the study:

…the small is being unconnected, the big one is to be attached. (Latour, 2005: 180).

Is Llangollen ‘attached’? This study suggests that it has only minimal internal and external relationships of practice with the wider networks of hosting. So we can ask why and how Llangollen, as an established tourism ‘place’, has become ‘small’ in this context?

The lack of ‘attachment’ in formal networks is also evident in other ways. We have seen earlier the lack of enrolment of accommodation providers in the ‘official’ networks of hosting (specifically in not engaging with the Visit Wales accreditation scheme and therefore not being ‘sold’ through the TIC, preferring as individual businesses to engage with booking.com, Airbnb and Trip Advisor). Llangollen itself has also failed to apply for funding for various digital initiatives which could have boosted its online presence, although, as noted above, the
development of digital technologies in rural areas has been a key theme of EU funding for a number of years.

We can also see that despite the existence of formal structures through which Llangollen could become a significant actor in policy networks, the town and its representatives are not fully enrolled in the webs of productive power which would give them access to funding for tourism project development. Network power is here seen as repressive, creating narratives which exclude rather than include. Observation, interview and policy documents highlight the dominant narrative of fragility of local networks, of the ‘problematic’ nature of the town as a ‘honeypot’ and the declining nature of its tourism market, rendering Llangollen absent from the ‘ordering moment’ (see opening quote by van der Ploeg, 2003) through which the future of its tourism activities will be shaped.

10.5 Discussion: Hosting relationships in practice

Tourismscapes do not endure by themselves but need constant enactment, maintenance and repair. (Jóhannesson et al, 2012:167)

What does network durability mean and how do we recognise it? The storylines provided in Chapters 7-10 are underpinned by a narrative of fluidity and change, of broker-host networks being assembled and made durable, breaking down, being repaired or disappearing. Rather than providing a snapshot of the policy landscape at a particular point in time, the narrative therefore describes a continuously changing image of backstage broker-host networks. The map (Figure 10.1) shows that although Llangollen itself is not seen in as a destination by formal brokers involved in tourism management, it is entangled in several destinations which are continuously generating new broker-host networks and narratives.

By ‘following’ different human and non-human actors over an 18-month period between April 2014 and September 2015, the following changes, featured in the above storylines, were observed:

- **Ordering of tourism in Llangollen:** the significant point of passage in the railway reaching Corwen, acting as a point around which emergent destination Dee Valley coalesces, drawing in new actors both in the towns up the valley and in the policy networks such as Denbighshire, Cadwyn Clwyd and the AONB.
• **Regional branding**: the role of the new North East Wales marketing area, both as a brand and as a vehicle for delivering the national tourism strategy and its underpinning narratives, and the availability of funding to support this.

• **Strategic notions at the policy level**: the introduction of the ‘Year of…’ initiative at national level, the rebranding of the World Heritage Site, and the wider focus on the North East Wales brand. These reflect the workings of strategic notions which prioritise the WHS as an iconic attraction, and conceptualise ‘Wales’ as a product delivered through thirteen different marketing areas.

• **Local issues acting as ‘tokens’ in network formation**: the perceived threat of the new supermarket, the closure of the print works, the threats to the High Street show the importance of key issues and narratives, as well as the role of ‘absent’ actors in the establishment of durable networks.

• **Changes in the webs of tourism governance**: the significant reordering of tourism funding following the closure of TPNW, and the launch of the North Wales Tourism Forum, resulting in changed relationships of collaboration and competition among various different brokers, and through this a shift in the locus of power from the local to the national.

• **The publication of new policy and strategy documents**: the Denbighshire Destination Management Plan and Tourism Growth Plan, the AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy, acting as points of passage for key strategic ideas about tourism in the area, and setting up internal and external relationships of practice with other tourism brokers.

• **Moves towards partnership and collaboration**: the implementation of the ‘partnership’ element of the Wales Tourism Strategy through the establishment of the Denbighshire Tourism Partnership and the launching of the North East Wales Tourism Ambassador Scheme

• **Destination evolution**: the emergence of new networks around the Dee Valley, in particular focused on the change in the area served by the Regional Development Fund, Cadwyn Clwyd, to include the World Heritage Site, and the attraction of funding and networks to this as a major attraction.

We can also add the fact that of the 30 participants interviewed in this study, seven had changed jobs by the end of the fieldwork period.

Is this level of fluidity in tourism networks exceptional or even unusual? Stevenson *et al.*, (2008), in their case study of the tourism policy-making environment in Leeds, UK, using data collected
before the economic downturn of 2008, suggest that ‘turbulence’ and ‘complexity’ in the policy environment are the outcome of a particular set of circumstances which arose from the introduction of a ‘modernising’ or neoliberal approach to tourism governance. However, more recent (post-recession) authors (e.g. Dredge and Jenkins, 2011; Volgger and Pechlaner, 2015) argue that dynamism and fluidity are central attributes of tourism networks, and that the ‘scarcity of dynamic analyses of tourism networks and their governance’ is something that needs to be addressed (Volgger and Pechlaner, 2015: 307).

This chapter also shows how formal strategies can lead to the ‘normalising’ of certain narratives (Hollinshead and Hou, 2013) at the strategic level. We see, for example, how the reordered funding structure for tourism in Wales has reduced the local power of network actors in determining the allocation of funding resources, so that the power of local authority brokers to negotiate and shape the way tourism is produced is shaped by normalising funding and marketing narratives generated by the national destination management body. We can also see that other strategic ideas, including ‘localism’ and ‘partnership’ can cause controversies in destination management where different narratives overlap and disrupt the formation of effective relationships of practice (shown by the overlapping and contrasting destination narratives of the four destination bodies shown in the map in Figure 10.1). The strategic focus on product development, expressed through the national marketing campaigns associated with the ‘Year of…’ also brings into question issues of identity at the local level, and highlights the difficulty of translating strategic notions into effective relationships of practice.

Although we find a partnership narrative through policy at all levels, the way this is interpreted, and how it works in practice is less clear. The lack of clarity around what the destination partnerships are there to achieve makes it difficult to enrol private sector brokers (tourism providers) in voluntary networks which are seen as the route to effective destination management by the strategy. We can also see the operation of both productive and repressive forms of power through the ‘normalising’ of management and branding narratives of the national DMO, and particularly through the ‘Year of…’ policy, which does not, at the time of writing, translate into meaningful relationships of practice at the regional, and even more so at the local level.

We have seen in this study that within this landscape of fluctuating webs of policy and practice, Llangollen remains a durable tourism place, continuing to be performed as a ‘honeypot’ despite
the absence of functioning links with the formal networks of practice. We have also seen that actors in these networks can perform multiple roles, across different ‘levels’, including voluntary and unpaid activities which can mediate the performance of tourism, challenging the notion of stakeholders as fixed actors with single and unvarying standpoints. It is also suggested that this can explored further by investigating the role of non-human actors – tourism assets which have been attractions since the early nineteenth century and the associations around them which continue to be performed through adjustment and repair of the webs of brokers which have developed around them.

The narrative also describes how the context of tourism provision extends beyond the ‘local’ in many ways, with connections between networked groups of actors ‘floating’ independent of place, and how effective networks which succeed in getting people to work together in communities of practice with shared goals can coalesce around non-human actors, such as the railway, the WHS and the Dee Valley. These can assume a dominant role through the attraction of gatherings of ‘strategic’ ideas, funding and the resultant relationships of practice which emerge. It also shows how funding defines the power relationships through which choices about tourism marketing and management are made in broker networks, and how the ordering relationships of tourism hosting are constantly made and remade through these networks.

We can therefore challenge how strategic notions around identity are translated through into relationships of practice. Although the new destination marketing arrangements are in their infancy, we can ask questions about how actors are enrolled, and what happens to those actors who are excluded from these networks? Stevenson et al (2008) suggest in their findings that strategy becomes irrelevant at the local level, and that the work of tourism policy-making and governance takes place ‘below’ this level. But we can see here that the ‘communities of practice’ emerging around branding and the allocation of resources, communities which are seen as expanding through the ambassador scheme, and through access to the Visit Wales ‘Themed Years’, have the power to exclude particular tourism places, even one as established as Llangollen.

As a tourism place, Llangollen is therefore barely visible in the formal networks of practice, yet some of its assets are identified as key actors in evolving destination networks. In particular, the World Heritage Site is now a powerful actor, recognised nationally as a site of global significance, and performed as such as the relationships of funding allocation fall into place through the
alignment of governance structures and narratives. This is largely taking place through the co-ordinating role played by the AONB in attracting the much-needed funding from Visit Wales, the EC Rural Development Plan, and Cadwyn Clwyd to develop this as a key tourism asset. We have also seen the mobility of tourism networks as they enrol and move on from different places, with the potential to act to the further detriment of Llangollen as they focus on ‘big’ projects in other places. This is particularly the case in the area of its greatest potential growth, activity tourism, where relationships between local activity providers, and with other providers outside the area, are in their infancy, positioning them poorly to benefit from Year of Adventure initiatives in 2016.

So how do the networks of hosting ‘visit’ a place? What renders tourism places durable as the networks move around? What happens if they go away, attracted elsewhere through national and regional marketing strategies which focus resources on ‘bigger’ assets elsewhere? In this example, it would appear that a broker-host network is emerging through the active mediation, and the creation of internal and external relationships of hosting forming networks around the theme of activity holidays coalescing around the emergent destination ‘Dee Valley’ - a collaborative network supported by management input and funding. As we have seen, formal brokers exist in the Dee Valley (for example, the BAG) which could support this emergent network, but the challenging relationship between the two main towns in the valley acts against collaborative working between brokers in the two.

10.6 Conclusion

Jóhannesson (2015: 182) suggests that policy making is ‘a process of improvisation that continually encompasses the entanglement of human and more-than-human encounters’, a position which is supported by many aspects of this study. This final chapter has brought together material from interviews, participation and observation, alongside a large body of policy literature, into a storyline which describes in detail a landscape of tourism policy dominated by the concept of ‘destination’. Developing the ideas of Bærenholdt et al (2004) it shows how a multiplicity of destination concepts and their related brand values and narratives order the landscape of tourism governance in a particular tourism place. It also shows how, through their associated mediation of resource allocation and use, these have the potential to exclude as well as
include particular tourism places, highlighting both productive and repressive aspects of power in these networks.

Tracing ‘Llangollen’ as a token through this landscape of tourism governance shows how the town is both entangled with and absent from these networks, each of which brings a different and sometimes contradictory set of ‘strategic notions about how tourism should be performed’ in the town. Despite its geographic location in all four of the ‘destinations’ covered in this chapter, no single body was found through which strategic, internal and external ordering produce ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’, thus challenging the way destination management is done in the context of a small but well-established tourism place.

However, despite the absence of formal destination management practices in Llangollen, it is possible, as we have seen in earlier chapters, to identify broker-host networks involving human and non-human actors which constitute ‘host communities’ of tourism practice. While absent in many ways as network actors from Llangollen itself, these communities of practice can be seen as networks around non-human actors such as attractions, events and brands which can be traced from Llangollen into networks which travel in different and multiple directions through internal and external relationships of practice. These networks are characterised by fluidity, highlighted by the ongoing processes of change throughout and beyond the fieldwork period.

The number of policy and planning issues which emerged towards the end of the period highlights the difficulty of ‘cutting’ the network in an ANT study, and the need for a longitudinal perspective on the performance of host.

The narratives also showed absences in the internal and external relationships of practice within this landscape, absences which would not be evident from a more ‘structural’ point of view. However, the use of the broker-host concept enables us to see that the presence of ‘mess’, fluidity and absence evident throughout the policy and planning landscape do not prevent tourism hosting from taking place independently of these structures, through a focus on how those multiple ‘realities in the making’ shape the performance of host in tourism.
Chapter 11

CONCLUSION: RE-CONCEPTUALISING THE HOST – POLICY, PRACTICE AND POWER IN BROKER-HOST NETWORKS

The ordering metaphor helps us to see tourism as a network that is dynamic: it constantly maps, translates, joins, connects, aesthetises, exchanges, enrols, hosts and courts. (Franklin, 2012: 46, emphasis added)

…research should be undertaken to understand the networks, communications and interactions surrounding policy and to develop theory that takes account of the experiences and views of those involved in the process. (Stevenson et al, 2008: 744)

11.1 Introduction

This study has proposed a re-conceptualisation of the host, one of tourism’s key sensitising concepts. Sensitising concepts do not define, but rather ‘suggest directions along which to look’ (Blumer, 1954:7), and their value in exploring a subject depends on the extent to which they can help us develop our understanding of the subject, and make sense of the materials we collect (Bowen, 2006). The decision to focus on the concept of host in this study was therefore made with the aim of highlighting the value of re-examining a familiar concept using actor-network thinking, and asking whether and how this can provide new insights into how tourism ‘works’ using an explanation-building analytical framework within a case study design.

This study therefore had the following objectives:

1) To critique the concept of host by exploring how different understandings of the nature of host underpin practice in the production of tourism.
2) To adopt ideas from actor-network theory to critique the different roles of tourism brokers and the dynamic nature of broker relationships in the performance of host.
3) To investigate the nature of identity and power as effects in forms of mediation occurring within broker relationships
4) To use these ideas to develop a conceptual framework based on broker-host networks
5) To use this framework empirically to explore new theoretical insights relating to the tourism host.
This final chapter shows how these objectives have been achieved in this study by using a new theoretical framework which tells a particular ‘story’ about the tourism host (Figure 4.3). It shows how the materials elicited during fieldwork using a research design based on this conceptual framework produce a new understanding of ‘host’ which has the potential to inform future research in several important ways. It also draws together some key methodological issues which arose during this study, and which were themselves ‘followed’ to produce an original contribution to the methodological literature as a further outcome of this study.

11.2 The host as ordering: applying the conceptual framework

Reflecting the quote by Franklin (2012) used in the Introduction to this thesis, this study argues that the tourism host, rather than being situated in binary opposition to ‘guest’ in a particular place, society or culture, is performed in actor-networks in which the everyday lives of people living in tourism places combine with the policies and practices generated in the ‘backstage’ of tourism production to co-create tourism ‘places’. The use of ANT provides a means of describing how these combinations are negotiated, performed and maintained, and shows how tourism is ordered through these networks of hosting.

The host is therefore constructed in this study as a broker-host network, a hybrid of the concepts of ‘broker’ and ‘host’ discussed in Chapters 2-4, produced through actor-network theory, consisting of people, things and discourses operating within tourism to perform the role of host. Using the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 4, broker-host networks, seen as entities which are generated and maintained through processes of ordering and mediation, produce effects which include identity, power, and tourism itself. Mediation in this sense involves the continuous performances by people and things which enable particular orderings to be sustained. Identifying processes of mediation within these networks therefore enables different actors to be ‘followed’ through a series of translations which generate and maintain the actor-networks of tourism hosting.

This theoretical framework was applied empirically using a case study designed to show the working of broker-host networks in practice. ‘Following the actors’ involves finding out how actors are shaped by assembled relations within actor-networks (Law and Singleton, 2013).
Fieldwork focused on assembling materials relating to the relationships between different human and non-human actors within networks of hosting, with a focus on the ideas, meanings and practices around the production and provision of tourism in a particular tourism place. As an initial focus, relationships were sought around those whose roles involve ‘responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’ (Locum Consulting, 2011). The chosen empirical point of departure, the introduction of Cittaslow practices into the governance of the town, was seen as a means of entry into broker-host networks through its Manifesto commitment to ‘welcome’ in practice as a key characteristic of its member communities. However, questions about the nature of the relationships emanating from Cittaslow, and how they are negotiated by the individuals, groups and ‘things’ involved showed that despite the Manifesto claims, the absence of ideas, meanings and practices relating to tourism suggested that ‘host’ was not one of the things being translated into practice through Cittaslow in the town. In accommodating this absence, the process of following the actors suggested alternative routes to follow, leading to an exploration of broker-host networks in Llangollen’s tourism past, the ‘following’ of two key non-human actors into the present, and an engagement with networks of policy and governance through which the production of tourism in the town could be further explored. The process of generating materials therefore quickly moved beyond the geographical and temporal space of the town, drawing in key brokers acting in networks which place Llangollen in differing spheres of policy and practice, in the past as well as the present.

The use of ANT in this way enables us to trace webs of hosting involving human and non-human actors which are attracted to tourism places, but which are fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed in particular locations. In this study, the policy and practices of hosting are analysed using three levels of ordering: strategic notions about how tourism should be performed, and the internal and external relationships of practice which emerge as strategic notions are translated through the network, which enable these practices to be realised.

It is important to reiterate at this point that the study itself is ordered by the conceptual framework produced from the literature, and shaped by my own hinterland of methodological choices, which determined who and what were included as participants, how I followed them, and how I used the materials thus generated. Using the ANT emphasis on ‘verbs not nouns’, the active focus on work in networks was used to develop four ANT storylines (van der Ploeg, 2003: 42; Dredge and Jenkins, 2011) about broker-host network ordering and effects, assembled using
tokens’, the gatherings of ideas, people and things around which tourism’s relationships of practice are formed.

Chapter 7 traces the role of different human and non-human brokers in the development of Llangollen as a tourism place, describing the emergence of heterogeneous broker-host networks, and highlighting the network power of ideas as well as things in tourism ordering. In ‘following’ host networks into the past, it shows how changing technologies, and particularly in this case transport technologies, mobilised other actors as tourism attractions, and foregrounds the link between place and identity in tourism hosting through the development of tourism branding for the town.

Chapter 8 follows two of the major actors from Chapter 7 into the present-day, emphasising the heterogeneity of their networks by tracing the ideas, identities, brands, as well as other actors, which coalesce around LIME and the Llangollen Railway. Both these major attractions remain embedded in different ways in the everyday lives of the people of Llangollen, although the nature of these relationships has changed considerably over the years, and they are also now both increasingly entangled in the wider networks of policy and practice which make them active beyond the local. These key actors therefore perform as tokens, network ‘tracers’ which illustrate the fluidity of broker-host networks in the changing landscape of tourism production.

Chapter 9 explores this landscape by engaging with tourism governance, beginning, as we have seen, with the successful Cittaslow application in Llangollen. The detailed search for networked hosting practices relating to tourism in Llangollen itself shows how tourism is both present in the everyday life of the town, and yet largely absent from its formal networks of governance. Continuing the theme of tracing tokens from Chapter 8, the chapter ends by showing how host networks are beginning to coalesce around a particular non-human ‘token’, the Dee Valley, which is gathering heterogeneous groupings of broker-host actors around an emergent destination.

Chapter 10 develops the context into the wider policy landscape. It explores the way policy narratives travel through formal structures of tourism governance, shaping different relationships of practice through which the work of hosting takes place. It traces both Llangollen and the Dee Valley through the layers of policy and practice which construct the tourism landscape in North-
east Wales, highlighting the fluidity of this landscape, the multiplicity of policy narratives present within it, and the way that Llangollen is generally absent from these networks. It also shows how the Dee Valley is increasingly being translated as the major actor in the area, a process which is incomplete as the study ends.

The narrative storylines presented in Chapter 7-10 therefore show how the networks of hosting were traced through the ‘backstage’ work of different groups of human and non-human brokers in the ordering of tourism at the three levels used in analysis. Although each storyline is discussed independently, the key themes interconnect and overlap throughout the account, as actors – particularly non-human actors, such as the Llangollen Railway and LIME, and policy narratives such as branding and strategic objectives - appear and disappear, re-emerging at different points in the account, making the narrative appear complex and ‘messy’. As we have seen, this is in the very nature of an ANT study (Law, 2004), and helps to highlight the complexity of networks where everyday lives and complex structures of governance are viewed through the same conceptual framework.

The next section discusses how looking at ‘the host’ through the lens of ANT, highlighting its characteristics as active, fluid, heterogeneous and multiple, produces new insights into how tourism ‘works’.

11.3 Contribution to knowledge: new insights on ‘host’

The narrative storylines summarised above highlight ways in which the broker-host concept is capable of generating questions about how tourism networks and tourism places travel through the formal structures of tourism policy, enrolling human and non-human actors which together perform the role of host on the ‘backstage’ of tourism. Such networks coalesce around key tourism ‘tokens’ through practices which are, as discussed earlier, ‘discursively constructed, socially produced and materially real’ (Ren et al, 2012:20). Brokers are active mediators of tourism within those webs. It therefore allows us to extend our understanding of how relationships between brokers are ‘governed’ by the normalising narratives of strategy, contributing to the ‘host gaze’ (Hollinshead and Hou, 2013: 245) quoted at the beginning of Chapter 2.
The use of the broker-host concept provides new insights into existing areas of theory discussed in the literature review, particularly the ‘BLT’ model of Cheong and Miller (2000) discussed in Section 3.2. The broker-host concept aligns with many aspects of the Cheong and Miller model, showing how brokers are empowered to negotiate and shape the way tourism is produced, using resources (money, ideas, ownership and knowledge) through productive and disciplinary forms of power. It shows in detail how broker roles can be multiple and fluid – collaborators, buffers (physical or cultural), experts, managers and competitors – and how these may align around issues or non-human actors, such as the development of the Llangollen Pavilion, or the Dee Valley.

However, we can also pose questions about some of Cheong and Miller’s assertions. In particular, although the literature is clear that remuneration is a central element in their definition of brokers, this study shows that active mediation takes place not just through professionals or those making a living from tourism, but also through many volunteers acting as brokers in tourism networks at all three ‘levels’ of ordering. Indeed, some brokers may have both paid and unpaid roles at different ‘levels’ in relation to tourism provision (Table 6.2), and these may influence the nature of their role as mediators. Cheong and Miller also made a distinction between what they called ‘touristic and non-touristic publics’, suggesting a clear divide between those with an active interest in tourism and those without. However, the multiple broker roles in this study also included some which were related to tourism and some which were not. This was evident throughout the networks (so an elected member at county level may also act as a volunteer guide in the local community; a senior public sector tourism professional may also own a self-catering cottage, and a local resident may volunteer at the Eisteddfod). This blurring of the ‘touristic/non-touristic’ binary was also evident in the links and overlaps between different parts of local governance and their strategies and policies discussed in Chapters 9 and 10, highlighting the way tourism hosting is entangled with other forms of ordering in the production of tourism (Ren et al., 2015).

This fluidity also enables us to challenge the role and nature of ‘stakeholders’ in tourism policy and practice (highlighted in the literature in Sections 2.5 and 3.5). Rather than describing networks of stakeholders and policy makers, this study focuses on the work which takes place in the relationships between them, and shows how such relationships can become black boxed in policy and practice. Chapters 9 and 10 show how policy and practice are framed within the
model of ‘stakeholder’ language. However, we have seen that brokers and groups of brokers nominated as stakeholders do not always have the aptitude or network power to fulfil this role, and are effectively excluded from the networks where decisions are made. In opening these black boxes, we can highlight absences which are seldom evident in studies which focus primarily on structures rather than practices. This study shows that ‘stakeholder’ is often used as a managerial concept representing a single-interest position in a policy ‘structure’. We can therefore think again about consultation and its relationship with participation/partnership narratives and ask whether the static concept of ‘stakeholder’ is appropriate in these fluid and heterogeneous networks.

Many of the relationships identified in this study were formally constituted around the strategic notion of ‘partnership’. However, the narratives also suggest that ‘partnership’ has different meanings in the internal and external relationships of hosting. This has particular relevance in the context of the wider destination management literature, which has regularly focused on the nature of partnership, or collaborative working (a body of work reviewed by Fyall, Garrod and Wang, 2012). Fyall (2011) provides an overview which sees partnership as an essential component of destination management, bringing together the many fragments which constitute the tourism product. Partnership is widely seen in the literature as a functional relationship between different stakeholders in ‘the destination’. Fyall quotes Manente and Minghetti (2006) in relating the relationship between these interests and the destination identity as the key to ‘an integrated system of tourism supply’ (Fyall, 2011: 91; see also Pike, 2008: 266). It is suggested that such relationships produce mutually beneficial outcomes, including reduced risk, the efficient use of resources, reduction in the power of channel intermediaries, and reducing standardisation.

These approaches suggest that it is possible to ‘measure’ destination effectiveness by assessing the ‘cohesion of a destination interorganizational network’ (Scott, Cooper and Baggio, 2008: 171). However, this study suggests that these standard ‘managerial’ criteria have a less significant role in the formation of formal destination networks, which are largely devoted to the implementation of national tourism strategy and the allocation of scarce local government resources. This is illustrated by the emergence of the North East Wales Ambassador Scheme, which has been successful in enrolling private sector brokers around the North East Wales brand. This supports the findings of Andersson and Ekman (2009) who showed that the
dominant role of ambassador networks lies in the way they strengthen adherence of local brokers to the destination brand. However, it also shows how a particular brand (North-East Wales) can work against a particular tourism place (Llangollen), by deflecting the energies of tourism ambassadors away from the places in which they are located.

Tracing broker-host networks also enables us to challenge how strategic notions around identity are translated into relationships of practice, building on recent ANT-based work by Ren and Blichfeldt (2011) on identity and destination branding. Although the new destination marketing arrangements discussed in Chapter 10 are in their infancy, we can ask questions about how actors are enrolled into these networks, and what happens to those who are excluded. There is no link between the various brands currently on offer (Wales – Year of Adventure 2016; North East Wales – Altogether Brilliant as well as Where Wales Welcomes the World). The ‘Welcoming the World’ brand is popular with local residents, despite the fact that it does not reflect its current or potential tourism offer, which is based around cultural and activity and adventure tourism for a largely domestic market, nor is it used by tourism image-makers in the wider networks of tourism (in this case Visit Wales and the local authority). In the face of this absence, the residents of Llangollen continue to use and value their brand as an important source of distinction for the town, although it receives no support in terms of recognition or resources within the wider networks of tourism.

As we have seen, ANT approaches have been criticised in the past for ignoring what is excluded from the network. This study shows how absence can itself be traced through observation of what is not present, or happening, as well as by focusing on what can be seen or recorded. These contributions foreground issues of power and identity in tourism, and show how a focus on ‘absence’ in analysis can highlight ways in which tourism does not always ‘work’ as expected in the narratives of policy and practice.

The final contribution of this study is methodological, arising from my own reflections on the practice of being an ANT researcher in the context of my own fieldwork experience in this study. The discussion of research design and method choice in Chapter 6 highlighted questions about how research quality is demonstrated in a study such as this, questions which emerged from thinking about how the researcher makes decisions about the course of the research about who and what to include, and about how to include them. Attempting to answer these questions
led to the identification of five ANT ‘character traits’ discussed in Sections 6.3-5. It is argued here that this represents a ‘modest’ achievement (Law, 2004) in bringing the researcher’s hinterland of methodological choices into the account, contributing to the transparency and trustworthiness of the research (Beard et al, 2016).

11.4 Research quality and limitations

The account produced in Chapters 7-10 is based on the situated knowledge of the researcher, produced in the context of the requirements of the academic process. The study was designed using a paradigmatic case study to develop a new concept – the broker-host network. As discussed in Section 6.3, such a case study demonstrates in-depth understanding derived from different types of material. Its intent can be intrinsic (a unique case of interest in itself) or an instrumental case which can help to understand a wider issue or question. Conclusions are seen as ‘general lessons learned from studying the case’ (Cresswell, 2013). The ‘case’ in ANT is seen as

…a sensitising device that may invoke questions about differences and similarities between sites and circumstances under study. (Jóhannesson et al, 2015: 9)

This study is therefore both intrinsic (it is not suggested in this research that the resulting narrative would be similar if the conceptual framework were applied in a similar way elsewhere) and instrumental, in that it has shown how the application of the framework enables the reconceptualization of host and the value of the broker-host concept.

The general lessons learned from applying the conceptual framework to this particular case are shown through the narratives in the four narrative storylines, and drawn together in this concluding chapter. It has also highlighted the importance of transparency of the account, and the importance of acknowledging the researcher’s ‘hinterland’ of methodological choice. To this, we can add some further ‘lessons’ relating to the conduct of the research, and how it could have been done differently, and perhaps more productively.

The practical: The main limitation of this study is one which is noted elsewhere in the literature on tourism policy and practice (e.g. Dredge et al, 2013) – the time needed to observe and analyse
the networks of tourism practice. Many studies focus on a snapshot in time, and we have seen that valuable studies cited earlier in this study (Mottiar and Tucker, 2007; Zorn and Farthing, 2007) took place over several years, in the latter case up to 30 years. Eighteen months of fieldwork is a very short time to explore the workings of networks – ideally very much longer is needed to show the fluidity and dynamism at the heart of the ordering process. For this study, two factors mitigated this issue:

1) the decision to follow actors into the past, which was taken early in the fieldwork period, and
2) the unplanned opportunity to extend fieldwork into a second tourism season, and in particular over 2015, when a number of significant changes took place within the tourismscape.

The network was therefore ‘cut’ in September 2015, but this too is an artificial point, because, as shown in Chapter 10, much of the policy literature relates to strategic notions about the future of tourism in Wales, thus extending the study of networks into the future.

The theoretical: The choice of Cittaslow as a starting point was originally made because of its explicit relationship, as expressed through its Manifesto, with tourism. However, it is important to note here that because of the campaigning role it adopted in relation to ‘the supermarket’, this may have instead provided greater access to individuals with indifference, or occasionally even active opposition to the further development of tourism in the town (a ‘strategic notion’ that would prefer tourism to be minimal in the town). This may also have been a factor in excluding some possible participants – in particular one local politician who took a different view to those involved in Cittaslow, and who repeatedly refused requests for an interview. For practical reasons, it was also not possible to interview the Destination Manager for Visit Wales at the national level, a strategic ‘absence’ which would have provided important additional testimony in relation to a number of the key relationships and themes covered in Chapter 10.

There are many other brokers who could have been included as participants in this study if time had permitted, and some where decisions were made by me to exclude. The first instance of this came with the decision described in Chapter 6 and Appendix 3 to move away from my initial focus on Slow Food towards an exploration of tourism policy networks, a decision which provided access to a much wider list of ‘actors’, but which may have over-complicated the final
discussion. In particular, as the future importance of the Dee Valley became clear, many other brokers were suggested to me as possible participants, and some were included in the final list, occasionally invited to ‘turn up’ to my meetings with other participants, on the grounds that they might have been able to help!

We can also ask why the focus on networks and communities failed to elicit a significant body of material relating to online communities in this example. Although digital networks did emerge as actors, particularly in relation to destination marketing, few of the brokers interviewed regarded online communities as significant in any respect beyond this. This may have been a result of the way the interviews were managed, but is nonetheless an interesting absence which could be pursued in future research.

**The methodological:** Most of the work to date in ANT in tourism is qualitative, often using innovative methods and approaches to generate materials for analysis. However, recent developments in digital mapping provides scope for using quantitative methods, and this has been shown to produce an effective approach to the complexity of actor-networks which it has until now been difficult to illustrate visually (Jóhannesson, Ren, van der Duim and Munk, 2014). Quantitative mapping of broker relationships as conceptualised in this study has the potential to demonstrate further the practical value of ANT, thus meeting one of the challenges in convincing practitioners noted in the next section.

### 11.5 Implications for management and practice

As shown above, this study offers an interpretation of broker networks in tourism which differs from a conventional policy/practice approach in several respects. In particular, in proposing a socio-material perspective on policy and practice, it draws in non-human actors to a field of study which has tended to use more managerial approaches to the study of tourism. The empirical work also shows that ‘tracing’ tokens enables us to understand how ‘gatherings’ of people, things and ideas can produce network effects which are independent of scale and of the formal structures of governance, and how tokens travel through time and space, continuing to attract networks while changing their form and associations.
By highlighting the way multiple realities play out in these networks, it also helps us understand why controversies arise, and therefore challenges the effectiveness of some key policy narratives, such as consultation and partnership, relating to the operation of these networks, and provides an approach which highlights absences in relationships where networks have the potential to exclude. It is therefore suggested that this conceptualisation of ‘host’ has the potential to bridge the gap between the two tourism knowledge ‘fields’ represented by managerial and sociocultural approaches to tourism.

As noted earlier, the value of an ANT approach to policy and practice is supported in the literature (e.g. Dredge, 2013). The discussion in Section 11.3 above has highlighted several areas where insights from this study can be used alongside management-oriented work to evaluate the effectiveness of tourism strategy and policy, particularly in relation to destination management and marketing. However, in making such recommendations for practice based on ANT:

… it is important to acknowledge that such complex and dynamic conceptions of destinations and destination experiences [using ANT] may be unpalatable to practitioners or policy makers who require clarity in their decision making with regard to the geographic, economic and political boundaries involved. (Lugosi and Walls, 2013:9).

Despite this, it is possible to see how future research can help to resolve these issues, and these are discussed briefly in the next section.

11.6 Suggestions for further research

There are several ways in which the work discussed here could be developed in tourism theory and practice. The application of the broker-host concept, and its conceptual framework based on ordering practices, has value in understanding the nature of host in other tourism places and contexts. It would be particularly interesting to see this applied empirically in relation to a growing literature on ‘social’ approaches to hospitality (Lashley et al, 2007; Germann Molz and Gibson, 2007). As suggested above, asking questions about the conceptual relationship between ‘host’ and ‘destination’ also suggests new approaches to research based on some key tourism concepts.
Destination

Many of the questions asked during fieldwork related to attempts to ‘follow’ ‘those with responsibility for Llangollen as a destination’. This study aligns with a growing body of literature on the socio-material nature of destinations (Ren, 2010a; Berenholdt, 2012; Jóhannesson et al, 2015) and destination branding (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011) and contributes to our understanding of how destination management policy is implemented at local level, showing how ‘strategic notions’ held in different communities of practice may not be congruent with formal strategies. This has the potential to make a practical and theoretical contribution to destination management by providing a way of developing further understanding of the internal and external relationships of practice in destination management, particularly tourism ‘places’, such as Llangollen, which are excluded or ‘black boxed’ by formal destination management practices.

‘Host community’

The idea of ‘host community’ has also appeared at various points in the narrative. Interviews with Llangollen residents did not show any commitment to ‘hosting’, although tourism is embedded in the life of the town. Using an ANT approach enables us to see the idea of ‘host community’ as a community of practice involving multiple roles and relationships between human and non-human brokers, extending beyond the context of a particular tourism place (Liepins, 2000a, b). As noted above, the storylines also suggest that we can ask further questions about the use of the concept of ‘stakeholder’, and particularly the way stakeholders are chosen as representatives of such communities. It would also be interesting to develop the broker-host concept further in relation to the growing literature on online ‘host communities’ in tourism.

Volunteering

Asking such questions about the nature of the ‘host community’ also takes us beyond the established notion of brokers as paid employees in tourism to include the voluntary sector whose significance as an important actor has emerged during this study. Volunteering at the Eisteddfod and on the Railway create important links between the town and its touristic identity. In particular we can therefore ask how volunteers are enrolled in tourism networks – what is their role in ordering – are they mediators or intermediaries? Does the fact that they are unremunerated reduce their power? Or does their power lie in the relationships of their role and the resources available to it.
There is limited research on the supervisory or managerial role of volunteers, or as board members or trustees, and this study suggests that there is potential to build on existing work in this area. Smith and Holmes (2009) highlight the role of tourism volunteering as a source of social capital through ‘active citizenship’, but we can ask how this can add to the durability of host networks. We can also examine further the training aspect of volunteers, as shown by the use of the Welcome Host scheme to enhance the value of the volunteer experience, and the potential of this to enrol new members to the community of practice. Jago and Deery (2002) demonstrated the importance in an organisational context of ‘host volunteering’ for attractions, events, and visitor centres, and the importance of volunteer training in maintaining service quality in tourism, and there is scope to develop this in the context of the local community.

11.7 Conclusion

… the ultimate survival of a sensitising concept ‘depends where the data takes us’…

(Bowen, 2006: 3, citing Padgett, 2004)

Using perspectives and sensibilities derived from actor-network theory, this study characterises tourism as a socio-material network, and hosting as a form of ordering within that context. Drawing on innovative recent contributions to the literature using ANT in tourism, it proposes a conceptual framework of hosting based on broker-host networks. Hosting is seen as one of the key processes through which tourism is ordered, a focus on the active work of hosting, rather than on a static concept, the host. It is argued that by tracing this active contribution, we can achieve new insights into how tourism itself works, or in some cases does not work.

Bruner suggests that ‘[t]ourism scholarship…aligns itself with tourism marketing, in that scholars tend to work within the frame of the commercial versions of their sites’ (Bruner, 2001: 881). This study has sought to move beyond this by taking an approach which cuts across the narratives of tourism marketing and their implementation through formal policy networks and to identify the ‘ambiguous and less tangible aspects …[of] ‘backstage activity’ which includes the interactions, and the power and politics of policy making’ (Stevenson et al, 2008: 746).

In the course of the discussion, ideas have been presented which suggest that the newly-conceptualised host is a form of ordering which produces heterogeneous webs of actors which
perform through and beyond the formal political and economic structures of tourism, engaging in and with overlapping structures and narratives about what tourism is and how it should be practiced. It shows that although policy networks relating to tourism in Llangollen are part of the emergent context of broker-host networks, the context in which host networks are active spreads beyond the place itself. ‘Host’ is incomplete in Llangollen itself, but becomes the site where everyday lives coalesce with touristic structures to co-create tourism ‘places’.

This shows that ‘host’, rather than being ‘too simple a term in a complex world’ (Selwyn, 1996:8) when re-conceptualised in this way becomes a concept which allows us to embrace complexity and mess and takes us to new understandings of an important space in tourism thinking.
REFERENCES


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Appendix 1 University of Surrey Ethical Approval

Ethical Issues in Research

Please complete this form in discussion with your Supervisor and sign where indicated. Your Supervisor must countersign the form. The form should then be taken to the Student Support desk by 21 June at the latest. Staff will record that your form has been completed. If no ethical approval is required for your study, the form will be stamped and returned to you. If ethical approval is required, you will be provided with instructions on how to obtain ethical approval and guidance on the required documentation.

YOU MAY NOT COLLECT DATA BEFORE IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED THAT ETHICAL APPROVAL IS NOT REQUIRED, OR UNTIL A FAVOURABLE ETHICAL OPINION IS OBTAINED.

If data are collected without required ethical approval, you could be asked to destroy the data or, if already submitted, that your work will not be marked. If you change your method or sample, a new form must be completed.

Name of student: Lynne Beard Course: SHTM PhD
Supervisor: Dr Caroline Scarrs

Dissertation topic: Reconceptualising the booi—the role of tourism brokers in mediating the performance of booi

Please answer Yes or No to the following questions. If you answer Yes to any question, ethical approval will be required for your study either from the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law (FBEFL) Ethics Committee or the University Ethics Committee (UEC).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the study, or may the study, involve undergraduate students either in FBEFL or across the University?</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does, or may the study, involve access of records or persons or sensitive confidential information?</td>
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<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does, or may the study, involve Faculty of Business, Economics and Law staff as subjects, investigating their working or professional practices?</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>Does, or may the study involve staff across the University of Surrey, investigating their working or professional practices?</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the study involve vulnerable groups (e.g., children under 16 years, over 65s who are unable to give informed consent, prisoners or young offenders)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>Will the respondents receive payment (including in kind or involvement in prize draws)?</td>
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<td>Could questioning—in questionnaire or in interview—or other methods used cause offense, be distressing or be deeply personal for the target group?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the study involve any risk to a participant’s health (e.g., invasive physiological or psychological procedures)?</td>
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<td>Does the research involve donation of bodily materials, organs and the recently deceased?</td>
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<td>Does the research require participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g., current observations)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the research involve activities where the safety of the researcher may be in question?</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your research study involve staff or patients from the NHS or a Health Service overseas?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Seek approval from FBEFL Ethics Committee

Supervisor comments:

Student’s signature __________ Date 12/11/2013

Supervisor’s signature __________ Date 15/11/13

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Appendix 2  Cittaslow International Charter: Requirements for excellence

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
1.1 Air quality conservation *
1.2 Water quality conservation *
1.3 Drinking water consumption of residents
1.4 Urban solid separate waste collection *
1.5 Industrial and domestic composting
1.6 Purification of sewage disposal *
1.7 Energy saving in buildings and public systems
1.8 Public energy production from renewable sources
1.9 Reduction of visual pollution, traffic noise
1.10 Reduction of public light pollution *
1.11 Electrical energy consumption of resident families
1.12 Conservation of biodiversity

INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES
2.1 Efficient cycle paths connected to public buildings
2.2 Length (in kms) of the urban cycle paths created over the total of kms of urban roads *
2.3 Bicycle parking in interchange zones
2.4 Planning of ecomobility as an alternative to private cars *
2.5 Removal of architectural barriers *
2.6 Initiatives for family life and pregnant women *
2.7 Verified accessibility to medical services
2.8 "Sustainable" distribution of merchandise in urban centres
2.9 Percentage of residents that commutes daily to work in another town *

QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE POLICIES
3.1 Planning for urban resilience **
3.2 Interventions of recovery and increasing the value of civic centres (street furniture, tourist signs, aerials, urban landscape mitigation conservation *
3.3 Recovery/creation of social green areas with productive plants and/or fruit trees **
3.4 Urban livableness ("house-work, nursery, company hours etc)
3.5 Requalification and reuse of marginal areas *
3.6 Use of ict in the development of interactive services for citizens and tourists *
3.7 Service desk for sustainable architecture (bioarchitecture etc) *
3.8 Cable network city (fibre optics, wireless) *
3.9 Monitoring and reduction of pollutants (noise, electrical systems etc *
3.10 Development of telecommuting
3.11 Promotion of private sustainable urban planning
3.12 Promotion of social infrastructure (time based currency, free cycling projects etc)
3.13 Promotion of public sustainable urban planning
3.14 Recovery/creation of productive green areas with productive plants and/or of fruit within the urban perimeter **
3.15 Creation of spaces for the commercialization of local products *
3.16 Protection /increasing value of workshops- creation of natural shopping centres *
3.17 Metre cubes of cement (net infrastructures) in green urban areas

AGRICULTURAL, TURISTIC AND ARTISAN POLICIES
4.1 Development of agro-ecology **
4.2 Protection of handmade and labelled artisan production, (certified, museums of culture, etc ) *
4.3 Increasing the value of working techniques and traditional crafts *
4.4 Increasing the value of rural areas (greater accessibility to resident services) *
4.5 Use of local products, if possible organic, in communal public restaurants (school canteens etc) *
4.6 Education of flavours and promoting the use of local products, if possible organic in the catering industry and private consumption *
4.7 Conservation and increasing the value of local cultural events *
4.8 Additional hotel capacity (beds/residents per year) *
4.9 Prohibiting the use of gmo in agriculture
4.10 New ideas for enforcing plans concerning land settlements previously used for agriculture

POLICIES FOR HOSPITALITY, AWARENESS AND TRAINING
5.1 Good welcome (training of people in charge, signs, suitable infrastructure and hours) *
5.2 Increasing awareness of operators and traders (transparency of offers and practised prices, clear visibility of tariffs) *
5.3 Availability of “slow” itineraries (printed, web etc)
5.4 Adoption of active techniques suitable for launching bottom-up processes in the more important administrative decisions
5.5 Permanent training of trainers and/or administrators and employees on cittaslow slow themes **
5.6 Health education (battle against obesity, diabetes etc)
5.7 Systematic and permanence information for the citizens regarding the meaning of cittaslow (even preemptively on adherence) *
5.8 Active presence of associations operating with the administration on cittaslow themes
5.9 Support for cittaslow campaigns *
5.10 Insertion/use of cittaslow logo on headed paper and website *

SOCIAL COHESION
6.1 Minorities discriminated
6.2 Enclave / neighbours
6.3 Integration of disable people
6.4 Children care
6.5 Youth condition
6.6 Poverty
6.7 Community association
6.8 Multicultural integration
6.9 Political participation
6.10 Public housing
6.11 The existence of youth activity areas, and a youth center

PARTNERSHIPS
7.1 Support for Cittaslow campaigns and activity
7.2 Collaboration with other organizations promoting natural and traditional food
7.3 Support for twinning projects and cooperation for the development of developing countries covering also the spread philosophies of cittaslow

*= Obligatory requirement
**= Perspective requirements
Appendix 3: The Slow Food story

The initial phase of data collection involved a review of ideas and practices related to Cittaslow and Slow Food, traced through web-based documentary searches, and an engagement, via the local council in Llangollen, with national representatives of the Cittaslow movement in the UK. This took me, at their invitation, to the AGM of Cittaslow UK, involving a long train journey from North Wales to York in the engaging, helpful and informative company of the Chair of Cittaslow UK, and an opportunity to meet with representatives from Cittaslow towns throughout the UK. Llangollen itself was not represented at the meeting, which seemed to surprise the other delegates, so I was seen as the Llangollen representative (I had arrived at the meeting bearing a characteristic Welsh bara brith as my contribution to the lunch offering, which was to be based on local food from the member towns and their areas). Discussion at the meeting centred on issues relating to maintaining the strict requirements of the Cittaslow Charter, and the difficulties of ensuring continuity as various local (and in the UK unpaid) councillors came and went in the different towns involved.

I was already a long way from home (in terms of my research question), and wondering whether what I was doing was strictly relevant to my project. However, I was learning a lot about the practices and issues involved in the acquisition and maintenance of Cittaslow status, and ‘local food’ and its relationship with the visitor economy seemed to play a key role in this in most of the towns involved. As I listened and participated in the meeting, and throughout the long train journey back, I asked myself what ‘following the actors’ required that I do in this case. Do I follow Cittaslow as an actor and engage with these other towns, spread all over the UK, and see how they have engaged with Slow Food issues in their local tourism, or do I stick to my original plan and focus on the specific initiative in North Wales and hope that my disparate findings from my day in York might contribute to my account as I returned to trace ‘Slow Food’ in my chosen destination?

Eventually opting to follow my original objectives, a few weeks later, at the invitation of the Town Council, I attended the annual Town Meeting in Llangollen, where the local community was invited to learn about the successful Cittaslow application, to find out what it meant for the local council and the residents of the town, and to be presented with a symbolic model snail from Cittaslow UK as a token of their membership of the organisation. After the presentations, explanatory leaflets were offered to interested residents, and an invitation issued to volunteer for the new Cittaslow committee which was to take the project forward. Everything seemed to be well on track. At the
meeting, I introduced myself and made arrangements to interview the members of the separate Slow Food committee which had been formed as part of the Cittaslow application, and to attend some of their meetings in preparation for a planned ‘Slow Food Week’ to be held at the start of the summer tourism season.

Later that week, during the first of these interviews, I found myself volunteering (unsolicited) to conduct a survey about food supply among local tourism accommodation providers, which would not only provide me with access to a key set of actors and their networks, but would also contribute to the local Slow Food campaign by forging connections with local tourism brokers. This was ANT in action – I was ‘following the actors’, ‘tracing the tokens’ and ‘acting in the network’. What could go wrong?

At this point it is worth noting that I had already assumed that the Slow Food team (which included local residents who were also tourism professionals) would be linking with the tourism industry in the town, that the supply of food to tourism establishments would be part of their role (at the time, both requirements of the Cittaslow Charter), and that the tourism providers would be interested in this new initiative to improve the tourism offering in the town. As it turned out, none of these things were true, and the nascent Slow Food committee collapsed and died within three months. No Slow-Food-based tourism innovation would take place in Llangollen during the period of my fieldwork.

How to proceed at this point? Which actors should I follow from here? My research question related to the networks of tourism production. Should I trace the ‘food and tourism’ idea elsewhere? I had already unearthed some interesting tourism initiatives involving food in the wider local area, and had discovered a strong food narrative in tourism promotion both locally and through the policies of the national DMO, Visit Wales, and its regional marketing organisations. Or should I look at tourism in Llangollen afresh and focus instead on the absences which had resulted in the failure of the Slow Food idea to translate into anything concrete, into a durable actor-network, in this particular case? Keeping my focus on the broader question of destination networks suggested that I should move away from ‘food’ and seek to identify and follow human and non-human actors which were actively mediating tourism in the area. But I had already amassed some interesting data and informants relating to food initiatives in tourism, and was reluctant to abandon these entirely.
Appendix 4: Llangollen Cittaslow Constitution: objectives

Constitution

2. **Objects**

2.1 The Objects of Cittaslow Llangollen are to:

a) Ensure on-going community involvement in the development and delivery of the Cittaslow aims of; supporting and promoting local culture and local traditions; working for a more sustainable environment; raising awareness and appreciation of local produce and local businesses; promoting healthy eating and healthy living and encouraging and celebrating diversity rather than standardisation.

b) Champion a holistic approach that strengthens our local community and creates a better daily life for all.

c) Generate consensus amongst the groups who have a responsibility for the future success of the town

d) Co-ordinate initiatives and grant applications in line with the agreed strategy for the future of the town

e) Assist with and where appropriate deliver projects.

2.2 Cittaslow is not anti-progress or anti-technology. It is a forward thinking movement that aims to use cutting edge solutions in communications, transport, hospitality, consumption, commerce and administration to improve peoples’ lives in a sustainable manner.
Appendix 5 Participant Information and Consent forms

Information sheet for participants

Project: Reconceptualising the host – the role of tourism brokers in mediating the performance of host

Name and position of researcher: Lynn Beard, MA (Oxon); second-year PhD student

The focus of this research project is the nature of the role of host in tourism. Conventionally regarded as the locals living in the communities that receive tourism, the researcher’s own experience as a tour operator suggests that the role of host can be more accurately described in the relationships between different local communities and different groups of professionals working within and around the tourism industry to perform the role. This study will therefore contribute to our understanding of the social and cultural role of these different groups in tourism.

I am seeking to gather data which will test this thesis by looking at the way ideas about how tourism should be practised are created, established, managed and sustained in tourism, using Llangollen, Denbighshire as a case study. I intend to focus in particular on the impact of the successful application for Green Tourism accreditation in October 2013 on how tourism is practised in Llangollen.

I am essentially looking at the cultural and social dimensions of the role of host, and do not intend to focus on the financial or commercial aspects of such relationships (while recognising, of course, that these are the essence of many of these relationships). It does not therefore seek data which may be regarded as commercially sensitive, and you have the right to refuse to answer any questions which you feel come into this category. Each participant is regarded as a separate entity, and information provided by one individual, organisation or company will not be revealed to partner or associated bodies unless specifically approved.

I plan to approach a range of relevant organisations at the national, regional and local levels, and am happy to share this list with you if required.

What I would like from you:
• Participation in a face to face interview arranged at your convenience. With your agreement the interview will be recorded using a digital recording device. Each recording will be given a code which will be stored separately from any record which can identify the organisation or participant (unless otherwise agreed).

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Follow up
In line with University policy, all data collected will be securely stored at the University of Surrey for a period of ten years. At the completion of the project (September 2015), a copy of the thesis will be available for inspection for anyone who wishes.

PLEASE NOTE: This research has received a favourable ethical opinion from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and you are entitled to withdraw at any point if you choose. If you choose to do this, any data arising from your participation will be excluded from the analysis and destroyed. Any complaints about any aspects of the research will be addressed: please contact in the first instance Lynn Beard (l.beard@surrey.ac.uk), and in the second instance Dr Caroline Scarles (c.scarles@surrey.ac.uk) or Professor John Tribe (j.tribe@surrey.ac.uk)
Participant Consent Form

Project: Reconceptualising the host – the role of tourism brokers in mediating the performance of host

Name and position of researcher: Lynn Bead, MA (Oxon); second-year PhD student

Name: ..................................................................................................................

Company/Organization: ..................................................................................

☐ I have read and understood the information provided, and what I will be expected to do during my participation in the above research project.

☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of the study which is not clear or which gives me concern.

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving reason and without prejudice.

☐ I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

☐ I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

☐ I request that

   a) my own identity

   b) the identity of the organisation

remain confidential.

I have read and understood the above, and freely consent to participate in this study.

Signature: ........................................................................................................

Date: ........................................
Appendix 6 Sample interview transcript

Informant 8: activity tourism provider

27 June 2014

[...] material redacted to maintain confidentiality of other individuals

INFORMANT 8 So this is the new thinking for next year [boards with logo graphics]

LB Are they going to be part of the same weekend?

INFORMANT 8 Yes...that’s the [...] brand...I like to keep it clean and easy to read because I want people to be able to read it at first glance...and we’re working on a new walk for next year, which will be a Food and Drink Walk.

LB Yes, you mentioned that at that meeting with [Informant 14]...um...so you’re going to do that as one of the walks for this are you?

INFORMANT 8 Yes...I’ve been meeting with different people at different venues...part of the ... ethos really is to promote the area, bring people in, bring tourists in, and of course 99% of our walking visitors come from over the border...

LB That many? Because that one we did there were quite a few locals, weren’t there?

INFORMANT 8 There were, and I was really surprised, but the research with all the other walks shows that we were probably the only group where we had locals

LB OK, so to go back to the beginning...this will be the third one, yes?

INFORMANT 8 2015 will be the third one, yes

LB Ok so you started in 2013...so that was your idea...so how did the idea come about?

INFORMANT 8 The idea came about...and I’ve had lots of chance meetings, which has been very good, because I’m relatively new to this area, and it takes a while to build up a bit of a network...so I met up with [Informant 24] at the Wrexham group via some training courses which Wrexham Council were putting on...they had a series of business –related courses, and I think there were ten evenings, and they were free...and they were excellent courses, they were based on people starting businesses, and I went to most of them, and it went through different things about budgeting, and pricing, and marketing and so on, and it came up in conversation about this tourism group, and I thought well that sounds like something that I should be a member of, so I joined in [...] and then...um...so that was interesting, because you meet interesting people there, mainly accommodation providers, but nevertheless interesting people, and...um...I was going for a walk with a group starting from Llangollen one day...so we met in Llangollen, and I was there a bit early, so I went for a bit of a wander, and the TIC wasn’t open, because it was too early, and I was looking at the sign that tells you about the Dee Valley Way...

LB Oh, the one in the car park?
INFORMANT 8  The one outside the TIC...and I was just standing there looking at this, and this guy walked up, and he was dressed in green and he had walking boots on, and he said ‘Oh, are you going to do one of the walks?’, because there’s North Berwyn Way and the Dee Valley Way, and you can do the two as a loop, and I said ‘No, I’m going for a walk with another group, but I will do them’...and this was some time ago...and he said...um...I said ‘Well, I’m toying with the idea of putting on a walking festival here’, and he said ‘Oh, you’d better come along to our Forum then...which is the following week at the Pavilion’. I said ‘Oh that sounds interesting, do I need to book on it or anything?’, so I think he gave me an email address, so I emailed it saying can I come along?’. So I went along...and that guy was [Informant 15]...just by coincidence he happened to be going in [...] so I went along, and I met [Informant 14], who I had previously met some time ago talking about something else, so I met up with X, and Y, and there were a number of other interesting people there, and I met Z...now he’s been commissioned to look into the outdoor providers groups in the Dee Valley...

LB  So who had he been commissioned by?

INFORMANT 8  I think it was the AONB...so they managed to get some funding for Z to come along and bring this group together...he’s a really interesting guy...he’d be a good person to speak to actually...I think his background is business...anyway he brought the group together...

LB  Was this around the time when they were doing the consultation for the Dee Valley?

INFORMANT 8  I think this was just after, when the Dee Valley was joining the AONB, this was just after, which would make sense in a way...so anyway, I met Z at this meeting, and he said ‘Oh, we’ve got a meeting next week, would you like to come along...at Ty’n Dwr’, which used to be the Youth Hostel, and then it was bought by the University of ...UCLAN...the University of Central Lancashire...and it was their outdoor recreation centre, so for their students who were doing outdoor activities and so on...and it’s quite an amazing place...it’s accommodation as well...yurts in the garden...I think it’s 3 star...and so I went along to a meeting there, and that’s how I met up with the outdoor providers group...in the Dee Valley

LB  Oh I see...well I can see how that might happen because I met [Informant 14] and he immediately put me on to different people to talk to...and he kept inviting me to meetings...it was fantastic...

INFORMANT 8  So that sort of came about by meeting people, and then...and...when I was talking to Z at the meeting, and I mentioned that I’d like to do a walking festival, he said...you should speak to [Informant 7]...[...]...because [Informant 7] had just managed to get the Walkers are Welcome status for Llangollen, and he said ‘If you speak to [Informant 7] then maybe [Informant 7] will be able to help you’, so I got his email address and contacted him in a one-line, saying ‘This is what I would like to do’, so he phoned me and said ‘well maybe we should have a chat’, so I said OK, where do you live then, I’ll come and see you’, and it turns out that he lives about 300 metres down the road! So I just walked down the road, and we had a chat...and he explained that they’d managed to get the accreditation for Walkers are Welcome [NOTE: what do they have to do?] for the town, so they were on the website and on the list, and somebody did a walking festival in a way of celebrating the status...but then it wasn’t followed up, so it didn’t do anything for possibly two years, so I said ‘well I’d like to do something...just on a small scale, so I’ll do a walking weekend’, so for the first year it was called walking weekend, so I put together just a list of four walks each day – we had a short town walk in the morning, led by a Green Badge guide, so you get a narrative of the history, the people, the landscape, and in the afternoon she did a walk that took you out to Valle Crucis and Dinas Bran, and told you about the landscape and so on, so there were two short walks, and then we had a Green badge guide who did an 8-mile walk on the Saturday and Sunday, and I did the two 14-mile walks on the Saturday and Sunday, so it was very small, but we felt that we had relative success

LB  So how long did you have to promote that idea for the first time?
INFORMANT 8  Well, I did...I started the idea in the February, and we did it in the May, so it was quite short...but a relative level of success...I was quite happy with that, in such a short time as well, and with a very small budget...well practically no budget at all really...the Chamber of Trade gave us a little bit of money, and [X]...he gave me a little bit of money...so that was enough to get some printing done, and off we went...

LB  So you had full support in Llangollen? There was no problem about coming in from the outside and doing something that was a Llangollen thing?

INFORMANT 8  Well...I wouldn't say ‘full support’...um...but no-one seemed to mind me doing it...

LB  [laugh]

INFORMANT 8  [laugh] I think if you’re in business in tourism, as long as people are coming in to spend money, in the cold light of day, you don’t mind what sort of festival it is...it doesn’t matter...and I think that’s true actually...so long as someone else is doing the legwork...

LB  Well, yes,...I’ve talked to various people from the Chamber of Trade...I haven’t talked to [Informant 7] yet...and they seem quite.....un-proactive in doing tourism-type things, I mean I know that they have issues that they’re very involved in, like the supermarket, and I know that they’ve had all sorts of problems over the years with politics and local personalities and what have you...but they do...for a Chamber of Trade and Tourism, they do seem to be quite laissez-faire about what happens...but they’re not acting to prevent people from doing things either...

INFORMANT 8  No, and I’ve been to some of the Chamber of Trade meetings...I went after the Walking festival, partly to say thank you for supporting us with the money, and just to tell them how it had gone, and that we would be doing it again next year, and I think that was important, because they’d put their hands in their pockets and given me some money, and they don’t have a huge amount of money..

LB  Yes, I know...and I think they had a big fall-off in membership as well, didn’t they? Although I think they’re building it up again now...

INFORMANT 8  Yes, they are trying to do that...so the first year of the Walking Weekend we felt went quite well, and this year we felt that it did go much better...

LB  Did you get more people this year?

INFORMANT 8  Oh yes...

LB  Because you had more time to advertise it...where did you promote it this year?

INFORMANT 8  We put it out through Facebook, and I have an email list...because I lead walks for a walking festival in Worcestershire, and I do the long walks for them, and I lead some walks for Corwen Walking festival as well...so I get to meet people there, so the idea...when I met the organiser of the Corwen Walking festival...he sort of let it slip that what he wanted to do was to build it from being a Corwen Walking festival into being a Dee Valley Walking festival, and I suggested that maybe it would be better to have two walking festivals, one in May in Llangollen and one in September in Corwen, because it given the valley as a whole two bites of the cherry, rather than putting all your eggs in one basket...[...]

LB  In Corwen? No...because I’m trying to keep it focused on Llangollen, but then it doesn’t, because the Dee Valley there’s quite a lot of business networking going on among some sort of groups, which is different from the Llangollen Chamber...
INFORMANT 8 Well I think...I depends on who you speak to...if you speak to [Informant 15], [he’s] very keen...and [Informant 14]...they’re very keen for it to be Dee Valley...because they don’t have an axe to grind, let’s say, or...they represent everybody, and they’re keen to do that [...] they see Llangollen, Corwen, Dee Valley as an area where it all needs support, so they look at it as a whole, which is very good actually, because everybody benefits from that, and I think that’s a good idea, and I’m...like you really...I’m concentrating my efforts in Llangollen because I think Llangollen offers a very good tourist...tourism opportunity...it’s a great venue for walking, which is what I’m interested in, there are layers and layers of history and folklore which we can bring in to all of our walks to make our walks more interesting, and that’s what we’re very keen to do...we use the word friendly because I think we are friendly, and some walking festivals you go to...they’re not...also we’re very keen that on one of our walks, you don’t just go for a walk, we stop and talk about sense of place [NOTE: look at this as a narrative], we talk about the history, you know, and the landscape and the folklore and the people, and what goes on there, and what did go on there, and why the Abbey is where it is, and why the Castle is where it is and what it represents, so on our walks you get much more than just a walk

LB Yes, well, I know...and you’re doing the course as well...

INFORMANT 8 I’m doing the course...[...]we stop and talk about...sense of place, really...and as a result of that, really, a walking holidays company has contacted me, and I now do all of their [...] walks for this commercial company, and do some other paces for them as well, so I think giving more than just a walk had paid off for me, commercially, so...and that’s what we do...we charge for our walks in Llangollen...a lot of festivals don’t...but we do charge because we think we give better value for money than a lot of walking festivals [?], and we use professional guides, and it’s only right that those professional guides should be rewarded for what they’re doing...they’re passionate about what they do, and the area that they’re doing it in, so they bring even more to the walks because of that...

LB So is there anybody else...have you got any competitors in Llangollen?

INFORMANT 8 No, not in the way that we do, no

LB So no other commercial company, say from outside the area that bring people in...

INFORMANT 8 No, I’m not aware of any. I noticed an advert the other day for um...I think it’s called Walking With Sheep! Which is a really nice title, but they will give you a map and you follow it yourself...which a lot of companies do...self-guided walks...so that’s fine, but they’re not actually based in Llangollen, they’re just using the area...I mean I offer guided walking in Llangollen and right across North Wales and Snowdonia, and in fact on the website it says ‘anywhere you want to go’, and you know we know these other areas, we’ve been to the Lakes, we were in the Lakes last week for five days...

LB So tell me about the food and drink walks...[...]. Have you spoken to the Clwydian Range people who do a food trail...?

INFORMANT 8 It’s a food trail, not a walk...no, because although we’re part of the county and the AONB, I’m trying to keep it very tight on Llangollen...the walk, of course, is going to be very short...it will only be about 3 and a half miles...

LB Cos they’ll be eating all the time!

[re food walk elsewhere...]

INFORMANT 8 Well. I felt, and this is something that we’ll introduce into ours, and I’m quite passionate about this, coming from an advertising background, is that when we stop at one of the stops, and one of my
walking customers goes to the table or the counter, and the provider hands over some food, and some drink, I think it’s important that the customer knows where that food has come from, who is supplying it, and where they can buy it, and that’s really important, so what I would have liked to have seen with my locally-made chocolate and hot chocolate, I would like to have seen at least a leaflet, or a business card, or something, because I go away and sit on the grass in the sunshine and think ‘this chocolate’s lovely, I wonder where I can buy it from’, but I have no idea. So in our one, we will make sure that everybody knows who’s supplying this food, that it’s locally sourced, cos that’s really important, and where they can buy it from, because then the customer goes away feeling ‘I’ve had a good day out, and I really liked that sausage, or whatever, and I know where I can buy it’. The providers think ‘well, actually we’ve had x number of people coming through, they’ve enjoyed our food, they were asking questions, and they’ve gone away with our contact details, so that’s really important I think, so that’s how we’re going to work it out…

LB So have you started to contact people about being providers for the food and drink walk?

INFORMANT 8 Yes

LB And…I suppose I’ve got two or three questions coming out of this…is it related to the Food Festival in any way? That’s one question…and is it related to local accommodation providers? So…who are they….I mean, I don’t want to take any commercially sensitive information, but how have you been enrolling people to get involved in this?

INFORMANT 8 The first person I spoke to was [Informant 7], who lives down the road...

LB Yes, […]

INFORMANT 8 Yes, […], he’s finding that he’s as busy now as when he was working, and I think he’s also secretary for the Food Fair as well, you see, and the Christmas Fair as well. I’ve spoken to [Informant 7] in the first place and told him what I would like to do…and he really likes the idea, and his first reaction was ‘would you do it during the Food Fair?’ and I said no – two reasons – well, three reasons really, one, if we do it during the Food Fair, we’ll be taking people away from the Food Fair, so it defeats the object really, two, I want the food walk to give the walking festival a boost, so it’s another thing for us, for our event, and third, if we do the food walk during the festival in May, we can promote the Food Fair which is in October, and in October they can promote the Food and Drink Walk, which is part of the Walking Festival, so we get this rolling on effect, and he could see my thinking in that, and he agreed with that, so he was happy, so yesterday I had a meeting with Colin, who is the guy who runs the Food Fair, and he really likes the idea, and…um…the venue for the start is the Courtyard Café, they’re going to do the breakfasts. Also the Courtyard café are going to be the starting point for all of our Walking festival walks next year. The previous two years we’ve started outside the Tourist Information Office, which seems like a logical place to start, because it’s easy to find, but…the TIO don’t like crowds of people standing outside their building...

LB Even before they’re open?

INFORMANT 8 Even before they’re open…and they’re not happy about us using the outside of their building to promote the Walking Festival. We’ve got two quill flags...

LB yes, there was one up at the Wharf...

INFORMANT 8 yes, and they’re really nice, you know, they’re eye-catching, and I wanted them to be put outside the Tourist Information Office, even if it was just for the weekend of the event, but they wouldn’t allow it…so they haven’t been very helpful, so we’ve moved now from the TIO to the café, which is nicely tucked away in the Courtyard…it’s not good commercially, because they’re off the main thoroughfare, but for
us, we’ve chosen the café because it’s tucked away, we felt one, it would introduce a lot of new customers to the café, so it would do them good, two, it gives us a good meeting place, even if it’s raining there’s an undercover area outside, three, people can get teas and coffees before we start...all of our walks we meet at a certain time and we leave half an hour later, so that does two things, it allows people to come to us to register, to say ‘I’m here’, and it gives the café time to sell teas and coffees, so again commercially we’re helping that local business...so anyway, the Café are going to be the HQ for the Walking Festival next year, so they’re happy about that, the Food walk will start from the café, and we’ll be taking in the Chain bridge Hotel, they’re interested, the Abbey Farm Tea Rooms, at Valle Crucis, I know they’re interested, but they haven’t said yes, but I’ve got a meeting with them, and the Motor Museum, we’ll be using them as a stop...they don’t have catering. But we’re organising outside catering to come in, with the gazebos, but they do have inside areas if it’s wet, plus the Motor Museum could do with some exposure, so we’d like to say that we’re helping them, and then we’ll finish back in town in Gales for local beer and cheese...but what will be happening food and drink along the route, we haven’t decided yet, but I would like it to be related to the time of day...we don’t want people to be drinking beer at half-past ten in the morning! So it will be a brunchy or light lunch kind of thing, bearing in mind they’ve already had breakfast, so that’s the way that will work. But before the event I will talk to all the providers about the commercial side of it, because they may not even think about it, but, you know, we’ll probably have a bracelet system for the walkers, and we’ll probably have a card as well with a list of who the providers are, and their contact details, and that can be ticked off by the provider when people get there as well...so we’re trying to cover all bases...we’re promoting local produce and businesses, and it’s another interesting walk for our walking festival

LB So do you think...thinking about food in Llangollen...there are some places that are very good at it...and it seems to me that it’s something they could promote much more than they do, to walking people, because the two seem to fit together...

INFORMANT 8 Yes, there are some very good food and drink people, and there are some that aren’t very good, and there are some that are keen to promote local produce and there are some that aren’t, and I guess a lot of that comes down to price...we’re keen to promote local produce, and that’s why the AONB are interested in us making it work, and they will help us make it work...so that’s a new walk for next year. The two other new walks we have are one taking in a stretch of the World Heritage Site from the Aqueduct to Llangollen,

LB I did that two weeks ago...ten miles?

INFORMANT 8 Well this will only be 4 and a half miles, because we think that the people who will want to walk it aren’t going to be big walkers...

LB So you can do it all on the flat, can’t you?

INFORMANT 8 Plus the Green Badge Guide for that...that’s her specialist subject, is the World Heritage Site...so we’ve contacted Wrexham Badge, because the Aqueduct is actually in Wrexham, and they are going to provide extra literature for us to give out free to the people joining that walk...so we’re promoting the World Heritage Site and also we’re getting Wrexham County involved as well...They will give us some of their...booklets as well, promoting Wrexham County, so we’re not only promoting Llangollen, we’re telling people what’s around...so I think they will also...because we’ll need a minibus for that...to take people to the start, and then walk back, I’ve asked Wrexham County if they will help us pay for the minibus...so Wrexham County are keen to be part of that. We’re also doing a walk that starts in Chirk, and we’ll come back through Chirk Castle, so then we take in the Chirk Aqueduct, the battleground site, which is where Offa’s Dyke crosses the Ceiriog
Valley...so that’s an interesting point there...then we take in part of Offa’s Dyke itself, which runs through Chirk Castle grounds, we’ll take in Chirk Castle, and then we’ll follow the Holy Road back to Llangollen...

LB  So how long’s that?

INFORMANT 8  About 12 miles...

LB  Ooh I’m going to do that one! Sounds good...

INFORMANT 8  So again, because we’re actually going into Chirk, we’re promoting Chirk High Street and the Castle, and we’re approaching Wrexham County to see if they’ll help with the minibus fee. The AONB will help pay for the minibus we have going up to Ponderosa, because we’re doing a walk from the Ponderosa, looping round the top of World’s End, and then back along the cliffs and the Castle, and then back into town. So we’re confident that the AONB will help us with that, because they’ve said they will, and we’re quite confident with Wrexham County taking people into their area as well...and if we can get that kind of support it means that the ticket prices for the walks can come down, and that’s what we’re keen to do. Another thing I’ve started to do for next year is that instead of approaching one sponsor, to say ‘will you sponsor the Walking Festival’, which, you know, you can be asking for hundreds of pounds just to cover the cost of printing and transport, things like this...so I’m approaching different businesses to sponsor different walks, which means that their contribution is a lot less, but they’re still getting some exposure

LB  Yes, well you could maybe target it a bit more to different types of people doing the different walks

INFORMANT 8  Well, that’s exactly what we’re doing, so the sponsor who aims their product at the people who do shorter walks...they’re a different type of person as well, so we can have a sponsor more related to the type of person doing that walk...and it’s a divide and conquer thing really, because I’ve seen people doing other events, not necessarily walking, where you have a big sponsor for the whole event, and when that sponsor goes, you’ve got nothing, and quite often the event disappears, whereas if you divide it up, if one sponsor pulls out the following year, you’ve still got all the other sponsors.

LB  So are they local sponsors, or are you looking...?

INFORMANT 8  We would prefer local sponsors, yes. If that’s how it does work, then fine, that’s how we’ll do it...

LB  But you’ve found it quite easy to get people engaged with it?

INFORMANT 8  People like the idea, but in a commercial world they have to think ‘well, will I get a return for this?’ And the fact that somebody is sponsoring two walks...we’ve got somebody sponsoring the two shorter walks ...]...they’ll still get exposure on the website to everybody, so they’re not only getting exposure on those two walks...so it’s quite a good buy really for them...

LB  Yes, so are you promoting the Festival more widely or are you just doing it through the targeted methods that you’ve used before, with existing contact details...

INFORMANT 8  We are...next year, I’m hoping that Denbighshire Council will help us more, because they haven’t helped us as yet, and I had a word with [Informant 9], who’s head of their marketing, and I spoke to him, and in the nicest possible way saying that we weren’t getting the support from the council that I felt we deserved...and I gave him a couple of examples, and he agreed [laugh], so I shall have a meeting with him very soon, and plan a campaign, and I’ll tell him what my plan is, and expect him to come up with a duplicate plan...because we missed out on a lot of opportunities which we should have been...for example, Visit Wales,
they produce a booklet each year, and we should have been in there...I sent Visit Wales the information, before the deadline...the council, Denbigh Council, had the information, well in advance, and when I questioned Visit Wales as to why we weren’t included, they said that they don’t accept information from individual groups, they contact the councils and the councils put forward the information, so I questioned [Informant 9] with this, as just an example, and he said ‘well you should have been’...well, should have been isn’t good enough for me...

LB So is that the North East Wales brochure ‘Altogether Brilliant’?

INFORMANT 8 We’re in that, but when that came out, we’d already had our event! So they’re working on the new one for next year now, and we will be in it, because [Informant 24] is heavily involved in that, and I shall make sure that [Informant 9] knows we’re involved, and I’m also joining the Destination Management team for Denbighshire, so that’s starting very soon...

LB Oh, are you? So you’ve really got to be in those things to make sure that your voice gets heard...

INFORMANT 8 But the thing is, you know, my gripe is, if you like, these different booklets are produced...we should be in there, because the council know about our event, and I think that they’re valuable to us. Having said that, I sent press releases to all the North Wales Post, and the Liverpool papers, and the Manchester papers, and the Yorkshire papers, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, I send press releases to all of these newspapers. Whether they actually pick them up and use them or not you’ve no way of telling, but you can only try.

LB And were you ...so the Visit Wales thing that you wanted to be in, that was for the whole of Wales, was it?

INFORMANT 8 Yes, they do have a diary of events in it, and we weren’t in it...

LB Were the other walking festivals in it?

INFORMANT 8 Yes, the other two that are in Denbighshire are...but I know for a fact that somebody who’s very involved with Corwen works for the council, and they’re very involved with the promotion of that area, so of course they’ve got a friend in the council, and I said [Informant 9], ‘I know that Corwen have a friend in the council, and we need a friend in the council, and I want that to be you!’ After all, he is a civil servant, and he’s working for me, and I don’t think it’s out of place for me to say that...and he should be thinking, well, I’m right, because I’m bringing tourists into his county, which is what his job is...anyway we had an interesting and friendly chat, and, you know, I shall have an interesting and friendly meeting with him!

LB Yes, well, being on the Forum will be interesting as well, because from what I can tell, they’re seeing that as the real...engine...for getting everything done, engaging people...

INFORMANT 8 Yes, but I do think that the North East Wales brand is a good idea, because when we travel around places, we talk about Denbighshire, and Flintshire, and Wrexham, but nobody knows where they are...everybody knows where Snowdonia is...but if you say North East Wales, people will say ‘I can picture where that is...I don’t know what’s there, but at least I have an idea of where you’re talking about’. There was a talk recently at one of the business clubs and it was the guy who is chairman of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway, and he said that in their new brochure, they’ve started using the catch line, or introductory line, that says ‘in the top left-had corner of wales’...so immediately people know the location, because you’ve told them, and that’s important, and it actually goes back to Ivor the Engine [think: he’s not from the area and he likes the brand NE Wales. People from the area don’t???] that was on TV 50-odd years ago, and that always
started with ‘in the top left hand corner of Wales’...and you have brands like Mid Wales...well, Mid Wales can only be one place...it’s got to be in the middle, hasn’t it?

LB But it’s then very hard to make that into a product, isn’t it? To make North East Wales into something that people want to come to, it’s then got to have values attached to it, and I think that’s the difficult thing that they’re looking at with that brochure, it’s everything, it’s almost too scattered...I’m not sure who they were trying to talk to with it

INFORMANT 8 It is...no...but nevertheless, it’s a start, and like I said, the first time round with anything, you learn huge amounts of lessons...so that’s good, that’s interesting, I think...North East Wales...

LB So you talked about working with the guy in Corwen, the Corwen Walking Festival...do you work to cross-promote...there’s one in Prestatyn as well, isn’t there...

INFORMANT 8 The guy in Prestatyn he last year on his website, and in their brochure, they listed the other walking festivals in North Wales, which is a very good idea...and I emailed him, because I didn’t know until afterwards that they had listed our event, so I emailed him and thanked him for doing that, and suggested that maybe all the walking festivals could do that for each other...it would probably start as far south as Oswestry, and include Whitchurch, which I know is Shropshire, and then Llangollen, Prestatyn, and Corwen, and the few others over in North east Wales as well, and I think that if we all did that for each other, then we would all benefit...um...[...]

LB But it’s not on at the same time, is it?

INFORMANT 8 No, but I would rather see it as being complementary

LB Well, it seems to me that if you are looking at people coming from over the border for weekends, then the more you can build the idea that they go walking in North East Wales, the better, so they might go once a month...if the festivals were spaced...

INFORMANT 8 And it’s a good idea that they are spaced out...I mean Prestatyn and Llangollen are both in the spring, I don’t think that matters really because they both have different products, and I’m sure that our styles are different as well...

LB Right...I want to talk to you about the outdoor activity providers group, which seems to go back longer than just this course, because you said that you met...

INFORMANT 8 yes, it was through Z, and I used to go to the meetings which were held at Ty’n Dwr,,,

LB How long ago was that?

INFORMANT 8 It’s got to be about two years...because the outdoor providers group hadn’t been going that long...so I wasn’t one of the original members

LB And why did it come together in the first place?

INFORMANT 8 I think because there are a lot of outdoor providers in the Dee Valley, and I don’t know whose idea it was to pull them all together and promote them collectively, but that is the idea of the group, which is a good idea. I think, because I’m not involved in water sports, I think I see it slightly differently to the way they see it, because you’ve got a number of businesses there providing the same opportunities, and they are in effect in competition with each other...some of them are quite friendly towards each other...and some of them aren’t...and I think that’s why you don’t get them coming to the meetings...I think there’s a lot of
friction...they are all members of the group, they’re all on the email list...I think there’s about 40 people on the list...but because most of them are water-based, I think that’s why they don’t come...and you probably noticed there’s always talk about this conflict on the river...and I’m not connected with it at all...so if that sort of talk starts towards the end of a meeting, then I usually leave, because it can go on and on and on and on...

LB So that’s become the focus for the group, rather than joint marketing, or promotion, or anything like that...

INFORMANT 8 And I think you’ve got one or two individuals who are not......the easiest people to communicate with [...], so they’ve taken on this guy, the river officer,

LB yes, that was going to ...mediate...arbitrate...

INFORMANT 8 Yes, calm the waters! [Informant 14] mentioned that guy’s background recently...so, yes, let’s hope that works. I stay out of that

LB So [X] is the sort of focus for it [the group], isn’t he?

INFORMANT 8 Yes...I think...[...] I think he’s a very good person to have there, because he knows so many people, and he knows the history of so many different things that have gone on...so he’s a very knowledgeable local person. Z was the Chair, but when his contract ran out he had to go...I don’t think he wanted to because I think he actually quite enjoyed it...Y is the Chair, I think reluctantly, you know, he does it, and he knows most of the people anyway, which is good...so it chugs along quite well, and as you know, we’ve got this badge scheme running at the moment and we’re sort of half way through that ...

LB Um...[Informant 16] gave me this, which is the report of the FLO...so you haven’t seen that?

INFORMANT 8 No, I haven’t

LB Well, it’s interesting because it’s written in the first person, but there’s no name on it, so I was wondering if you knew who’d written it [...I it’s just what worked and what didn’t work. It’s quite interesting... but they’re not doing it again till 2015?

Informant 8 Well [Informant 14 and Informant 16] thought 2015, but XX said he’d seen in an email 2016...I’m not sure that it will happen again...I think...there are a number of things which...let’s say weren’t done well enough...the name, for a start, didn’t tell anybody what it was...and I can see why they chose that name, because it’s a river-based charity they thought it was quite clever to have the initials that spelt FLO, but to the everyday punter it doesn’t mean a thing, and I think that was one of the biggest problems. You need to say what it is...you know, what it says on the can, but anyway, I’d like them to do it again, because it could...if it was reinvented, and maybe more people from more disciplines were involved, rather than everybody from the river, then that would be better.

LB Yes, then it would be outdoor sport rather than just water sport...

INFORMANT 8 Yes, I mean, the Pavilion is a fantastic venue, but it’s not ideal for everything, and the problem with the Pavilion is that you and I know it’s only a five-minute walk from the town, but it’s five minutes too far for most people. They won’t walk from the town to the Pavilion...but anyway, I don’t know what will happen with it.

LB Yes, so that’s a festival that hasn’t achieved its critical mass, or momentum, or whatever...
INFORMANT 8  Well, I think you can distort the fact and figures, but I don’t think it was...certainly didn’t reach its potential. I think [Informant 16] would be very disappointed if it didn’t happen again, because a lot of funding went into it, I don’t know how much, but a lot of funding went into it, and the reason you get the funding is to kickstart an event which will eventually be self-funding

LB   And I suppose if it worked it would also reinforce the providers group, wouldn’t it...

INFORMANT 8  Yes, because everybody who took part was from the providers’ group...I don’t really know...again it’s something that I try to stay out of...you end up looking as if you’re just trying to put your nose in...I think everybody’s entitled to an opinion, but when people think you’re poking your nose in then it’s not welcomed, so you very quickly think...‘well, I won’t have anything to do with that...’ and that’s where I was with it...

LB   So would you be keen to have more people offering walking holidays involved in the outdoor activity providers group?

INFORMANT 8  Well, we’re comfortable with what we do, and we’d like the Walking Festival to grow, but from my own point of view I’m quite happy with what I do...the thing is that nowadays there are so many apps and maps and people producing guidebooks and things like that, a lot of people are just happy to go and do their own thing, and what we offer with the Walking Festival is the added value of our extra knowledge that they wouldn’t get from a book

LB   Yes, and it’s nice to go in a group of people you haven’t met before...So the Wrexham Business Group, to cover the last thing that was on my list, because I didn’t go to that meeting that you sent me the thing for...but that was all around food wasn’t it?

INFORMANT 8  It was, it was actually at the Home Farm, where they produce their own sausages from their own pigs, and they were telling us they’re opening a farm shop there as well, very soon, so we had a go at making chocolate...

LB   Oh it really was hands on!

INFORMANT 8  And you could have made your own sausages as well...it was a nice place, and it was quite a good little meeting...

LB   And I notice they’ve got this thing called Tourism Ambassadors, or Tourism Champions...

INFORMANT 8  Yes, the Tourism Ambassador Scheme...yes, I’m a Tourism Ambassador

LB   So what does that involve?

INFORMANT 8  It’s attending the meetings, so learning what’s going on...in Wrexham County...and attending the Learning Journeys, which have been very interesting, so we’ve had a few of those, and what the Learning Journeys do is, for example if you’re an accommodation provider and you have some visitors come to you for a weekend, and they say to you ‘where can we go’, and you have the knowledge to say ‘oh well you can go to Chirk Castle (depending on weather etc) and if it’s going to be wet in the morning you can go inside, and if it’s going to be fine you can go up the Ceiriog Valley...nice pubs up there...because we’ve visited all these places so we can actually speak from knowledge of having been there...

LB   and do they only do places in Wrexham County, or do they do...
INFORMANT 8  It’s Wrexham…and we’ve been into Llangollen as well…because Wrexham…they do have some fantastic rural countryside, up the Ceiriog Valley, but you have to accept that the most dramatic countryside is the Aqueduct and Llangollen, so you’re sending them into the next county, but it’s only a couple of miles, and what you’re actually doing is you’re providing a good service to your customers and you’re supporting your local area…so gaining all this knowledge to pass on to your customers is part of the Ambassador scheme

LB   So that’s a good scheme, isn’t it?

INFORMANT 8  Yes, it is…that’s [Informant 24’s] scheme, so I think that the Denbighshire Ambassador Scheme will follow the same plan…

LB   Oh have they got one?

INFORMANT 8  I’m sure they will have one because I’m sure they will have been talking to [Informant 24] and learning from what [Informant 24]’s done in the last two years, and really if they just copy what [Informant 24]’s done, then they’ll be heading in the right direction, and of course they’ve got some different countryside, and offers, in Denbighshire…and Flintshire are just that little bit further behind [but Clwydian group have done this, and also they are further ahead in the food stuff]

LB   But some of their B and Bs are very good at doing that sort of thing, some of the Clwydian Range Business group…and some of their websites, which I’ve been looking at…they have that Sense of Place toolkit, have you seen that?

INFORMANT 8  No...

LB   That was something that [Informant 14] and…I don’t know if it was [Informant 16] or somebody before…it’s basically photographs and ideas, and some of their websites give lots and lots of ideas of things to do, and they seem to be doing that on a very local level...

INFORMANT 8  It is good…but doesn’t it all then become very fragmented, and it’s difficult for people to find this sort of information?

LB   It does, yes, but they’re very reluctant to hook up with the Dee Valley people, very very resistant, they’re kind of worried about it…because the other meeting I went to that week was the AONB Sustainable Tourism meeting, the final one before they go off and finalise the strategy…and they were almost there as a pressure group, really…worried that the Dee Valley are going to take away their business…but I think you’re right, yes, it does fragment it...

INFORMANT 8  Yes, and I think the North East Wales website gives everybody the opportunity to say their piece, and again it’s selling the whole area as a destination, and whether people choose to go to the Dee Valley, or choose to go to the Clwydians, then that’s up to them…maybe they’ll choose to go to both, and that’s what you would like…I mean, the trails are very good, whether you have a castle trail, or a food trail, they’re hoping to establish a food trail in the Dee Valley...

LB   So who’s behind that?

INFORMANT 8  I think that’s the AONB again…so I think because I’m wanting to do a Food and Drink Walk, they’re interested in that, because that ticks the box for them, and also we’d give them a couple of leads for their food trail…it would be a driving trail…so um, there’s lots of things happening, and lots of things that can happen…things take time…
Yes, and its creating the...glue that makes them work...

Mmm, and quite often you find that it’s just two or three different people, and quite often the councils, they say ‘well it shouldn’t be the councils’, but I think it should really, there should be somebody at the council who you could easily contact...this is what came out of the Ruthin castle meeting, not the one that we went to, but the one before, when they had an open discussion about what is needed, and they said ‘easy routes of communication’, because we’re fragmented, you’ve got groups here and groups there, but you just need one group...maybe you need just one group that all those groups feed into, or are connected to, and that’s what people are saying, they need to be able to contact people at the council easily, which you can’t do.

But then you’ve got the business that you...the Denbighshire Forum might be a conduit for that, but you need something that works for all of them, so you’re back to North East Wales again, and you’re back to having some sort of networking body which doesn’t exist really...

Well, I wonder whether destination management, the three destination management groups, will...obviously whoever heads those groups will be talking to each other...or they should be...because they can learn a lot from each other...they can learn a lot from [Informant 24] because he’s been doing it for two years now, and he can give them a rundown of what they’ve achieved and how they got there...and then the other groups can learn from that, take that information away and build on it, maybe change it slightly, but as long as those people at the top of each of those groups are constantly talking to each other, then it must benefit everybody, and those three groups annually could come together, although they come together each month...that’s how I would imagine it would go....

Yes, is it...I was quite surprised when I interviewed [Informant 9] and he said destination management is done on a county basis, destination marketing is done on a partnership basis...and I was speaking to the consultant who was doing the consultation for the AONB, and she said some destinations wouldn’t dream of separating management from marketing, because the two are intimately connected, whereas here it seems that a distinct decision has been made to keep them absolutely separate

Yes, yes...but does it depend where the funding comes from?

Well, I suppose that the funding for NE Wales comes from Visit Wales, and the funding for Denbighshire comes from...Denbighshire...[or from other bits of the Welsh Government as in RDP, via Cardiff from Europe]...but that shouldn’t be a problem, really, should it? I mean, Wales isn’t huge, is it? I think the other problem is that they keep re-arranging...all of it...Visit Wales keep reorganising themselves, and the counties keep reorganising themselves...getting reorganised...

And it has to be said that Visit Wales is very pro South Wales, and that’s something that needs to be addressed

Although they have got tourism people in Llandudno Junction, haven’t they?

Um, I don’t know...you see another problem we have in Denbighshire is that there are only two TiOs, and they’re both privately run

But there’s also a network of tourist Information points, and they’re separate and not privately run (see NE Wales brochure), not part of North Wales Tourism at all, and X said ‘no, not ever, we want to be independent’, and there’s another one in Corwen, in the library, and I’m not sure what they’re part of...

I think they just said ‘yes we’ll have a load of leaflets’ [but see Informant 18’s comments on training staff at the library]...and to have your leaflets distributed you have to be part of North Wales Tourism
partnership, and it’s too expensive....if you’re a big company already earning lots of money, then you can afford it...but if you’re like me, you can’t afford it...

LB   And that’s the reality for the majority of tourism businesses, really, they’re mainly small, aren’t they?

INFORMANT 8   Yes, if you’re a B and B, you can’t do it, can you?

LB   But that’s why these other networks are so important...

INFORMANT 8   Yes...so I’ve had, not exactly a falling out with the TIC in Llangollen, but recently the lady in charge has left...

LB   Yes, [...]

INFORMANT 8   Yes [...] ...the gallery side is someone else, because they actually lease that part of the building, that big room, from somebody else, but they only lease one side of it, the gallery side is leased by somebody else, you see...cos I said can I do a window display? And they said no, we’re not allowed to use the windows for anything...and the next week I went there and they had 50% off all jewellery! In the window, and I said why’s that, and they said ‘well we have to make money’ [...]

ENDS
Appendix 7  Analysis sheets for policy landscape
Appendix 8  Extracts from field notes/reflexive diary

But my feedback plays any role? But G was participating not writing. Only took notes!

- Participation in AGM, workshop.
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And I did do it.

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And I did do it.
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Group (Get East).
Catherine Fillosion, Cameron Tamura.
Always keep, or Don Walker.

The Connecticut Farm Project,
- an experiment a time -- new system.
- what materials for training.
- follow up next time.
- for interview.
Tales about other people having up.

Laws of coagulation bridging
access.

Comment: "Following Hypothesis is that"

Elie.
305

The presentation is not clear due to
unreadable handwriting. Could
please improve

3. Which groups have sales falling at

4. The graph shows a

5. The product has

Product - Cross promotion

- Promotional campaigns

- Distribution

- Price

- Promotion

- Control group

- Experiment group

- Results

- Conclusion

The company will

3. Life expectancy and income

4. The factors from your account

- Age
- Gender
- Income
- Education

- Life expectancy

- Company

Before

- Equal

- Company

- Equal

- Company

- Equal

- Company

- Equal